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INDIGENISING POST-WAR STATE RECONSTRUCTION
The Case of Liberia and Sierra Leone

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ABSTRACT

Current approaches to post-war state reconstruction are primarily dominated by the liberal peace thesis. These approaches tend to ignore the indigenous institutions, societal resources and cultural agencies of post-conflict societies, although such entities are rooted in the sociological, historical, political and environmental realities of these societies. Such universalised and ‘best practice’ approaches, more often than not, tend to reproduce artificial states. The Poro and Sande are the largest indigenous sodality institutions in the ‘hinterlands’—a pejorative term attributed to rural Liberia and Sierra Leone. Both the Poro and Sande exercise spiritual, political, economic and social authority. In this thesis, I use critical realism and the case study approach to investigate: a) the extent to which the liberal peace practitioners who are leading state reconstruction in Liberia and Sierra Leone recognised the role and potential utility of the Poro and Sande institutions; b) the extent to which the Poro and Sande were engaged; and c) the implications for the quality and viability of the reconstructed states. This evidence-based research suggests that the liberal peace project sidelined indigenous institutions, including the Poro and Sande, in the post-war recovery and rebuilding exercises. The disregard for indigenous and emerging resources in the context of state reconstruction in Liberia and Sierra Leone has contributed to the resurgence of 19th century counter-hegemonic resistance from the sodality-governed interior of both countries. At the same time, the reconstructed states are drifting back towards their pre-war *status quo*. Authority structures remain fragmented, kleptocracy is being restored, webs of militarised patronage networks are being emboldened, and spaces for constructive dialogues are shrinking. This thesis underscores the need for indigenisation as a complementary strategy to help reverse the deterioration, and to maximise gains from massive investments in peacebuilding.

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feedback this work may enjoy is largely to the credit of my supervisors' contributions and guidance.

DEDICATION

I dedicate this thesis to the nameless child whose slow death from starvation in the Liberian civil war has forever changed the course of my life. His last beckoning to a society that failed its children remains the light in my path.

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ACRONYMS

ACRM	Anti-Corruption Revolutionary Movement
ACS	American Colonisation Society
AFL	Armed Forces of Liberia
AFRC	Armed Forces Revolutionary Council
AI	Amnesty International
APC	All People's Congress
BWIs	Bretton Woods Institutions
CDF	Civil Defence Force
CDWS	Comprehensive Drawdown and Withdrawal Strategy
CPA	Comprehensive Peace Agreement
CSA	Case Study Approach
CSO	Civil Society Organisation
CVT	Centre for Victims of Torture
CWG ER	Cluster Working Group on Early Recovery
DDCs	District Development Committees
DDR	Disarmament, Demobilisation and Reintegration
DDRR	Disarmament, Demobilisation, Rehabilitation and Reintegration
DDRR-SIF	Disarmament, Demobilisation, Rehabilitation and Reintegration Strategy Implementation Framework
DfID	Department for International Development
DR Congo	Democratic Republic of Congo
ECOMOG	Economic Community of West African States Monitoring Group
ECOWAS	Economic Community of West African States
EO	Executive Outcomes

FGI	Focus Group Interview
FIND	Foundation for International Dignity
GDP	Gross Domestic Product
GooB	Government out of a Box
GTF	Gender Task Force
HIV/AIDS	Human immunodeficiency virus/ Acquired immune deficiency syndrome
IA	International Alert
IBL	Institutionalisation before Liberation
IDDRS	Inter-Agency Disarmament, Demobilisation and Reintegration Standards
IDPs	Internally Displaced Persons
IFMC	Inter-Faith Mediation Committee
IMATT	International Military Advisory and Assistance Team
INGO	International non-governmental organisation
INPFL	Independent National Patriotic Front of Liberia
IR	International Relations
IRC-SL	Inter-religious Council in Sierra Leone
IRIN	Integrated Regional Information Networks
JIU	Joint Implementation Unit
KII	Key Informant Interview
LCC	Liberia Council of Churches
LDF	Lofa Defence Force
LFF	Liberia Frontier Force
LPA	Lome Peace Agreement
LPC	Liberia Peace Council
LURD	Liberians United for Reconciliation and Development
MARWOPNET	Mano River Women's Peace Network
MDF	Maryland Defence Forces

MODEL	Movement for Democracy in Liberia
NCC	National Constitution Commission
NCDDR	National Commission for Disarmament, Demobilisation and Reintegration
NCPSL	Network for Collaborative Peacebuilding in Sierra Leone
NCRRR	National Commission for Return, Resettlement and Rehabilitation
NDI	National Democratic Institute
NGOs	Non-governmental organisations
NMC	National Muslim Congress
NPFL	National Patriotic Front of Liberia
NRC	National Reformation Council
OCHA	Office for the Coordination of Humanitarian Affairs
OECD	Organisation for Economic Cooperation and Development
PAL	Progressive Alliance of Liberia
PPP	Progressive People's Party
RRO	Regional Reintegration Office
RRR	Return, Resettlement and Reintegration
RUF	Revolutionary United Front
SAP	Structural Adjustment Policy
SBA	Subah Belleh Associates
SDF	Sinoe Defence Force
SLA	Sierra Leona Armed Forces
SLCS	Sierra Leone Council of Churches
SLMC	Sierra Leone Muslim Congress
SLPP	Sierra Leone Peoples Party
SRSR	Special Representative of the Secretary-General

ULIMO	United Liberation Movement of Liberia
ULSU	University of Liberia Students Union
UN	United Nations
UNAMSIL	United Nations Mission in Sierra Leone
UNDP	United Nations Development Programme
UNF	United National Front
UNHCR	United Nations High Commissioner for Refugees
UNICEF	United Nations Children Education Fund
UNMIL	United Nations Mission in Liberia
UNOMIL	United Nations Observers Mission in Liberia
UNOMSIL	United Nations Observers Mission in Sierra Leone
WB	World Bank
WANEP	West Africa Network for Peace building
WIPNET	Women in Peace building Network
WODAL	Women Development Association of Liberia
WPM	Women's Peace Movement

CHAPTER 1

INTRODUCTION AND RESEARCH METHODOLOGY

“When the peacekeeping troops and relief workers depart, when the extraction companies return, when the miracle of the free market is nowhere to be found, the cycles of deprivation and violence reappear...the rondelet then begins anew” (Tirman, 2004: 9).

1.1 INTRODUCTION

Since the end of the Cold War and the subsequent withdrawal of strategic support by the Cold War powers—the Soviet Union and the United States of America—from African states, the continent has seen a sharp rise in state implosion, often accompanied by protracted civil wars.¹ The liberal peace project of external interventions for post-conflict statebuilding has grown apace. Africa has played host to the largest number of liberal peace post-conflict state reconstruction projects.² Given the growing social, economic and political debility in the continent, this trend will likely continue in the foreseeable future. The new statebuilding endeavour, as observed by David Chandler (2005), is in marked contrast to the political norm that governed the post-independence and Cold War periods in Africa. During those eras, the lack of consensus on what constitutes the state, coupled with the determination to protect the new states from their former colonial powers, curtailed international—especially multilateral—involvement in statebuilding in Africa (ibid). An emerging normative framework that places responsibility for the safety and well-being of individuals at the centre of global politics, and a growing awareness of the

¹Nana Poku in his chapter ‘Context of security in Africa’ in *Peace & Conflict in Africa*, David Francis ed. (2008), indicates that over 42 wars, mostly civil, were fought in Africa between 1970 and 2006. Fourteen African countries were involved in armed conflicts in 2006 alone, accounting for 69% of all war-related deaths globally in that year.

²Roland Paris (2006) records that 12 of the 22 major post-conflict peacebuilding and statebuilding operations of the United Nations between 1989 and 2005 were in Africa, including in Namibia, Angola, Mozambique, Liberia (twice), Rwanda, Congo (DRC), Sierra Leone, Ethiopia-Eritrea, Burundi, Cote d’Ivoire and Sudan.

globalisation of insecurity, present compelling justifications to the international community to rebuild collapsed states and ensure the reconstitution of failing states.³

Although indigenous sodality institutions are the bedrock of politics and security in most African states, especially in West Africa, these were either neglected or exploited in state formation and statebuilding during the colonial and post-colonial/post-independence eras.⁴ The contemporary liberal peace statebuilding projects continue to subject indigenous institutions (generally) and indigenous sodality institutions (specifically) to the same abuse. This persistent disregard for, or at best the exploitative use of indigenous political institutions, has prompted me to embark on this work. I advance indigenisation as a framework of inquiry and strategy for building more viable states after collapse, as a complement to the liberal peace thesis. I apply the proposed framework to the case of Liberia and Sierra Leone to explore the efficacy and potential utility of the Poro and Sande sodalities—the dominant indigenous political institutions in both countries—in ongoing internationally led post-conflict state reconstruction efforts.

In Section 1.2 of this introductory chapter, I briefly reflect on the genesis of the thesis. Section 1.3 is devoted to an overview of the thesis, in which I present its central arguments and core research questions. Section 1.4 discusses the background and context of the work, noting current debates on state reconstruction and the gaps in

³The Canadian-sponsored Responsibility to Protect doctrine, reinforced by the Ogata Human Security Report, is credited for the global emphasis on human as opposed to state security. As a consequence, international intervention has gained a new lease of life, which is extensively discussed in this chapter and in chapter 3 of the thesis. Full details on the Report of the International Commission on Intervention and State Sovereignty, published in 2002, is available on <http://www.iciss.ca/report-en.asp>, while the final Report of the Human Security Commission is available on <http://www.humansecurity-chs.org/finalreport/index.html>.

⁴As discussed later in the chapter, indigenous sodality institutions are dismissed as African spiritism, which lacks any political agency and whose engagement could undermine secular institutions, such as those of the state. Where they were mentioned, especially in Liberia and Sierra Leone, elements of indigenous sodality institutions were recreated and deployed as proxies of the colonies and later of post-colonial state regimes in the infamous indirect rule system exercised over the 'hinterland'.

scholarly and policy literature, to which this work contributes. Section 1.5 undertakes a substantive review of the Poro sodality institution, noting its origin, political and security agencies, and also its problematic aspects.⁵ I discuss the research methods, including a justification for adopting critical realism and case studies as the epistemic basis and research methods for the work, in Section 1.6. Researching secretive sodality institutions such as the Poro and Sande posed serious ethical and access challenges. I have, therefore, devoted Section 1.7 to elucidate the strategies and steps I took to address these challenges throughout the project. Section 1.8 discusses the major limitations of this work. I conclude the chapter with an outline of the rest of the thesis in Section 1.9.

1.2 GENESIS OF THE RESEARCH

Despite more than five decades of turbulent statehood in Africa, diehards of the Treaty of Westphalia still dismiss the proposition that structures and institutions established to oversee the socio-political life of any people must resonate with their worldview and be rooted in their context (Clapham, 2003; Ottaway, 2003; Chandler, 2005; Mazrui, 1995; Sawyer, 2005). Even when the quasi-African⁶ state built on the legacies of colonialism collapses, they are in a hurry to piece together the fragments. As observed by Roland Paris (2004), the only improvement that the international state-reconstruction and peacebuilding project makes to post-collapsed states is to impose ‘democratisation’ and ‘marketisation’ agendas upon them—even if the post-war institutional environment is too feeble to carry the weight of the competitive

⁵I discuss interactions between the Poro and the Liberian and Sierra Leonean states in Chapter Three.

⁶Robert H. Jackson first coined the phrase ‘Quasi-states’ to describe post-independent African states. He indicates that African states possess quasi existence, in that their statehood is only based on international *de jure* conferment and totally lacking in empirical statehood. They enjoy little or no domestic legitimacy and are incapable of performing the core functions typical of a state. See Jackson, R.H., *Quasi-states: Sovereignty, International Relations and the Third World* (Cambridge, 1990).

culture inherent to ‘democratisation’ and ‘marketisation’. This scenario became real to the researcher during both the civil wars and the ongoing internationally led state reconstruction projects in Liberia and Sierra Leone.⁷ The following incidents prompted this academic journey.

In May 1996, it was clear that the war-ravaged people of Sierra Leone were least prepared for any so-called ‘democratic elections’. Yet the international community, in a hurry to re-establish the state and exit, insisted on elections. A majority of the country was under the control of the infamous Revolutionary United Front (RUF), who instituted the barbaric limb-cutting strategy as a direct protest against the general elections. The international community assumed no responsibility for the horrible danger to which they exposed Sierra Leone. Barely a year after Sierra Leone’s bloody elections, the same international community, after a hurried disarmament and reintegration process, insisted on elections in Liberia. At the time, echoing the hold of the RUF over Sierra Leone, Charles Taylor’s National Patriotic Front of Liberia (NPFL) was in charge of over 80% of Liberian territory. With the memory of Sierra Leone fresh in the minds of traumatised Liberians, they overwhelmingly voted for Taylor as their president. The international community then blamed Liberians for being foolish enough to elect a warlord and an internationally recognised criminal. The shattered and ‘criminalised’⁸ state was placed under both military and economic sanctions. In less than a year, another round of war resumed and thousands of Liberians paid the ultimate price.⁹

⁷As a regional civil society leader and peacebuilding practitioner in West Africa, I interacted intimately with both processes.

⁸A word coined by Bayart, Ellis and Hibou in their book *The Criminalization of the State in Africa*, to argue the existence of a functional link between power, war, economic accumulation and illicit activities within African polity. They claim that the state has become the instrument for crime on a global scale, mostly in Africa.

⁹As though lessons were not learnt from the first failed disarmament, demobilisation and reintegration programme of 1997, the international community insisted on the immediate resumption of disarmament in December 2003 at

Aside from these hasty, often uninformed decisions and their attendant devastating consequences, at no time has the international community found fit to ask whether the collapse of the state was a consequence of the foundations on which it was established, or whether there were resources inherent in the society that could serve as a basis for reconstruction. The researcher has been part of campaigns for indigenous inputs, if not leadership, in state reconstruction. While the campaigns offer all the reasons for state reconstruction to be informed or led by indigenous institutions, there has been no evidence-based analysis of the efficacy and relevance of indigenous institutions to state recovery and reconstruction. Hence the long journey which culminated in this thesis.

1.3 OVERVIEW OF THE STUDY

In this work, I advance *indigenisation* as a conceptual framework and an approach to state reconstruction to complement (with a minus)¹⁰ Roland Paris's 'Institutionalisation before liberalisation (IBL)' approach to post-conflict peacebuilding.¹¹ I apply the proposed framework to the case of Liberia and Sierra Leone by exploring the efficacy and potential utility of the Poro (and Sande) sodalities¹² in state reconstruction and sustenance and, when ignored, in undermining the viability of the developing post-collapsed states in both countries. The work

the end of the second phase of the Liberian civil war. The interim government, established after a 75-day peace negotiation in Accra, Ghana was barely constituted and the multinational peacekeeping force had not yet taken positions across the country. That hurried disarmament, in spite of protests from within the international community itself as well as from civil society organisations within Liberia, led to the death of dozens of Liberians and the loss of property worth millions of US dollars.

¹⁰I add a minus because, as will be discussed in Chapter 6, I challenge Roland Paris's call for long-term international trusteeship as a solution for institutionalisation of effective and responsive government. Such a call, I argue, has forgotten the decades and centuries of colonial dominance under the guise of imposing civilisation and to 'build modern states' in colonised territories. If external authoritarians did not build effective institutions then, they will not be able to do so now either, and certainly not in the time Paris would suggest.

¹¹Opposing Paris's strong argument for international control of the process, I argue that the project should be led from within.

¹²The Poro and its female version, the Sande, are the largest indigenous sodality as well as political institutions in the Guinea Coast, which includes areas covering present-day Liberia, Sierra Leone, Guinea and Cote d'Ivoire.

specifically aims to: a) explore the nature of interactions between the Liberian and Sierra Leonean states and the Poro and Sande sodalities, noting the implications for the decay and eventual collapse of both states; b) explore the role and potential utility of indigenous institutions and mechanisms, particularly indigenous sodality institutions, in contemporary state reconstruction initiatives in Africa; and c) propose *indigenisation* as a conceptual framework and an evidence-based research strategy for understanding and harnessing indigenous mechanisms as resources in post-conflict state reconstruction.

1.3.1 Research Questions

To achieve the objectives outlined above, this work attempts to address the following core question: In what ways might the Poro (and Sande) sodalities contribute to or undermine the reconstruction of collapsed states in Liberia and Sierra Leone? Specifically, the work will explore the following research questions:

1. Did international state reconstruction efforts in Liberia and Sierra Leone recognise and/ or engage the Poro and Sande in recovering and rebuilding the collapsed states?
2. In what ways did the international effort affect the self-renewing agencies of indigenous systems, particularly the Poro and Sande sodalities?
3. In what ways did the Poro and Sande impact the achievement of the following post-conflict state reconstruction and peacebuilding sub goals, and what lessons can be drawn to inform future post-conflict state reconstruction efforts in Africa?

- Post-conflict disarmament, demobilisation and reintegration and security sector reform
 - Return, resettlement and community revitalisation
 - Re-establishing structures of local governance
4. What is the quality of state systems emerging from the state reconstruction efforts in Liberia and Sierra Leone, and how did interaction or non-interaction with the Poro and Sande affect such quality?
 5. What strategies are appropriate for harnessing indigenous resources in rebuilding collapsed states?

1.3.2 Core Arguments of the Thesis

Drawing from four years of research work on the extent of interactions between the internationally driven liberal peace approach to post-conflict state reconstruction and indigenous institutions in Liberia and Sierra Leone, I advance three inter-related arguments:

1. That the growing decay and collapse of the state in Africa is telling evidence that the African state is yet to take root in Africa. All attempts to ‘Africanise’ (Shraeder, 2004), ‘traditionalise’ (Chabal and Daloz, 1999) or even ‘insulate’ (Kukah, 2003) the state from Africa’s own political, security and economic realities have failed to establish viable states in most of Africa. As a consequence, nearly all states in Africa have suffered conditions of fragility and, sometimes, violent collapse. Ali Mazrui (1995) suggests that the turbulence is a manifestation of the violent configurations taking place between African indigenous institutions, discourses and political cultures and

those of the Westphalian state. I further Mazrui's observation by arguing that collapse is not only a manifestation of the configuration process, it is the threshold for state reproduction. This 'ripeness' for political transformation potentially offered by collapse is more likely to be realised if it is established and informed by the emerging political agencies and foundations resulting from the long and violent configuration process. There is the tendency in international post-conflict state reconstruction practice to treat state collapse as an aberration. A result is the tendency to dismiss building blocks emerging from the violent collapse—building blocks on which post-conflict states should have been established to ensure viability and sustainability. In place of the conflict-induced building blocks, the international state reconstruction architects tend to introduce prefabricated, externally borrowed institutions and systems. This practice risks reversing the transformative gains from the violent configuration, thereby re-establishing conditions that are prone to new violent collapse.

2. The state has interacted with indigenous institutions ever since the state was introduced in Africa, despite earlier state-builders, influenced by the imperialist doctrine of *Terra Nullius*¹³, remaining oblivious to this fact. Those recognising the interaction blame indigenous institutions and practices for the failure of the state and insist that all efforts should be mobilised to protect African states from African societies. Aside from the negative criticism, there is little mention of possible contributions indigenous mechanisms may have made to state survival. I argue that the Eurocentric reactions to African

¹³Terra nullius was a doctrine used by colonialists to justify their conquest. It means that all lands conquered were said to be empty before the arrival of the colonialists. This suggests that the lands were devoid of people, history, culture and meaning.

indigenous institutions account for the mutually destructive relationships which were established between indigenous and state institutions. I posit that more constructive interactions guided by the culture of dialogue and mutual understanding are likely to yield mutually reinforcing relationships, which could lead to institutional congruence and the reproduction of durable, resilient and responsive states in the context of state collapse.

3. Critical realism offers a useful lens in examining the political agencies of African indigenous sodality institutions and the implications for their interactions with state institutions. Critical realism argues that all mechanisms are possessed with powers and liabilities, which account for their ability to generate or reproduce. These determine the extent to which the mechanism will influence or be influenced by other mechanisms in its context. Such mechanisms can be transitive (the socially produced objects) or intransitive (natural objects that are not socially produced). I argue that the transitive and intransitive framework provides a strong theoretical lens and analytical framework for understanding the implications of interactions between indigenous institutions, formal state institutions, and the larger environment in context.

1.4 BACKGROUND AND CONTEXT OF THE THESIS

The scale and impact of the multilateral state reconstruction project and its primacy to the international policy agenda, as Chandler (2005) has rightly judged, presents a conundrum for which a steep learning curve is a necessity. The debate revolves around three key questions: a) who is in the lead in reconstructing collapsed states and

what is the moral, legal and strategic basis for their role, b) how are states being reconstructed, and c) how viable are the outcomes. While few still agitate for “a sovereign state to be treated as an independent political unit... and it be allowed to pursue its domestic affairs without external interference...” emerging frameworks and doctrines have weakened this claim (Koji, 2003:11). In 2001, the International Commission on Intervention and State Sovereignty (ICISS) issued a report affirming that ‘where gross human rights abuses are occurring, it is the duty of the international community to intervene, over and above considerations of state sovereignty’ (ICISS, 2001). Endorsing the report, the UN General Assembly at the 2005 World Summit declared, “Each individual state has the responsibility to protect its populations from genocide, war, crimes, ethnic cleansing and crimes against humanity...”¹⁴ However, in the event that a state is incapable and/ or is complicit in these crimes, the international community is “...prepared to take collective action in a timely and decisive manner, through the Security Council, in accordance with the UN Charter...”¹⁵ The human security argument is reinforced by the growing realisation of the interdependency of global security.¹⁶ Mark Duffield (2007), citing Tony Blair’s claims on the internationalisation of insecurity¹⁷, notes that the intent behind the clamour to spread liberal peace values across the world is more towards protecting the liberal world and its way of life rather than saving war-ravaged communities in the

¹⁴Paragraph 139 of the Millennium +5 Outcome Document (September 15, 2005). Available on <http://www.globalpolicy.org/empire>. Accessed 21/02/07.

¹⁵Ibid. It is also important to note that proponents of the sovereignty thesis are weakened each time tyrants and warlords display grotesque crimes, such as those associated with, in the case of West Africa, the Revolutionary United Front (RUF) of Sierra Leone, the National Patriotic Front of Liberia (NPFL), the Liberia United for Reconciliation and Development (LURD), and Taylor’s Liberia. For more on this argument, please see Integrated Regional Information Networks (2006) “Justice Unfettered? Internationalising Justice in the Human Rights Era” (www.globalpolicy.org, accessed on 21/02/2007)

¹⁶Speiser and Handy in their article “The State, its failure and External Intervention in Africa” (Centre for the Study of Globalisation and Regionalisation, Working Paper No. 175/05) indicate that European and American policymakers, thanks to the horrible events of 9/11, have realised that “state collapse whether in faraway Africa or next-door Eastern Europe or Haiti with its attendant vices threatens ‘Western’ security, prosperity, and way of life” (p. 2-3).

¹⁷Tony Blair’s policy argument on the internationalisation of insecurity was articulated in his August 1, 2006 speech on World Politics, World Affairs Council, Los Angeles, available at <http://newsvote.bbc.co.uk>, cited in Mark Duffield, “Development, Security and Unending War: Governing the World of Peoples”.

impoverished world.¹⁸ Rather than belabour an already decided debate on the moral and legal positions¹⁹, both sides now argue from an operational basis. The dominant debates centre on whether insiders or outsiders should take the lead in state reconstruction, and on the quality of the outcomes of reconstruction. A review of the positions is necessary.

1.4.1 The Debate on Internal Leadership in State Reconstruction

Christopher Clapham doubts whether outsiders can actually reconstruct a state for any people. His argument is based on his thesis that all states must be built on foundations of strong social capital and indigenous “*raison d’etre*” (Clapham, 2003: 35). Marina Ottaway (2003) takes the debate further by contending that “External actors may build organisations but,” she insists, “they cannot build institutions” (p. 259). If Sillitoe’s (2002) claim that institutions are forms of discourse is anything to go by, then Ottaway is right. Institutions can only be built, or at least given life and *raison d’etre*, from within. Sawyer (2005) agrees with the discursive claim for institution building. He contends that durable institutions are those that are developed through processes of decision-making characterised by informed discourse among a society’s people. Such an internally induced institutional reconfiguration and transformation process, Chandler posits, “results in the building of domestic consensus, a sense of political community usually after a real clash and eventual

¹⁸Duffield also reminds us that the direct links between poverty and the production of terrorists is not that obvious. Otherwise Africa, and not the Gulf and Asian regions, should have topped the list of terrorist producing regions globally. He also reminds liberal enthusiasts that while these impoverished regions, particularly in Africa, assume the blame for their fate, we must not forget that their predicament is intimately linked to the liberal practice of capital accumulation and dispossession.

¹⁹For a detailed review of the legal debate on humanitarian intervention, please see Wheeler, Nicholas J., *Saving Strangers: Humanitarian Intervention in International Society* (Oxford University Press, Oxford, 2000); Wheeler, Nicholas J. and Alex J. Bellamy: ‘Humanitarian Intervention in World Politics’ in Baylis, John and Steve Smith, (eds.), *The Globalisation of World Politics* 3rd ed., (Oxford University Press, Oxford, 2004); and Verwey, W., ‘Legality of Humanitarian Intervention After the Cold War’ in *The Challenge to Intervene: A New Role for the United Nations?*, Ferris, E. (ed.), (Life and Peace Institute, Uppsala, 1992).

reconciliation of existing social forces,” indigenous or otherwise (2005: 5). “Outside interventions,” de Waal contends, interfere with this process instead of hastening or strengthening it (Waal, 1997: 639, cited in Moore, 2004:2). He goes on to argue that current practices hinder the development of strong bonds between state and society and therefore undermine the development of “democratic good governance”—the pretext under which the international community embarks on the project in the first place (ibid).²⁰ Martin Doornbos (2003) focuses on the insider-outsider relationships being established as a result of current practices. He observes that the overwhelming and rapid intervention of external actors in state reconstruction tends to create internal and external dichotomies in which internal actors are disempowered either by the mere presence and capacity of the external actors, or the domineering and usurping tendency of international state reconstruction practices. As for Tirman (2004), he alleges that the assumption “that ‘better coordination’ or ‘good governance’ will take care of post-conflict state reconstruction duties, as claimed by ‘humanitarian internationals’ is not only a managerial and imperialist mindset, it is often a prelude to failure” (p 3). Judging from indicative outcomes in Sierra Leone and Timor Leste, among others, Tirman, as cited at the beginning of the chapter, is pessimistic about the externally driven project. Chesterman, Ignatieff and Thakur (2005: 9), drawing from a range of studies, arrive at an emphatic conclusion: “states cannot be made to work from the outside”.

²⁰One concrete example de Waal cites is the question of accountability. While much of the international interventions usurp state functions, the international community is often not subject to domestic claims for accountability. This lack of accountability to the public it serves undermines liberal democratic practice. The only hope, de Waal concludes, is for those being saved to assume ownership of the process, but he falls short of proffering strategies on how this could happen. See Alex de Waal (1997) *Famine Crimes: Politics and the Disaster Relief Industry in Africa*.

1.4.2 Pro-international State Reconstruction Debate

In response to critics of internationally driven post-conflict state reconstruction, Moore (2004: 8), citing Edward Luttwak²¹, asks, “Should one give war a chance... can one really believe that the humanitarian international is slowing the wheels of history and thus stalling the emergence of a strong indigenous, and one hopes against hope, liberal democratic bourgeoisie?” as charged by de Waal and others? While acknowledging the limitations of current approaches and the need for improvement, Moore doubts whether internal leadership is a viable option, or whether things will get any better if the international community adopts a hands-off approach²². Contrary to de Waal’s and Doornbos’s claim of negative consequences, Moore contends that international intervention strengthens the beneficiary state to the extent that it is “capable of coping with the ravages of a new world ‘order’” (p. 2). Moore reminds proponents of ‘internal leadership’ that we are in an era when states “have been effectively drawn into multileveled and increasingly non-territorial decision-making networks that bring together governments, international agencies, non-governmental organisations...” (ibid). Although current practices in state reconstruction and humanitarian intervention “will not lead to de Waal’s imagined statist status quo ante,” Moore insists it “contributes to the creation of a new and partially globalised ‘state class’ and citizenry better equipped to deal with the global processes of state and societal restructuring in which war-torn societies are most intricately intertwined”

²¹The citation of Luttwak’s work, which argues for war conclusion disregarding the self-perpetuating tendency of war driven by war economies, seems an attempt to dismiss the arguments of de Waal. Nowhere did de Waal argue for letting wars reach their full conclusion. His argument is about highlighting the resources emanating from conflict situations and allowing these emerging agencies to find full expression in the transformative process set in motion by the violent conflict.

²²Rwanda comes to mind as an example of what happens when the international community chooses not to intervene. Although the liberation of Rwanda can be credited to internal leadership through the Rwandan Patriotic Front, the price of the international community’s decision not to intervene was so grave that this inaction continues to weigh heavily on the international conscience.

(ibid).²³ He, however, admits that the current efforts of state reconstruction are inadequate, but declines to acknowledge any possible negative effects from the deficiency.²⁴ As for Wheeler (2000), he reminds us of the moral imperative: wealthy nations are under obligation to “save strangers”. He is more emphatic in expressing doubt about domestic leadership in state reconstruction. He contends that in the contexts of collapsed states, where the minimum social and political cohesion of the society has eroded, leaving so-called indigenous leaders and institutions to restore the state is an illusion (ibid).

1.4.3 Debates on the Strategies and Outcomes

Aside from the insider-outsider debates, there are those who focus on the strategies and quality of states being rebuilt. Chandler (2005) questions the international community’s technical and administrative approach to state reconstruction, where external actors define the rules and procedures, often from a claim to best practice. Duffield is more categorical. He argues that post-conflict international actors in post-conflict contexts operate “...essentially Newtonian and machine-like in conception [where the process is viewed] precisely as an attempt to close down one machine so that another can be ‘kick-started into life’” (Duffield, 2001: 85). Kumar (1997: 27) offers a more comprehensive description of how the project is delivered, which I adopt as follows:

²³The same claim that African political elites are better placed to rule since they know the centre, speak the language of the colonial masters and are trained to operate the complex state institutions was made at independence. Although that assumption has woefully been proved erroneous, the current actions of the international community seem oblivious to this reality.

²⁴Moore calls for “longitudinal studies to assess the efficacy of current approaches in contributing to ‘democratic state-ness’ in new and renewed states” (p. 4). Such studies, Moore avers, will deepen our “understanding on how [international interventions] affect processes of state building and democratisation in war-torn societies, and how they are altered by contemporary modes of globalisation” (p. 4). Until then, he insists, the argument against international state reconstruction projects is speculative. But by the same token, it is difficult to establish Moore’s own claim that the project does create a ‘globalised state-class’ citizen capable of engaging the global, even if it means total ignorance of the local.

- The project is often designed with limited flexibility in terms of time and resources;
- There is a tendency to apply untested intervention models, and when they fail with disastrous consequences, no culpability is established;
- The post-conflict state reconstruction context is often swarming with a multitude of international actors who represent varied and sometimes irreconcilable interests;
- Not only are there limited coordination strategies and mechanisms, there is ‘turf’-defending and deliberate resistance to coordination;
- The bureaucracy is replete with red tape and intentionally designed to be incomprehensible;
- Projects are often inappropriately placed to serve the respective national political interests, rather than address felt needs;
- Local communities are objectified and seen as helpless and ignorant recipients of international assistance;
- Where there are successful local initiatives, they are romanticised and, like Christopher Columbus, the international actors who first encounter these scattered success stories report them as their own;
- The international state reconstruction project is very expensive and, given the limited input of local actors, unsustainable.

Kumar concludes his observation by arguing that while the international community may have many years of experience and technical knowledge in economic and to some extent social reconstruction, it’s knowledge is limited when it comes to political (or state) reconstruction (ibid). Paris (2004) adds to the debate on the epistemic basis

for the project. He argues that the internationally driven state reconstruction project is an extension of the liberal peace thesis, but with a minus. While Paris's diagnosis of the problem is accurate, his prescription is more likely to worsen the condition of the patient. I return to the liberal thesis and Paris's prescription in Chapter 6.

For now, it is worth noting that the debates in the literature so far remain shallow. While proponents of domestic leadership have strong arguments on their side, they fail to address the total breakdown of the social fabric, entrenchment of cleavages, and the lack of financial and human resources that often dog post-collapsed states. Besides, there is the generalisation that whatever is 'within' has the legitimate claim to the project. The perennial confrontation between indigenous institutions in Africa and the elites who took over the state and drove it to collapse is not recognised in the debate (Davidson, 1992). This also applies to the insidious corruption of indigenous institutions over the last decades and even centuries, which transformed them into what Abraham (1978) calls "personal amorphous" structures. These, under the tutelage of the settler states, exercised what I would call personal amorphous authority in the interiors of Liberia and Sierra Leone. This domestic indigenous and domestic conventional divide remains a threat to any attempts at rebuilding from within (I return to the settler-state and interior divide in Chapter 3). While the verdict is yet to be passed on the externally led process, one only needs to draw from history to establish a pattern and speculate on the possible outcomes. All this reinforces Clapham's observation that "...state reconstruction has become a far more complex and ambivalent business under the pressures of globalisation" (Clapham, 2003: 41). And as Holzgrefe and Keohane (2003) concede, "current theorising of state

reconstruction takes place in a state of evincible ignorance” where the “...empirical claims are little more than guesswork” (cited in Tirman, 2004: 3).

1.4.4 Gaps and contribution to the Literature

I have already outlined conceptual and operational gaps in the state reconstruction project in the previous section. Here I focus on a specific gap, which is the absence of indigenous sodality institutions in the discourse of rebuilding collapsed states in Africa. There is a burgeoning body of literature on African indigenous systems, processes and institutions and their role in conflict resolution and peace building, local governance, medicine, security, etc.²⁵ Such growing articulation of what Africa has to offer both to itself and further to the world is a welcome effort that was hitherto dismissed, particularly during the heydays of colonialism. Nevertheless, one indigenous institution that is less prominent in the emerging Africanist scholarly international relations (IR) discourse is the indigenous sodality institution—pejoratively branded as ‘secret societies’ by earlier anthropologies. Their political agency and potential role in statebuilding and sustenance are less known.²⁶ Few regard African indigenous sodality institutions as political structures. Others regard them as spiritual entities and, given their secretive and mythical character, impenetrable and intellectually unmanageable (Richards et al, 2005; Ellis, 1999).

²⁵The World Bank’s Indigenous Knowledge project has developed a compendium of indigenous resources, ranging from medicine and dispute resolution mechanisms to agricultural technology and governance. This comprehensive collection of indigenous knowledge is also silent on indigenous sodalities, particularly their social and political roles. For more details, see World Bank Indigenous Knowledge Database Africa Region, available at <http://www.worldbank.org/afr/ik/guidelines/>. Also the list of African and non-African Africanist scholars is growing at a phenomenal rate. This includes: Duba et al (1997), Honey and Heifer, Grasses, Milk and Water: A Heritage of diversity in Reconciliation, Mennonite Central Committee, Nairobi: Kenya; Gluckman (1973) Custom and Conflict in Africa, Basil Blackwell: Oxford; Solanke (1992) ‘Traditional Social and Political Institutions’ in Olaniyan: 27-37; Finnegan (1967) Limba Stories and Storytelling, Clarendon Press: Oxford; Mamdani (1996) Citizen and Subject: Contemporary Africa and the Legacy of Colonialism, Princeton University Press: Princeton.

²⁶To my knowledge, very few draw links between African sodalities and African politics and those who do including Patrick Chabal (1986; 1994; 1996; 1997; 2002), Daloz, J.P. (2002); Hyden, G. (1980; 1997; 2006); Ellis (1999) and Christopher Clapham (1997) speak of the destructive effects of indigenous sodalities to the state.

Contrary to the generalisation that indigenous sodality institutions in Africa lack political agencies, the Poro (and Sande) sodality in the Upper Guinea Coast of West Africa has served as the sole political institution and guarantor for security and social order and wellbeing in the interiors of Liberia and Sierra Leone. Beaming the scholarly spotlight on the Poro sodality in this emerging wave of state reconstruction introduces a much-neglected area into the theoretical investigation of the state and politics in Africa. This is critical for societies such as Liberia and Sierra Leone, where the dominant political systems predating colonialism and the establishment of the Westphalian state were sodalitous in nature. They continue to hold sway in Liberia and Sierra Leone despite centuries of systematic efforts to silence and/ or destroy them.

1.4.5 Justifications for Situating the Work in International Relations

I establish this work in the international relations (IR) discourse. However, by attempting to bring indigeneity, the subject of the work, into the IR discourse is to introduce what Beier refers to as “multiple cosmologies” and thereby negate IR’s basic premise, which upholds Western concepts of power, security and autonomy as universal tenets (Beier, 2004: 3). This is bound to suffer backlash from diehard IR conservatives.²⁷ For them, the state as defined in the Treaty of Westphalia is the sole unit of analysis in international relations and that indigenous political systems are subjects of anthropology—the study of social microcosm. The relegation of indigenous politics and institutions to anthropology, Beier observes, was a

²⁷Hegel and his call to “Forget Africa”, Samuel Huntington’s *Clash of Civilizations*, Robert Kaplan’s ‘Coming Anarchy’ and ‘New Barbarism’ theses, and Patrick Chabal and J.P. Daloz claims of Africa’s patrimonial order encroaching on the pure and unadulterated Westphalian state, are just a few of the many IR scholars and students who could challenge the introduction of sodality in IR discourse.

consequence of claims made during the heydays of colonialism which postulated that ‘primitive’ peoples were neither capable of forming societies of the sorts known in Europe, nor did they “represent any authentic political claim” (ibid). Hegel, cited in Franke (2009), was more categorical in articulating the Eurocentric stereotype about Africa:

At this point we leave Africa, not to mention it again. For it is no historical part of the world, it has no movement or development to exhibit. Historical movement in it—that is in its northern part—belongs to the Asiatic or European world. What we properly understand by Africa is the unhistorical, underdeveloped spirit still involved in the conditions of mere nature, and which had to be presented here as on the childhood of the world’s history (p. 3).²⁸

Franke rightly observes that such stereotypical presentation of Africa has undermined Africa’s potential to contribute to the IR discourse (2009). As a consequence, “International Relations is impoverished by a restrictive cosmology that does not admit to a full range of imaginable possibilities” (Beier, 2005: 26). The usurpation and deliberate silence of IR on indigenous institutions, Beier contends, makes the discipline guilty of the “violences of erasure” (p. 67). Holsti (1996) observes well when he said that although current IR, security and peace studies literature is growing, these remain inadequate in deepening our understanding of current international dynamics. He dismisses the overprotection of disciplinarity in IR as a selective disregard for the eclectic origin of IR (cited in Beire, 2005).²⁹ This work adds to the growing voices insisting on a rethink of Hegel’s Eurocentric claims about Africa. More importantly, the introduction of sodality institutions as political institutions with

²⁸See Franke, B. (2009) *Security Cooperation in Africa: A Re-appraisal*, First Forum Press.

²⁹Again this work is not suggesting that efforts are not underway. Much work has been done to expand the discourse and the number of African voices active in the debate has grown at impressive rate. The list includes people like David Francis, especially his recent works on *Peace and Conflict in Africa* (2008), *The Politics of Economic Regionalism: Sierra Leone in ECOWAS* (2001) and his edited book of *Civil Militias: Africa’s Intractable Security Menace* (2006); George Ayettey in his book *Indigenous African Institutions* (1991) and *Africa Unchained: The blueprint for Africa’s future* and Mamdani’s (1996) *Citizen and Subject: Contemporary Africa and the Legacy*, among many others.

functions usually in the domain of the state brings fresh debates and offers a new window to a rich and under-explored area of Africa's political development. This in my view remains a critical missing link in what is becoming a lively and crowded debate on the political relevance of Africa in the IR discourse.

1.5 PORO, PEOPLE AND POLITICS IN LIBERIA AND SIERRA LEONE

This work is about the Poro sodality and its female version, the Sande, and their role in post-conflict state reconstruction in Liberia and Sierra Leone. It is therefore prudent to begin with an in-depth review of the sodalities. Sodality³⁰ institutions were the dominant features of political and social life in the Upper Guinea Coast.³¹ Among the dominant sodality institutions in Liberia were the Poro and Sande, Bodio, Neegee, Susha, Toya, Kala and Uama-yama. In Sierra Leone, aside from the Poro and Sande, there are the Ragbenle, Wonde, Humoi, Njaye, Tuntu, Thoma, Yasi and Gbangbe (Little, 1965; Ellis 1999). The re-captives and the repatriates also had an abundance of sodalities, of which the Freemason and the United Brother Friendship dominated as avenues through which the free slaves expressed brotherly and sisterly solidarity, preserved social order and advanced Black Pride (Sawyer, 1992). All accounts indicate that of all the sodalities in the region, the Poro and Sande were the most pervasive in the lives of ethnic groups that practiced them (Ellis, 1999; Little, 1965; d'Azevedo, 1969; Ferme, 2001; Sawyer, 1992). Sawyer (1992) describes the Poro as "...the countervailing and reinforcing authority in all Mel and Mande societies" (p.48). As universal membership sodalities, all individuals born to the tribes are required to undergo the Poro and Sande initiation rites. Watkins describes the

³⁰The word sodality comes from the Latin word 'sodalitas' or 'fellowship'. It refers to bonded institutions, societies, and individuals in a spirit of fraternity. I prefer the term to the pejorative 'secret society' that anthropologists used to describe the Poro and other sodality institutions in mostly Africa.

³¹This includes areas that are known today as Liberia, Sierra Leone, Guinea and Cote d'Ivoire.

initiation process as “complete *rite de passage*” through which members of the communities were ushered into adulthood and enjoined, as citizens, to perform all the sacred and secular duties expected of citizens in their societies with diligence and zeal (Watkins, loc. Cit: 671).

The Poro (and the Sande) is hierarchical and secretive. Its ultimate powers reside in a high priest whom, for a lack of better word, Watkins refers to as “grandmaster”. He must not be seen by the community, and dons a mask and costume to that effect. The ‘grandmaster’ is expected to have, in addition to spiritual powers and characteristics, in-depth knowledge of the ethnic community and all things that facilitate life in the society, and command the respect of chiefs, elders, children, women and the entire community (Brown, 1967: 69). The grandmaster is represented in communities by *Zoes* (or priests), who are selected from prominent families whose ancestors are said to have made a pact with the spirits of the ancestors (Harley, 1941).³² The *Zoes*, constituted as the Poro Council, serve as the Electoral College and adjudicators in all Poro-practicing societies, although the grandmaster has the final say. A third level of leadership is the council of elders (known among the Sande as the *Soweisia*), who play the role of teachers and guardians both during the extended initiation rites and throughout the life of an individual. The Poro depends on its youth population to be its foot soldiers, and on a select group of men commonly known as the traditional hunters.³³ Although the Poro sodality covers four countries and more than 25 ethnic groups in the Upper Guinea Coast of West Africa, it has no centralised governing

³²The grandmaster rarely participates in the affairs of the society. The grandmaster appears and arbitrates only in times of war and during major inter-tribal disputes between Poro practicing communities. The chiefs and council of elders are charged with the administration of the state, regions, and communities.

³³These include the Kamajors, Kaprs, Tamaboros, Donzos, etc.

structure. Each ethnic group has its own structure drawing from the same set of beliefs, values and practices.³⁴

There are mixed accounts regarding the origin and purpose of the establishment of the Poro and Sande sodalities. Some speculate that the Poro emerged as a supra-national institution with secular and supernatural powers to respond to political and military instabilities that existed in the Guinea Coast, and for which “petty diplomacies” and cross-ethnic cooperative mechanisms were inadequate (Richards et al, 2005: 13).³⁵ Others suggest that the sodality was the dominant political institution in the Malian Empire until around 900 AD, when the royal elites converted to Islam and outlawed the institution (Key Informant, Gbarnga, 2006). The peripheral tribes who maintained the practice in the Empire might have carried it down south as they escaped further invasions. Whatever the origin, what is not disputed is the fact that the Poro and Sande are essentially a political construct which, by the time the states of Liberia and Sierra Leone were introduced, had survived over a millennium and spread to nearly all ethnic groups in Sierra Leone, Liberia and the forest regions of Guinea and Cote d’Ivoire (Bellman, 1984). They maintain their ubiquitous presence till this day, despite state repression and the pressure from modernity. This enduring power, Little (1965) indicates, is a consequence of the meaningful function of the Poro and Sande. He identifies social, political and spiritual functions which the sodalities perform in practicing societies. A brief description of the functions is necessary.

³⁴In order to forge inter-ethnic cohesion and foster pan-Poro sodality, all ethnic groups operate the Poro bush schools in languages other than their own language. For instance the grandmaster, when speaking to a Kpelleh community, would speak in Lorma or Vai, etc. Also, teachers are drawn from other ethnic groups to facilitate inter-ethnic interactions. It is also important to note that the Liberian government made attempts to centralise the Poro in the 1930s. They established an apex body to oversee the sodality and designated a special place in Central Liberia as its headquarters. That attempt proved disastrous for both the government and the institution itself. It created internal squabbles and resistance within the sodality, which further exacerbated social disorder in the hinterland.

³⁵During the turbulent 16th to 17th century period in the Guinea Coast region, Richard et al (2005) suggests, the Poro and Sande were used by the societies to “preserve trade secrets, coordinate war, impose peace and maintain a common cultural front against the expanding empires” (p. 12).

1.5.1 Social or Educational Function

The knowledge and history of the ethnic community, including essential life skills that the ‘grandmaster’ is reputed to possess, must be transferred from generation to generation through education; hence, the Poro and Sande sodalities operate an elaborate educational system. While the Poro, through the educational system, controls the transformation of boys to men, the Sande is tasked with supporting and facilitating the transformation of girls into women. Over a period of four years (for boys) and three years (for girls), the school moulds boys and girls through various subjects and methodologies³⁹ to foster unity among them, preserve and, when necessary, defend the society’s way of life (Brown, 1967: 69).³⁶ It is also at the school that an initiate’s individuality is subsumed under the collective identity of the ethnic community; thus elevating social collectivism above individuality. A big part of the Sande transformation process is to instil morality and proper sexual comportment in young women (Bledsoe, 1980; MacCormack, 1975).³⁷ Just as boys are circumcised during their initiation ritual, the clitoris and part of the labia of girls are also excised during their rites of passage in the Sande School (MacCormack, 1975: 157). Womanhood begins and ends with the Sande, as the sodality remains integral in the lives of its initiates until death.³⁸ The transformational emphasis of the Poro and

³⁹The contents of courses taught in the Sande School varied from those of the Poro. Girls learned how to take care of their homes, grow gardens, tell stories to their children about the origin, myths and values of their ethnic group, and how to conduct themselves when in public. They also take health courses including knowledge of basic herbs, guides to fertility, etc. Boys were trained to respect elders and women, take pride in their traditions, support their families, and discharge their kinship obligations with dignity. They also learned skills in warfare, drumming, dancing, basic civil engineering, hunting and singing; and general knowledge in history, law and religion. The core values the Sande School inculcates in girls include chastity, compassion, hard work and how to foster unity and social healing. Boys and girls are marked as members of the ethnic group. In addition, female genital mutilation is practiced on girls and circumcision on boys.

³⁶As indicated earlier, although Poro and Sande are not centralised, the contents and methodology of the schools are similar. Besides, as a way of fostering pan-Poro solidarity, boys from one ethnic group could attend the school in another. Teachers and initiates are also moved between groups. Also, in many Poro-governed societies, the duration of the bush school has been reduced to allow boys and girls to attend formal schools. The cross-ethnic pan-Poro sodality was the central mechanism for promoting pluralism and inter-ethnic harmony

³⁷It is important to stress here that the definition of who is or is not a child in Poro society goes beyond the universal biological consideration of childhood. While physical growth or age is one factor, in Poro society the

Sande on producing individuals of good character, dignified in their deportment and productive for their respective societies, distinguishes these institutions from other educational systems that place greater emphasis on cognitive development.³⁹ This, however, is not to suggest that the *rites de passage* of the sodalities do not have serious excesses. I shall discuss the excesses in section 1.5.4.

1.5.2 Supernatural or Religious Function

Although the Poro was organised primarily for social, political and security reasons, Harley (1941) insists it was established not only to end wars and build camaraderie amongst communities, but also to “reduce the entire pervading spirit world to an organisation in which man may participate...” (opt. cit.: 7). The Poro, Harley continues, was the “...mechanism by which man might contact the spirit world and interpret it to the people, where men became spirits, and took on god-hood...” (ibid). While Harley’s supposition can be dismissed as a Eurocentric exaggeration of the unknown, it is agreed that the Poro is based on the ethos that god and the spirits are invisible and that ancestors are the intermediary between humans and the spirit world. Power, it is believed, is a gift from the gods, which they give to individuals as they see fit. Those who are possessed by these supernatural powers are accountable only to the ancestors and to the council of Zoes, who represent the ancestors in the material world (ibid).⁴⁰

“*rites de passage*” concludes childhood. This means end of childhood and is synonymous with acquiring citizenship. Until someone undergoes these rites, he is considered a child, which means exclusion from activities in society in which only adults may participate, including owning land, marriage, participating in public discussions (in the case of males) and women’s issues (in the case of females).

³⁹I argue in chapters 6 and 7 that the Poro educational system provides the most comprehensive approach to citizen and civic consciousness building.

⁴⁰While in this view accountability seems confined to the small group of spirit-imbued individuals comprising the council of Zoes, there were norms regarding their relationship with members of their society, which regulated any possible excesses. This is not to suggest that such understanding was not prone to abuse of power and the creation of authoritarian regimes. As will be discussed later, Poro societies used repression and suffering as indication of the ancestors being angry with their leadership. In such instances the entire community either relocates,

1.5.3 Political Function

Little (1966) indicates two overlapping phases of governance in Poro-governed societies: a) the civil phase and b) the religious phase (cited in Brown, 1967). In the civil phase, governance focused on the management of the towns—providing welfare, attending to health issues, ensuring order and respect for the norms of the society—while the religious phase was concerned with issues of emergency such as wars and cross-ethnic politics (ibid). Little claims that it was in the latter phase that the authority of the Poro superseded that of the community chiefs (ibid). Although both Harley and Little refer to their second phase as religious, their description is entirely political. Theirs and all other accounts consistently indicate that Poro and Sande councils throughout the Upper Guinea Coast served as electoral colleges, declarers and negotiators of wars, adjudicators of disputes, guarantors of social order, regulators of trade and commerce, and preservers of the environment, societal norms, values and histories (Ferm, 2001; d’Azevedo, 1962; Sawyer, 1992; Little, 1965). Little (1965) has argued that the Poro and Sande were the principal means by which the areas known today as Sierra Leone, in particular, were governed.⁴¹

abandoning their Zoes for more benign leaders, or replaces them with better leaders. Besides, the selection of leaders and highest Zoes from the council of Zoes was a rigid process. I return to this in Chapter 3.

⁴¹Branding these political activities as religious seems, to the researcher, an attempt to perpetuate the Eurocentric claim that indigenous institutions and societies, especially in Africa, are incapable of innovating and operating political institutions.

1.6 CRITICAL REVIEW OF THE PORO AND SANDE: RATIONALE AND PROBLEMATICS

1.6.1 Rationale of Poro and Politics

The emergence of political institutions rooted in myth is not unique to the Poro-governed societies. Simmel (1901) argues that all societies depend on “illusion as to their powers and ... superstition with reference to God” to sustain themselves and instil order (ibid: 3).⁴² Far from the moral valuation of secrecy, therefore, Simmel contends, “[secrecy or sodality] is the greatest accomplishment of humanity” (ibid: 4). I am not suggesting here that all societies are therefore sodalitous, nor am I contending that sodalities are entirely good. In fact, Simmel identifies two characteristics that distinguish sodalities from all other societies. Firstly, sodalities are autonomous, exclusive and separatist (ibid: 8). However, while they appear exclusionary to the rest of the world, the firm boundaries which encircle them facilitate the spirit of unity and fraternity within (ibid). Secondly, sodalities are a product of intentional and deliberate socialisation processes, and not of natural growth processes. In the case of the Poro, the communal growing together is carefully carried out through well-defined socialisation techniques, the most important of which includes the discipline of silence, which Ferme (2001) and Bellman (1984) refer to as *ifa mao*;⁴³ the symbolic eating, digesting and rebirthing⁴⁴ of initiates by the grandmaster; and concealment⁴⁵ of the identity of the grandmaster.

⁴²Secrecy and secret institutions have dominated the control of the Westphalian state across Europe and North America. In the cover story of the February edition of *New African* No. 470, the editors ask whether secret societies are not the way forward for Africa. They argued that sodalities like the Freemasons, the Skull and Bones and the Bohemian Grove, among others, have exerted great influence on the civilisation and development of Europe and America.

⁴³*Ifa mao* is a Kpelle phrase, which means ‘do not speak of it’. Simmel indicates that all secret societies are highly dependent on the capacity or the inclination of the initiated to keep the secret and eschew betrayal (p. 23).

Given that these so-called secrets for which the Poro is considered adverse in Eurocentric polity are held by entire societies and across ethnic groups, I contend that the emphasis of the sodality was not so much on creating endogamous, separatistic societies shrouded in secrecy. Rather, it was a process of establishing an expanded union of multiple ethnic groups with the aim of evolving a nation. The process of secretiveness therefore provided a sense of nationalism couched in a feeling of superiority and separateness. By the end of the 18th century, Little (1965) observes that the Poro and Sande nation-building project had extended to all groups of the Mel- and Mande-speaking people. They had one cosmology, one belief system—a symbol around which they united. There was an effective pan-Poro security architecture, which monitored the trade routes, protected the diverse societies from invasion and, most importantly, facilitated an emerging shared history.⁴⁶ While it is arguable whether the Poro would have incorporated the egalitarian Kwa-speaking people⁴⁷, especially in the southeast of Liberia, its grip was far-reaching, embracing over 10 million people in a contiguous territory under an evolving national tent.⁴⁸

Rather than rely on sanctions or the threat of these to ensure the secret is kept, the Poro teaches initiates various skills on how to be tactful in speech and thereby remain truthful to *ifa mao* (Harley, 1941).

⁴⁴Those thus rebirthed are said to constitute an interdependent community bonded by the unsaid. Such interdependency, according to Simmel, lends a form of union and sense of superiority over outsiders (ibid: 28).

⁴⁵Richard et al (2005) refer to the grandmaster as the “*Great Masked Thing*” (18) and Gibbs (1965) emphasises that the “...masquerade is no mere frivolity... it generates the deference and fear that must surround [the grandmaster] if the Poro is to carry out its social and political control functions that link it to political institutions” (219-220). Simmel (1901) therefore observes rightly when he points out that by concealment, all sodalities transform their leaders into “...terrible, powerful, and threatening” beings in order to instill fear and awe in their members (28). It is the fear and awe that makes it possible to exercise absolute sovereignty over and command absolute loyalty from members.

⁴⁶The nation-building process of the Poro and Sande, according to Seyon, involves the socialisation of members of the new political community formed by integrating smaller communities in order to solicit their devotion and loyalty to the state and its leaders. All this clearly justifies the Poro and Sande’s intense processes of education and transformation of individuals into citizens, as described in this chapter.

⁴⁷Marcomack records that even though the Poro was not successful at incorporating the Kwa-speaking people, many Kwa-speaking ethnic groups, including the Islamised ethnic communities, adopted the Sande. So while the Poro was confined to the Mande and Mel communities in the Guinea Coast, the Sande was far-reaching, embracing the egalitarian Kwes along the coast and the Islamised Fulah and Mandingo ethnic groups that spread throughout both countries and across the West Africa sub region.

⁴⁸More importantly, even though confederacies and large states were developed among societies, especially in Poro-governed regions, no attempts were made to develop centralised political structures. The Poro remained decentralised even in the same confederacies—coalescing while at the same time maintaining individual social and political structures of the various communities. The introduction of Europe—from the days of slavery to colonialism, and later the establishment of the Westphalian state—added alien elements to the configuration

Notwithstanding its central role in organising the social, political, economic, religious and security spheres of rural peoples in Liberia and Sierra Leone, there are some practices of the Poro and Sande which conflict with basic freedoms and human rights.

1.6.2 Problematics of the Poro and Sande

The single most important area where the Poro comes into direct conflict with dominant contemporary discourse on civility, human rights and democratic freedom is its discourse and exercise of power. Contrary to Foucault's thesis that power exists in webs of relationships, Poro and Sande communities are socialised to believe in what I call a triangular power structure (O'Farrell, 2005). In this structure, the gods are creators and givers of power; the gods select a few individuals and imbue them with powers; while the mass of the society are predestined as mere subjects. This notion of power clearly demarcates Poro and Sande communities into enclaves of the powerful and mass of the powerless. How the gods select individuals to be worthy of possessing and exercising powers is hereditary. This means that once the gods choose an individual, his/ her heirs would naturally inherit the powers. While power in Poro and Sande communities is manifested in the ability of the powerful to do and produce things, which the community consider extraordinary and meaningful, the most important exercise of power is the ability of the powerful to inflict harm, including the mysterious taking of human life and control of all resources in the community. A key informant in Monrovia identified the life threatening myth as the main resource by which the powerful subject the rest of the society to social, economic and political quiescence (Key Informant, Monrovia, 2006).

process by placing emphasis on assimilation and centralised hierarchies. The consequence of this institutional collision, particularly between the state and the Poro, is the subject of subsequent sections.

Notwithstanding the establishment of councils of Zoes to protect all Poro communities from the arbitrary use of power, the fact that power is controlled by a privileged few who are accountable only to the gods predisposes Poro and Sande communities to the exploitation of despots and autocratic leaders. Dunn and Tarr (1988) indicate that by the end of the 19th century, all countervailing institutions and modalities, which ensured that the powerful were held accountable, were severely weakened as the powerful few forged partnerships with slavers and colonial powers. The powerful few emerged as despots, while their new sources of power became the slavers and colonialists instead of the gods. Senyon and Tarr indicate that it was easy to replace the gods with the slavers and colonialists, since the latter were removed from the day-to-day lives of the people and had the ability to exercise overwhelming violence. As a consequence, as Arthur Abraham observes, what remained as political and governance systems of the Poro and Sande communities at the end of the 19th century were power structures controlled by despots who exercised arbitrary rule. These repressive regimes set in motion the weakening of rural polities and the rise of instability (Sawyer, 1992).

The Poro and Sande's elite power structure, which is also shrouded in myth, manifests itself in the communities in three important ways: a) the control of speech, b) control of women's sexuality, and c) exclusion and marginalisation of youth and 'strangers'.

Control of Speech and Freedom of Expression: A central part of the Poro and Sande sodalities *rites de passage* is to define power relations, inculcate power discourse and impose limits of power and powerlessness on individuals. There is no dialogue or questioning of the power arrangements. These are shrouded in myth and guided by

rigid, sometimes fatal consequences for those who attempt to rebel against or even question these arrangements. As part of its initiation exercises, initiates are entrusted with secrets of the community. The law of *ifa mao* is imposed through oath to ensure that initiates do not violate the law. In other words, all members are enjoined under the laws of *ifa mao* not to disclose the secret. While control over speech is projected as an effort to keep the secrets of the community, critics of the sodalities argue that the process is ultimately aimed at ensuring quiescence and silence. In this view, *ifa mao* violates freedom of speech and self-expression. A key informant in Freetown alleged that aside from keeping a community's secret, control of speech is also aimed at preventing resistance and the emergence of critical voices against the privileged class. In addition to the law of *ifa mao*, structures and spaces of communication are determined by age, gender and degree of 'citizenship'. By citizenship I mean that in Poro and Sande societies, those outside of the community including those who are non-initiates, have added restrictions on where and how they speak. For instance youth and women are not allowed to speak in the presence of male elders, while young girls are expected to constrain their speech when in the presence of female adults. These fault lines undermine the building of plural and yet cohesive societies beyond initiates of the sodalities.

Control of Female Sexuality (FGM): Aside from its social functions, a major part of the Sande sodality is the control of women's sexuality. Girls who undergo Sande initiation rites undergo a process wherein parts of their clitoris, labia or mons pubis are excised. Many ethnic groups in Liberia and Sierra Leone—including non-Poro groups—practice female genital mutilation (FGM). For instance, amongst the Mandigos who converted to Islam FGM is practised on infants. According to

Gesellschaft für Technische Zusammenarbeit (2007), over 95% of all women in Sierra Leone have undergone FGM. It is important to note that the practice of FGM is not unique to the Sande sodality. According to the WHO (1995) report on female genital mutilation, about 28 African countries practise FGM. The report indicates that FGM prevalence rates are 97% in Egypt, 98% in Somalia, 94.5% in Eritrea and 93.7% in Mali. Another important point is that all of the countries with the highest prevalent rates are also countries where Islam—the strongest and longest opposition to the Poro sodality—is the predominant religion. Notwithstanding its popularity and the strong evidence that the practice did not originate within the sodality, its adoption by the sodality has serious negative health and social consequences. WHO cites disfiguration of female body parts, high rates of maternal mortality and increased susceptibility to blood borne diseases including HIV/AIDS as the serious health risks that can be caused by FGM. The second negative effect of FGM practice is its explicit control over women's sexuality. Some including Ellis (1999) and Richards et al (2004) contend that the Sande's emphasis on chastity is a form of repressive control of the sexuality of women, which extends to other spheres in society, including political and economic spheres. The excision of parts of girls' reproductive system extends the abuse to violation of women's integrity.

While some of these allegations are accurate, my argument is that rather than give the sodalities support to abandon FGM, many advocates are campaigning for the total elimination of both sodalities. Such sweeping campaigns not only 'throws out the baby with the bath water', they fail to offer alternatives that guarantee the social order and values which members of these communities learn and practice through the sodalities. Turning a blind eye to the constructive contributions Poro and Sande and

other sodality groups have made to social order and inter-group cohesion, I contend could delay post-conflict reconstruction. As I argue throughout the thesis, there is the need to support societal institutions such as the Poro and Sande to reinvent themselves, while ridding their institutions of practices that contravene fundamental human rights and freedoms. The most desirable outcome would be to evolve a synthesis between indigenous and state institutions and polities. Dialogue with the two processes, in my view, will lead to the building of more viable, resilient and responsive states and societies.

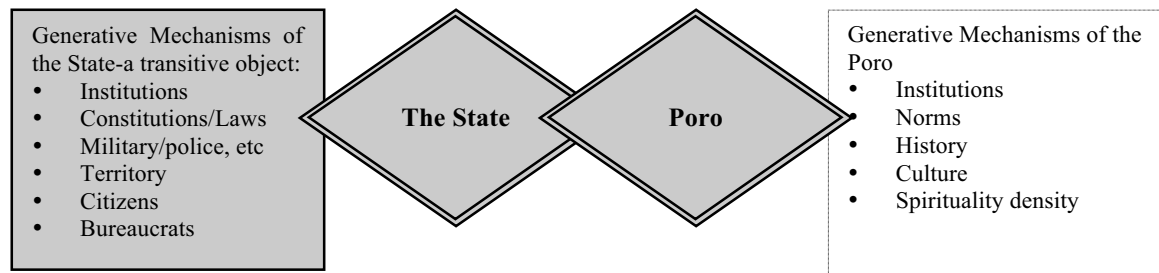
1.6 RESEARCH METHODOLOGY

1.6.1 Critical Realism as Theoretical Lens

Critical realism propounded in the works of Roy Baskhar (1975 and 1989), Andrew Sayer (2002) and Archer (1995), among others, offer both a theoretical lens and a framework of analysis, which are suitable to assess the inherent powers and liabilities of mechanisms, and their interactions with mechanisms in the context. This resonates with my aim to assess interactions between the state and the Poro sodality and the implications for the viability of both entities. Critical realists argue that empirical science has focused more on socially-produced objects, which they call *transitive objects*, to the neglect of *intransitive objects*, the “natural and social realities that are neither a product of, nor constituted by our theories about the world” (Baskhar 1975:12).⁴⁹ Figure 1.1 below illustrates my adoption of critical realists’ theoretical framework.

⁴⁹This transitive-intransitive dichotomy to the positivist only means theories, discourses and worldviews of the West against all other realities that do not fit into Western constructs.

Figure 1.1 Interactions of State and Poro Sodality



CONTEXT: Demography, Ecology, Geography, Ethnicity, Population density, etc.

In Figure 1.1, the first box contains structures and agencies intrinsic to the state—a transitive object that is illustrated in the second diagram. The third is the Poro, also a transitive object, while the fourth contains the structures and agencies inherent to the Poro. Both the state and the Poro interact with each other in the institutional environment as well as with natural realities—intransitive objects—in context. Some of the natural intransitive objects include demography, ecology, geography, population density, ethnicity, etc. Post-independence state builders in Africa assumed that by establishing elements⁵⁰ inherent to the Westphalian state, with disregard to the transitive and intransitive objects in its context, the state would operate originally and unimpeded. Consequently, while institution building, training bureaucrats, establishing constitutions and laws, etc. were prioritised, little attention was paid to demographic composition, ecological conditions, cultures, history, geography and indigenous institutions. Critical realism argues that the extent to which an object is influenced by or influences other objects and the natural context depends on its generative powers and liabilities. It is these interactions which account for the “reproduced objects” (Baskhar, 1975) or “synthesis” (Archer, 1989). Clapham observes that because mechanisms outside of the state in African contexts, including

⁵⁰These include bureaucratic institutions and bureaucrats, constitutions and laws, military and other security apparatuses, defined territories and so-called citizens, etc.

sodality institutions, were given little consideration in the statebuilding and management equation, they have inadvertently undermined the performance and viability of the African state (Clapham, 2001). Again, the lack of recognition of the intransitive objects in the current state reconstruction processes in Liberia and Sierra Leone, it can be postulated, increases the risk of entrenching the crisis of state formation and statebuilding.

A second critical realists' theoretical lens adopted in this work is its interpretation of the structure-agency debate.⁵¹ Proponents of the 'structure' thesis argue, "while people choose their actions, they make their choices from cultural codes, discourses, or socialisation processes which they do not choose" (Carter and New, 2004: 4). It does not seem to matter how the structures are formed or whether they are transplanted from another social reality or not. Once they are brought into existence, structuralists would argue, "they become the movers and shakers of human actions" (p. 6). A frequently cited example is the state. In the thinking of structuralists, the state has become "an agent of protean omniscience, penetrating in profound ways every aspect of social life, leaving no room for social action to challenge or modify the state" (Goldberg, 2001: 293). Aside from its pervasive character, the state has the tendency to pervert social systems in societies it dominates (ibid). The agency thesis argues to the contrary. It contends that humans, not structure, are the "...causal primacy in explaining the social world... which is basically a product of people's thoughts, habits and conversations" (Hird, 2002: 587). Giddens proposes a third view, which he calls structuration. Giddens insists that both structure and agency are

⁵¹The social science dictionary defines agency as the capacity of humans to act independently and to make their own free choices, while structures refer to institutions, culture and social codes which constrain or influence individual actions. See online Social Science Dictionary, available at <http://bitbucket.icaap.org/dict.pl>, accessed 07/05/09.

conjoined, mutually reinforcing (and at times undermining) forces, which cannot even be analytically separated (Giddens 1984). Recognising that people draw upon their inherent and learned transformational agency to shape structures, Giddens also agrees that structures, once formed, influence people's actions (ibid). Roy Baskhar (1989) builds on Giddens' structuration thesis with a critical realist's thinking. Critical realists agree that both structure and agency are mutually reinforcing, but go beyond that to inquire about the capacity of either structure or agency to influence a phenomenon. Essentially, two key questions that guide critical realists' inquiries are: a) what are the powers intrinsic in a structure (in this case the state or indigenous sodality) that account for its capacity to influence change in people or society in general? And b) what are the vulnerabilities or predispositions intrinsic in the structure that makes it susceptible to change by humans or society in general?⁵² The structure/ agency debate has been at the centre of sociological theorising for generations, and I have no intention to recount the debates. The allusion is made here to point out the implication for the institutional interactions between the state and the Poro sodality in Liberia and Sierra Leone, and how elites of both institutions exploited the contradictions.⁵³

⁵²Baskhar indicates that people are the only beings "capable of reflecting upon and so seek to alter or reinforce the social arrangements they encounter for the realisation of their own interest" (Baskhar, 1975, cited in Carter and New, 2004: 5). Critical realists identify endurance and constraining powers as the essential powers of structures, while agencies are possessed with powers of reflexivity, self-consciousness, intention, cognition, and emotion (Carter and New, 2004).

⁵³While this historical analysis provides compelling clues to the proposition of this work, it should in no way detract from its aim, which is to assess the efficacy and potential utility of the Poro in state reconstruction and quality of interactions (intended or unintended) between the externally driven statebuilding project and the Poro. It is important to note here that critical realism is not the same as scientific realism and realism in international relations (IR). In fact its tenets seem to contradict both scientific and IR versions of realism. Scientific realism is based on the claim that if a proposition is scientifically proven to be true in one place at a given time, it is true everywhere at all times. It also claims scientific knowledge is independent of what people think (Harrington, 2005). IR realism flows from scientific realism as it holds the view that relations between and within states are best understood in terms of "struggles for power and self preservation disregarding all differences of political ideologies" (ibid: 295). Given that a mechanism is influenced by agencies and structures inherent both to its nature and outside in its context, the claim of absolute truth everywhere and at all times is one this study aims to challenge.

1.6.2 Framework for Data Analysis

Pawson (2006), drawing on the central argument of critical realism, offers an evidence-based framework for data analysis, which I also adopt in this work. Pawson suggests that research conducted using a critical realists' theoretical lens and which aims to influence policy, must be based on what he calls "weight of evidence" (p. 27). The weight of evidence is established by the quality of *primary research* and the extent of *triangulation*. Since critical realists aim to observe interactions between phenomena, Pawson indicates that the analysis should arrive at a synthesis which, he adds, contains three elements—*mechanism, context and outcome*. Although all mechanisms (M) are imbued with causal powers (P) and liabilities (L), they are not the only drivers of the mechanism. Realists contend that the actions of mechanisms are contingent on the context (C) wherein they exist. The context is also imbued with powers and liabilities. The combination of the inherent powers (P) of a *mechanism* (M) and its *context* (C) determines the range of *outcomes* (O) it produces or reproduces (2006). The case is therefore made that the outcomes of the international reconstruction process are not only driven by the actions of external interveners, they are also contingent on other mechanisms (powers and liabilities) in context.

1.6.3 Case Study Approach

The choice of the case study approach (CSA) also deserves some explanation. A key principle for researching indigenous resources is "wholeness and depth", which resonates with CSA (Grenier, 1998: 31). Yin (2003) and Stake (1995) argue that CSA is the most appropriate method if the inquiry is concerned with the "how" and "why" of a social phenomenon and if "the boundaries between the phenomenon and

its context are not clearly evident” (Yin, 2003: 11). CSA is different from other qualitative research strategies because of its openness to the use of indicative *a priori* propositions.⁵⁴ Beginning with propositions, however rudimentary, in my view seems appropriate for a PhD effort. Besides, limits of financial resources and time for the study made it unwise to choose an ethnographic approach whose validity depended on the duration of my presence in the “natural setting” of the phenomenon. CSA also leans towards a qualitative mode of inquiry and has been the most preferred approach in studies conducted by critical realists (Pawson, 2006).

Critics of CSA dismiss the strategy because it is not “generalisable”, and that researchers adopting the approach tend to select cases that promote their *a priori* indicative propositions (Punch, 1998: 153). There is also the tendency for the over-representation of historical cases to the disadvantage of the here-and-now (Silverman, 2005). In order to minimise the shortfalls of CSA and the qualitative mode of inquiry, I outline detailed descriptions of the theoretical and philosophical grounding of the work, as well as the basis for selecting the research contexts, participants and units of analysis. In addition, all aspects of the study were subjected to regular scrutiny by my supervisors; some aspects by the advisory committees I set up during the fieldwork in each country, and doctoral peers at the Peace Studies Department who are also researching similar contexts, albeit with a different focus. These safeguards should be the basis for judging the quality and truthfulness of this work. Besides, a study on the interactions between indigenous structures and agencies and those of the state cannot be generalised, given the spatio-temporal specificity of indigenous structures and agencies, particularly sodality institutions. I therefore make no claims to

⁵⁴Straus (1987) indicates ethnography and grounded theory, which are also appropriate in researching social phenomena such as sodality institutions in context, focus wholly on “discovery” and the deriving of theories exclusively from the “natural setting”.

generalisability, measurability and objectivity—the positivist’s criteria for valid research.⁵⁵ Max Weber (cited in Outhwait, 1998: 24), while acknowledging that the qualitative approach is “necessarily perspectival and value-laden,” contends “it could be objective, in the sense of having validity and scope beyond its original context.” Bassey (1981: 84-85) is more categorical. He insists knowledge is not only intended for generalisability and objectivity. As long as the research is carried out systematically and critically with the aim of ameliorating social conditions, “if it is relatable, and if the work extends the boundaries of existing knowledge of the subject,” Bassey argues, “it should be judged as a valid form of research” (cited in Bell, 2004: 11-12).⁵⁶

1.6.3.1 Research Focus and Units of Analysis

The focus of this work is on the interactions between the Poro sodality and state institutions in current state reconstruction processes in Liberia and Sierra Leone. The primary dependent variable for the work is therefore the state. Whether *de facto* or *de jure* or both, the state’s viability is assessed based on its performance and the degree of domestic and international legitimacy it enjoys.⁵⁷ Security, operating an efficient and effective bureaucracy, and providing national identity—the core functions of the

⁵⁵As indicated consistently in this chapter, my aim was to undertake an in-depth and systematic study whose findings could deepen understanding on the political relevance of the Poro in state reconstruction and sustenance and thereby inform future studies on the political agency of African indigenous sodalities. Besides, the choice of cases was based on the state, which is the dependent variable in the work. Reference is made to history only where appropriate, as the phenomenon being studied is a work-in-progress in both contexts. The work must therefore be judged on its own merit and not from generalisation about a strategy whose application is inherently context-specific.

⁵⁶Elizabeth Chell (1998) “Critical Incident Techniques” in *Qualitative Methods and Analysis in Organizational research: A practical guide*, G. Symon and C. Cassell (eds.), also contends that qualitative research should be judged as valid once it broadens insights and understanding of the social phenomenon under inquiry and produces a coherent account that makes sense. Devatak (1995) also argues that when a research work based in critical theory such as critical realism is judged, it must be on its ability to reflexively reveal oppressive structures and how it creates spaces for the oppressed to conceptualise their own world—not on the basis of objectivity.

⁵⁷Performance here is understood as the efficient and effective delivery of all services expected from a state system, while legitimacy is the level of acceptability the state enjoys from both those within its territory and the international community.

state—are the independent variables in this work. From the point of view of critical realism, the performance of all mechanisms is contingent on its context. There are multivariate intransitive and transitive objects in context. For the purpose of this work, I focus on the Poro and Sande indigenous sodalities, their interactions with current internationally-led state reconstruction projects, and the viability of the state reproduced through the international process. On the question of interaction, I assess the extent of recognition and engagement of the Poro and Sande in recovery and reconstruction of state and societal institutions. Table 1 below illustrates the dependent and independent variables of the work.

Figure 1.2: Unit of Analysis

Case Study	Unit of Analysis
The Poro and the State	Poro, DDR and emerging security architectures
	Poro, community revitalisation and nationbuilding
	Poro, public sector reform and local governance
	International intervention and Poro

1.6.3.2 Selecting Case Sites and Samples

For the selection of the countries, sites and participants, I adopted the purposive sampling technique. As indicated by Silverman (2005), purposive sampling allows the researcher to choose a case, site or respondent that illustrates some features of the phenomenon being studied, while using predetermined criteria to guide the selection process (ibid). I adopted Stake’s case selection criteria in this work. These include balance, varieties, accessibility, hospitality of the sample population, researchability of the case, and the learning opportunities in the selection process (1998: 102). Liberia and Sierra Leone were selected as countries of focus because they: a) have a unique history within the African continent as countries established by (in the case of Liberia), or with the influence of (in the case of Sierra Leone), freed and recaptured slaves returned to Africa; b) are amongst the first post-Cold War collapsed states that

are being reconstructed by the largest multilateral interventions since the establishment of the United Nations; c) are neighbours with common ethnic groups; and d) are arguably the only countries in Africa where the Poro and Sande sodalities, or generally the politics of sodality, dominated and has been in constant collision with state institutions. I also situated the study in three cities each in both countries: Monrovia, Gbarnga and Voinjama in Liberia and Freetown, Bo and Kambia in Sierra Leone.⁵⁸

1.6.4 Fieldwork

I spent a total of seven months (June-December 2005) undertaking fieldwork in Liberia and Sierra Leone. Most of this time was spent in Liberia.⁵⁹ I visited Sierra Leone twice and spent a total of four weeks in the country. I visited and conducted focus group and key informant interviews in Monrovia, Gbarnga and Voinjama (in

⁵⁸Monrovia and Freetown are the capital cities of Liberia and Sierra Leone, respectively. They are the seats of the coastal states established by the freed slaves and colonialists. As cosmopolitan cities, many of their inhabitants became disconnected from the norms and values of the hinterlands. These cities were dominated by the 'civilising' projects of the freed slaves and the British colonial empire. The relevance of the Poro in the social life of inhabitants compared to the hinterlands is limited. Gbarnga and Bo were selected because they are considered the hubs of Poro dominance; while Kambia and Voinjama are cities, though situated in the Poro-dominated hinterland, that are increasingly populated by converts of Islam and 'born-again' Christians who are in open confrontation with practices of the Poro. The clash of Islam and 'born again' Christians on the one hand against the Poro on the other has added to the destabilisation of the interior over the years, which was first instigated by state penetration and repression. How these cities are recovering and the extent of state reconstitution provide considerable clues to the quality of the state reconstruction project.

⁵⁹During my time in Liberia, I served as consultant to undertake a summative evaluation of International Alert's Rural Media and Peace Project (3 weeks); as Senior Fellow accredited by King's College London to the University of Liberia's newly established Kofi Annan Centre for Conflict Transformation (3 months); and as International Consultant to the Evaluation and Strategic Coordination Unit of UNMIL, the United Nations Mission in Liberia (4 months). These opportunities gave me exposure to in-depth policy and natural dynamics on the ground. More specifically the IA project, which focused on post-conflict communication structures and effect with emphasis on rural communication, took me to five counties, including the three counties selected for this work. With the University of Liberia, I conducted a comprehensive assessment of roles of NGOs, public institutions, and UN agencies in Liberia's reconstruction and how to develop the needed human capital for the reconstruction project. At the UN, I participated in the development of the UN's Common Country Assessment, the Interim Poverty Reduction Paper, the Comprehensive Drawdown and Withdrawal Strategy (CDWS), and a mid-term evaluation of the disarmament, demobilisation, rehabilitation and reintegration (DDRR) programme. Serving in these capacities afforded me the opportunity to immerse myself in the very active post-conflict reconstruction dynamics in Liberia, and to test some of my propositions in real life situations. However, limited resources did not allow for such engagement in Sierra Leone. A comparative review of the interactions of state reconstruction actors in both countries was therefore not possible. It is important to point out that observations conducted during this period were not as systematic and repetitive as would be required in the participant observation method. The emphasis here is on the in-depth experience I gained during these assignments.

Liberia) and Freetown and Bo (in Sierra Leone). I was unable to visit Kambia as originally planned, due to financial and other constraints. However I was fortunate to interview a number of Kambia residents who had come to Freetown for a workshop organised by the Network for Collaborative Peacebuilding in Sierra Leone (NCPSL). I also conducted interviews with staff of a local NGO, ABC-Development, who operate in Kambia. The extended period spent in Liberia afforded me the opportunity to immerse myself in the very active post-conflict reconstruction dynamics in the country.⁶⁰ Although I was not able to spend as much time in Sierra Leone, many of the UN staff in Monrovia were among those who led the recovery process in Sierra Leone. I benefitted from their hindsight as they constantly referred to their experiences in Sierra Leone.

1.6.4.1 Data Collection Methods

I adopted qualitative focus groups and individual interviews as primary data collection methods, complemented by literature review and documentary research. I review the data collection methods in this section.

Literature and Documentary Research: Throughout the project, more so in the first two years, I undertook a substantive literature review. I organised the relevant literature in four categories: a) state formation, nationbuilding, state collapse, and reconstruction with a focus on the contemporary liberal peace project; b) historical development and collapse of Liberia and Sierra Leone; c) Indigenous sodality

⁶⁰During the consultancies, I informed the institutions that I was undertaking research work for my PhD studies. In fact I was invited to serve in UNMIL's Strategic Evaluation and Coordination Unit to help in their own reflection process. My supervisor at the UN occasionally requested me to share my findings and suggestions on areas where the mission could improve. I agreed not to share or quote any documents that are classified. References made to the UN or to the works of King's College and IA in Liberia are those they have already placed in the public domain.

institutions in the Upper Guinea Coast with a focus on the Poro sodality; and d) conflict analysis, including current debates on contemporary violence and intrastate conflicts. I then organised an indicative bibliography of the key authors in the respective areas, which I discussed and agreed with my lead supervisor before embarking on the in-depth review exercise.⁶¹ The literature review exercise proved vital in exposing me to the dominant debates, thereby facilitating my articulation of the contributions this work sets out to make to scholarly and policy literature on state reconstruction. The exercise also informed the design of the research plan for my fieldwork. I undertook extensive documentary research in the field. Materials consulted included UN and government reports, NGO and INGO research papers, including advocacy materials from groups like Global Witness, Human Rights Watch, Amnesty International and International Crisis Group. I also reviewed new policies and legislations, newspapers, journals and numerous Internet sources.⁶²

Like the rest of the social science research data collection methods, literature and documentary review carry inherent weaknesses and strengths. The dominant criticisms include the question of validity and selection bias. Lustick (1996) observes that there is a tendency for researchers to gravitate to secondary sources that back their thesis, while dismissing those with a compelling counter-thesis. There is also the temptation of taking for granted the political angles and circumstantial influences which tend to shape authors' narration of the 'truth' (1996). To address this weakness, I took seriously Lustick's suggestions as safeguards during the work. These include: a) a commitment to identify potential political angles and biases in all

⁶¹The bibliography was expanded as I reviewed references for the original bibliography.

⁶²I regularly monitored the many radio talk shows and newspapers in both countries. Some of the radio programs were 'call-in' programs. With full coverage of both countries by a number of GSM cell phone companies, calls came from the length and breadth of the countries, thus giving me a sense of how ordinary people were interpreting and engaging the ongoing state reconstruction processes.

secondary sources and ensuring thorough triangulation for their verification—a strong recommendation of critical realism as well. The healthy debates I had with my lead supervisor and colleagues also exposed me to a range of alternative angles to some of the literature. I also made use of critical reviews of works of the key authors posted on a range of Internet sources. Despite its inherent weaknesses, literature and documentary review has inherent strengths that are particularly crucial when studying social phenomenon with historical development, as well as patterns and regularities from interactions with other social phenomena, in context. The stability and cumulative accounts of the development of the state and its interactions with indigenous systems like the Poro could not be obtained, or at least understood, without reviewing literature and documents and establishing patterns and regularity.⁶³

Focus Group and Individual Interviews: While documentary and literature research shed much light on historical developments and interactions, they were limited in understanding the ongoing state reconstruction dynamics and to establish a “weight of evidence” (Pawson, 1996). I therefore undertook extensive qualitative focus group interviews (FGIs) and key informant interviews (KIIs) as the primary data collection methods.⁶⁴ The focus group discussions were centred on the broad lines of inquiry outlined in the semi-structure interview guide I developed, while the detailed questions were used in the key informant interviews (Please see annex 1 for Interview

⁶³The key here is remaining vigilance as proposed by Lustick. Throughout the work I constantly ask myself two key questions about every literature and document: a) who is the author and what is his/her general theoretical orientation. In other words what side of the debate is he/she on? And b) why was the document or literature written and for whom? These were extremely useful in the way I judged written pieces of information.

⁶⁴Literature review and initial documentary research as indicated earlier helped me to develop detail semi-structure interview instruments. Please see Annex 1 for interview instruments.

Instrument). As indicated in Table 1.1, I conducted a total of 21 focus group interviews with 260 participants and 52 individual interviews.⁶⁵

Table 1.1: Breakdown of Focus Group Interviews

Location	Category of Group	Number of FGIs	Number of Participants
Liberia	Women	4	71
	Youth	3	45
	NGOs leaders	3	35
	Elders	3	26
Sierra Leone	Women	2	16
	Youth	2	34
	NGO leaders	3	25
	Elders	1	8

The interview processes helped me explore the individual and general perceptions about state reconstruction and how local Zoes in particular perceive the process vis-à-vis its impact on Poro and Sande authorities and structures. Most importantly, local political, social and developmental agencies emerging from the war were better discussed and given voice during the exercise.⁶⁶ The KIIs were mostly selected from participants in the FGIs as a way of deepening discussions from the FGIs. Other key informants including political leaders, Zoes and leaders of the international community were directly contacted.⁶⁷ I conducted all the interviews in English, Creole, and what is known as ‘Liberian English’, all of which I speak and understand. I also, with the consent of participants, tape-recorded most of the interviews

⁶⁵This does not include follow-ups, workshops and seminars I facilitated and/or attended. Also, data collection methods adopted in this work are not without weaknesses. How one validates the monotony characteristic of post-conflict communication patterns and at the same time pursues the predetermined line of inquiry was one challenge I faced in the use of the interview method. There were double challenges in the use of documentation. First, it was difficult to access historical documents, particularly in Liberia. Secondly, numerous research works have been undertaken in both countries over the last decade. While the availability of this large volume of work was useful to establish evidence, sifting through the vast number of documents was extremely difficult.

⁶⁶Having focus group meetings in separate groups with women, youth, national NGO leaders and international actors also ensure safe spaces and some sense of equality, which facilitated some measures of openness and active participation. The focus group discussions were organised in a way to foster dialogue and thereby build on the emerging expanded public spaces where ordinary people contribute to public issues. I did not only aim to extract information, but also to empower.

⁶⁷Selection of respondents for the individual interviews was also based on purposeful sampling. I directly contacted those who were well informed about the subject, willing to share and available. Some respondents were recommended either by participants of the focus group or another key informant.

conducted in Monrovia and Freetown, while majority of those conducted in the countryside did not allow for tape recording.⁶⁸

The qualitative interview method also has a number of weaknesses. Firstly, critics of the method allege it is difficult to separate the researcher's biased interpretations from the "pure" data in qualitative interviews (Silverman, 2005). Second, there is the particular challenge of interviewing in the post-conflict context. Burton describes the dysfunctional communication pattern common in post-war contexts as 'telling', a monotonous and embellished communication practice (1978: 37, cited in Finlay, 2001: 57). Two focus group discussions in Bong County vividly illustrated this challenge. All 26 women who participated in the discussions reported loss of a family member. As a consequence, the focus group discussions were hijacked by discussions on the multiple losses of the women. The women tended to be repetitive, recounting the traumatic experiences over and over and again as if they were eliciting sympathy from me.⁶⁹ Third is the question of trust. Liberia and Sierra Leone were just emerging from devastating civil wars that tore apart the social fabrics and destroyed basic institutions. In some FGIs it was difficult to establish an environment

⁶⁸In some individual interviews, especially with Zoes, I was not allowed to take notes or use a tape recorder. In one of the key informant interviews in Gbarnga, one elder noted that he was surprised that anyone outside the practice thought that it had anything to offer the country. "...they think they can fix our country without us..." he noted in an apparent tone of sarcasm. In my introduction of all interview sessions, I made sure that I shared the purpose of the exercise and emphasised that I was aware of the value of not discussing elements of the Poro and Sande that bind the communities. I acknowledged the value of the practice and indicated that my interest was in the contribution the Poro and Sande could make in restoring our broken societies and political orders. This introduction was an effective door-opener.

⁶⁹Rather than dismiss the womens' apparent cry for a listening ear, I spent three hours just listening to their stories. My experience in psychosocial counselling proved useful. I also encouraged the women to set up small social support associations where they could recount their experiences and support one another. I also linked them to the Women in Peacebuilding Network, which is a regional support group that is active in both countries. In my conclusion of the session, I emphasised that the aim of my study is to find within our own society ways by which we can address some of the challenges they outlined in their personal stories. I specifically asked whether there were practices in the Sande (all the women were practicing initiates of the Sande) and Poro that could help us rebuild our society and whether those who have come to help us were engaging these local resources. I asked whether the women would be available the following week to discuss the questions. They consented and I went back and conducted the interview. The level of openness and generosity to help me with my work was overwhelming. While this proved successful for me, I am not suggesting that all researchers who encounter such situations should present themselves as counsellors. Referral to competent practitioners would be the best option. In my case, I had 12 years of experience in trauma counselling and working in both countries as a trauma counsellor.

of trust, which was necessary for open and honest participation. Besides, not all members in the focus group meetings were practicing Poro and Sande initiates. There were those who had converted to Islam and Christianity and were averse to the practices of the Poro.⁷⁰ Although I started most of the difficult FGI sessions with trust building exercises, they were inadequate to create the necessary environment in some situations. In such cases of lack of trust, results from the FGI were limited and I relied heavily on the follow-up key informant interviews. Finally and most importantly, the culture of “*ifa mao*” (do not speak it) to outsiders was a particular challenge, especially on the questions of authority, security and powers. As discussed in depth in the following section, I relied on local field advisors to physically carry me to some key informants, especially Poro elders.⁷¹ The challenges I encountered during the project can be categorised as access and ethical challenges. How I addressed them during the project is the subject of the following section.

1.7 ACCESS AND ETHICAL CHALLENGES

1.7.1 Access Challenges

The degree of access challenges any researcher faces is essentially determined by the researcher’s identity, research topic, and the context in which the work is conducted (Ringmar, 1996). In Liberia and Sierra Leone I am generally known as a political activist and a peacebuilding practitioner. But being Liberian, I was viewed in Sierra Leone as one from the “geography of enemies”, while to the Poro I was from the

⁷⁰Youths in Monrovia had limited knowledge about the Poro and its influences in rural communities, while youths in the rural communities, many of whom became members of the fighting forces like the Civil Defence Forces, had strong opinions about the role of the Poro sodality in the reconstruction process in their respective communities.

⁷¹They assured elders that I was seeking the help of the Poro and Sande in the rebuilding process. Some introductions were done in local languages that I did not understand. I was unable to ascertain whether that affected the quality of the interviews. However, a thorough triangulation process helped to minimise any possible false stories.

“geography of strangers”.⁷² The latter identity posed a difficult challenge to access traditional leaders, especially elders and priests of the Poro sodality. To overcome these challenges, I implemented the following safeguards. On arrival in both countries, I conducted a feasibility study in each of the capital cities with prominent government officials, academics and individuals who, though members of the Poro and Sande sodality, are actively engaged with the political development of both countries. I wrote formal letters with a two-page summary of the project to three persons in each country, asking them to serve as my field advisors.⁷³ In addition to arranging interviews, calling and speaking directly to key informants about the project, as well as helping to locate resource materials, all the advisors granted me regular one-on-one meetings for the purpose of triangulation.⁷⁴ I also identified and engaged some local NGOS to help me to: a) identify gatekeepers, b) provide an overview of the local context, and c) assist me in establishing local community relations. In addition to these safeguards, my prior engagements and credibility in both countries proved invaluable to the exercise.⁷⁵ In retrospect, the innovation of establishing local field advisors proved not only useful in accessing high quality

⁷²Ringmar coined the phrase “geography of enemies” to describe divided societies in which the researcher could be seeing as coming from the other side of the divide and therefore could be misled in interview processes. I adopted the phrase to the concept of strangers, which is also strong in Poro society where outsiders are not necessarily enemies but strangers who must be kept on the outside, while demonstrating the spirit of generosity to them. I describe myself as from the ‘geography of enemies’ because due to the role Charles Taylor played in Sierra Leone’s conflict, many Sierra Leoneans were ambivalent about Liberians in general during the height of the conflict. Although that was not the case during the research as Liberians and Sierra Leoneans united to disassociate themselves from the onslaught of Charles Taylor and Foday Sankoh.

⁷³These include: Pewu Subah, senior partner of Subah Belleh Associates (SBA)—one of the oldest management and research firms in Liberia and an initiate of the Poro sodality; Sampson T. Varpilah, deputy minister for health and social welfare (Poro initiate), and Leymah Gbowee, leader of the women’s movement in Liberia (Poro initiate). In Sierra Leone Professor Joe D. Alie of Fourah Bay College and a well respected member of the Poro sodality, Walter Carew, Program Manager of the Christian Health Association of Sierra Leone, and Gladys Koroma, Coordinator of the Women in Peacebuilding Network in Sierra Leone.

⁷⁴While this became necessary to accommodate the schedules of the advisors, it proved useful as I was privy to information that would never have been revealed in large meetings

⁷⁵The following NGOs and CBOs served as my local partners. In Sierra Leone they were: Peace Studies Department at Fourah Bay, National Accountability Group, ABC-Development in Kambia, and the Foundation for International Dignity in Kenema, Bo and Freetown. Local partners in Liberia were West African Network for Peacebuilding (WANEP-Liberia), Women Initiative and the Peacebuilding Resource Center.

information, it increased the sense of ownership on the part of the advisors and their respective communities, a key principle of critical theory.⁷⁶

1.7.2 Ethical Challenges

Ethics supplants the practicality argument of research for the moral and legal argument. Descombe (2002), Bulmer (2001) and the Social Research Association's *Ethical Guidelines* (2003) have all asserted that under no conditions should the desire for knowledge and 'truth' supersede the respect for human dignity and safety.⁷⁷ The issues of ethics were even more pertinent to this work, considering the subject I set out to study. The Poro and Sande are shrouded in secrecy which, as I indicated, is guided by oath, threats and real punishment for those who breach '*ifa mao*' (do not speak of it).⁷⁸ Another critical challenge I had to deal with was the risk of being perceived as an inquisitive and intrusive outsider, who wants to invade the private domain of the sodality. To address these challenges, in addition to strategies outlined to address access, I made efforts to adhere to the core ethical principles of social research. These include a) consent, b) confidentiality, c) anonymity, d) justice, and e) 'do no harm and do good'.

Consent—To address concerns of consent, I ensured a full disclosure of my intent of the study, including its benefits to the communities, especially the Poro and Sande, as

⁷⁶Also new developments such as the arrest and trial of President Charles Taylor in the Hague and the renewed sense of hope that it generated in countries of the Mano River region contributed significantly to the favorable climate and cooperation I enjoyed during the fieldwork.

⁷⁷Besides the imperative to respect the dignity of all those studied, the SRA contends that good research enhances future access to research subjects and their communities, while bad research destroys the opportunities for access and thereby undermines the development of social research in general (SRA's *Ethical Guidelines*, 2003: 22). The University of Bradford therefore avers that researchers within its jurisdiction must conduct their study in the "most conscientious and responsible manner possible..." (Code of Practice for Ethics in Research, June 2003:1).

⁷⁸During the period of the research, in the bid to reassert itself, the Poro and in a few cases the Sande were involved in acts of resistance and violence, including abduction and forced initiation of youths and Muslims who reject the practice.

well as the risks of participating in the research. I emphasised that I was conducting the research to assess whether there is a place for the sodality in the rebuilding processes. I sent a two-page summary of the project to key informants who were literate, and explained the project to my field advisors who in turn explained it to local chiefs and women to whom I was referred. I also began each interview session with an introduction of the project and emphasised that it was voluntary and that no one was obliged to participate or continue when the process felt uncomfortable for them. Throughout the project, I kept the field advisors and some key informants informed of my progress. While the introduction of the field advisors was effective in granting me access, I was aware that being introduced by someone who command respect in his/ her respective community had elements of coercion. To assure participants of their freedom to participate, or not, I emphasised that they were not forced to continue the process, and that this was my personal work in which the advisors had no personal stake. I assured them that I would not report any part of the conversation back to the person who introduced me, nor would I inform the latter if the participants chose to withdraw from the process. With most of the population unlettered, I did not insist upon written consent, although in some instances in Monrovia and Freetown most of the participants granted written consent.

Confidentiality—I assured participants that the information that I obtained from them would be handled with the utmost care. All recorded interviews are in my possession and away from both countries. They will continue to be kept in a safe place three years after the submission of this work and discarded thereafter.

Anonymity—I assured all participants that names would not be attributed to any quotes, nor mentioned in the work. No information which identified the participants and key informants was used in my write up. I adopted the phrase ‘key informant’ or ‘participant’ to refer to all citations in the work. As agreed with most of the participants, their names are not included in this work.

Justice—Critical realism, which is also based on critical theory, emphasises issues of justice. The questions a) who are included in focus group meetings and who are excluded, b) who dominates the interview process and who is silent, and c) how to facilitate equal participation, occupied me during the fieldwork. To address this concern, I devised a representative distribution of categories to include youth, women, elders, academic, international actors, etc—and an adequate number under each category—to be interviewed prior to the fieldwork. This balance was necessary to ensure the voices of the weak and strong, the marginalised or the actively engaged, were heard and represented in this work.

Do no harm and do good—Kvale recommends that researchers must undertake a clear risk/ benefit calculation before deciding to conduct a social research (1996). The potential benefits to subjects and the larger society should outweigh the risk of harm to warrant a decision to carry out a study. Two key questions informed my judgment: a) will this benefit the post-war societies? and b), will this benefit or at least not harm the individual participants who will offer to participate? I was also aware of the risks of some participants misinterpreting the qualitative interview as psychosocial counselling sessions, especially since questions on societal healing mechanisms were part of the lines of inquiry. In the situations where traumatic issues

arose, I suspended the interview process, listened to the participants and recommended relevant organisations for follow-up. Discussing anything about the Poro and Sande raises concerns in rural communities, which have legitimate gatekeepers who protect the interests of the sodalities. In this regard, my field advisors helped by explaining the purpose of the exercise to the local chiefs. I also kept the local chiefs and Zoes informed of my work.⁷⁹

1.8 LIMITATIONS OF THIS WORK

This work is necessarily limited in focus, scope and time. Although there are many other social forces active in the post-conflict reconstruction contexts of Liberia and Sierra Leone, including over a dozen other sodalities, the work strategically focuses on the Poro and Sande sodalities as primary intervening variables in state reconstruction. The choice is informed by the fact that both countries have strong and consistent historical accounts of the political rivalry between the Poro sodality and state institutions. These have led to recorded institutional failures and armed violence.⁸⁰ More significantly, the Poro remains the largest institution for social order, economic well-being and security in over 80% of rural Liberia and Sierra Leone. Its dominant political, economic and social roles would be evident in post-conflict Liberia and Sierra Leone.

⁷⁹I also emphasised during the interview process that participants should not feel obliged to tell me anything that would threaten their personal security. I indicated that when my questioning touched on anything sensitive, they should feel free to let me know. In cases where I was reminded, I immediately changed the line of questioning.

⁸⁰The work also explores the ‘alliances of convenience’, which was established between the Poro and the State including the most recent security pact between the Sierra Leone state and the Poro, in which mass mobilisation of Poro warriors reminiscent of 19th and 20th century mobilisation of the Poro for war took place. Francis and Alie indicate that the alliance which made the Poro a part of the state’s war-fighting machine has resuscitated the old debate about the marriage between Liberia and Sierra Leone and the Poro. See Francis, D (ed., 2005), *Civil Militia*.

A second limitation is time. I have focused on the current state reconstruction process with only anecdotal reference to history. The fact that state reconstruction in both countries is ongoing makes it difficult to determine a cut-off point to assess impact and make conclusive claims about the process. In addition, I am of the view that a comparative review of the dynamics between the Poro and other indigenous institutions and statebuilding at independence, and during the present post-collapsed state building processes, would have provided a comprehensive view and critical lessons. The lack of resources and time informed the decision to conduct a time-bound case study with a focus on the current dynamics of interactions between the Poro and the state. This, however, does not reduce the significance of this work. A more in-depth study of current dynamics would be invaluable to future researchers who might want to compare the two periods in Liberia and Sierra Leone's history.

Yet another limitation of this work is the scope for the fieldwork. I selected three communities out of several from each country where the dynamics of statebuilding and the perspectives of multi-stakeholders were engaged. The choice is again a consequence of time and resources. I, however, argue that the communities were strategically selected to provide useful clues with a strong potential for reliability. For instance, Freetown and Monrovia currently host about half of the populations of the respective countries. The cosmopolitan natures of these cities have provided unique dynamics between indigeneity and the modern state in the past. Currently the bulk of the state reconstruction projects are present in these capitals, and considering the mass internal displacement which emptied the countryside into the cities, one can argue that for the first time in the history of both countries, the 'barbaric hinterlands' have intimately encountered the 'civilised' coastal settler states. This encounter is a

real-time manifestation of interactions between the state and the Poro (and Sande). Bo in Sierra Leone and Bong in Liberia are considered the largest concentrate of Poro-practicing groups. The study in both contexts gave me a sense of the ‘natural’ settings of the Poro. Kambia and Lofa are considered the communities where the Poro has come into direct confrontation with other social institutions like Islam and Christianity. The mix of religious and political confrontations in these cities provided useful clues into the local governance, as well as social dynamics vis-à-vis state and Poro society interactions.

1.9 STRUCTURE OF THE THESIS

The work is divided into seven chapters. Chapter 1 looks at the overview of the thesis, my motivation for embarking on the project, background and context of state reconstruction, detailed accounts of the Poro and methodology adopted in the work. Chapter 2 looks at the state-building process in Africa, noting how the African state has managed to survive and why it seems to be losing the survivor struggle. Within the context of globalisation, the chapter considers the intervention of the international community both in statebuilding, collapse, reconstruction and maintenance. Chapter 3 looks at debates on statebuilding in Liberia and Sierra Leone. It traces the historical development and trajectories of Liberia and Sierra Leone. The chapter argues that the twin states met a common fate—state collapse—because of the foundations on which they were established. Chapter 4 undertakes an analysis of the civil wars in Liberia and Sierra Leone. It engages with the dominant debates on the sources and dynamics of the civil wars in Liberia and Sierra Leone and challenges the claims that both civil wars are caused by greed and ethnicity alone. Chapter 5 is the case study in Liberia and Sierra Leone on the role of the Poro in recovery and reconstruction. Chapter 6

draws lessons from the case of Liberia and Sierra Leone to theorise indigenisation. It begins with a further review of existing debates and theories on state reconstruction and argues for indigenisation as a complement to the liberal peace approach to statebuilding. It looks at indigenisation as framework for analysis to deepen understanding of interactions between indigenous mechanisms and the liberal peace project. Chapter 7 offers the conclusion and key findings. It ends with a policy proposal on indigenisation of state reconstruction as a complement to the liberal peace project.

CHAPTER 2

STATEBUILDING, SURVIVAL AND COLLAPSE IN AFRICA

“...Over these disastrous millennia there have been Africans concerned to work out solutions to our problems and to act on them. The traces these makers left are faint, because in the continuing triumph of Africa’s destroyers the beautiful ones [though born] were murdered, the land poisoned. Now wherever future seed seeks to take roots, it strikes sand.” (Ayi Kwei Armah, 1995)

2.1 INTRODUCTION

African states have gained notoriety as the most described in global politics.⁸¹ Therapies for the ailing states are also legion.⁸² But none of the multitude of names and therapies has managed to reverse the fate to which African states were condemned at their inception. One after the other, the states are crumbling. A majority of those that are yet to crumble have degenerated so much that they can barely stay afloat politically, socially and economically. The continent, despite its abundant natural endowments, has remained the poorest, contributing less than 5% of global GDP.⁸³ Notwithstanding the ongoing tragic situation in many African states, the scale of state failure and collapse in Africa since the end of the Cold War has sparked fresh interrogation and dialogue on the relationship between statebuilding, state builders and state collapse. One worrying observation is that such inquiry, instead of reflecting on the origin of the post-colonial African state to fully understand its failure and collapse, places emphasis on proximate factors like ethno-politics, bureaucratic failure, war economies and regionalisation of insecurity. I make the case that collapse presents us with an opportunity for a new beginning, and this is only

⁸¹Thandika Mkandawire in his article, *“Thinking about Developmental States in Africa”*, summarises the derogatory names carried by states in the continent. They are branded as, “... the ‘rentier state’, the ‘over-extended state’, the ‘parasitical state’, the ‘predatory state’, the ‘lame leviathan’, the ‘patrimonial state’, the ‘prebendal state’, the ‘crony state’, the ‘kleptocratic state’, the ‘inverted state’, the ‘shadow state’, etc.”

⁸²Mkandawire also provides an excellent summary of the therapies: “[African] states are urged to “de-link” from their societies, to reduce themselves, to stabilise the economy, to privatise the economy, to engage in “good governance”, to democratise themselves and society, to create an “enabling environment” for the private sector, to empower women and civil society, to respect human rights, etc.

⁸³See Progressive Policy Institute (http://www.ppionline.org/ppi_ci.cfm).

possible if we extend the inquiry to the point where we started. The chapter will therefore discuss the political and historical development, survival, failure and eventual collapse of the African state. The chapter begins with a discussion on the nature of the state and its historical development. It then focuses on how states in Africa have performed in delivering on the core functions of the state. With this background, the chapter shifts focus to the increasing failure and collapse of the African state. The analysis is then applied in Chapter 3 to discuss the development, survival and eventual collapse of Liberia and Sierra Leone.

2.2 NATURE OF THE STATE

As observed by Francis (2005), what exactly constitutes a state has been a subject of controversy. Tilly defines the state as “relatively centralised, differentiated and autonomous *organisations* successfully claiming priority in the use of force within large, contiguous and clearly bounded territories” (1990: 43). Michael Mann (1984) summarises the notion of state as: a) differentiated institutions, b) centrality, c) binding authority, and d) defined territory (p. 112). Mohan and Zack-Williams (2004) add sovereignty, constitutionality, public bureaucracy, legitimacy and citizenship to the list of state characteristics. It is the aggregate of these elements that constitute the state. Duvall and Freeman (1981) concur with the institutionalised nature of the state, but shift focus from the aim to dominate to the aim to govern. There is a significant difference in the nature of a ‘dominating’ state from that of a ‘governing’ state. While the former commands obedience through coercion, the latter negotiates acceptance from the public through service. Dominance and governance are not mutually exclusive characteristics of the state, as both theorists would have us believe. Mann (1984) reminds us that the dominating and governing characteristics

are inherent to statehood, but points out that the state as an institution of governance is an outcome of state maturity (1984). He indicates that all states begin as an institution of dominance—exercising “despotic power” to instil order and consolidate control of their territories. They then mature to what the author calls “infrastructural power” (p.113-116).⁸⁴ As for Mamdani (1996), a viable state is a “civic state”, which enjoys widespread acceptance from the people it claims to administer.

Robert Jackson focuses on sovereignty as critical to the nature of the state. Sovereignty confers on the state “the right to control a given expanse of territory and the people living on it and in the process the right to make and enforce such rules, or laws, as is deemed necessary” (1990: 30).⁸⁵ Jackson distinguishes two types of sovereignty—juridical and empirical. Juridical sovereignty is the recognition a state enjoys from the international system, while empirical sovereignty is conferred on a state domestically as a consequence of performance and acceptance.⁸⁶ There are other equally important characteristics of the state aside from its ‘institutionalised’ and ‘sovereign’ nature. Raymond Carré de Malberg (1920) would prefer to describe the state as “a *community* established on a *territory of their own* and possessing a higher *power of command and coercion*” (cited in Wolf and Resnick, 1986: 162). This definition, in my view, makes three important assumptions. First, the concept of a community on its own territory suggests that the state is a product of a pre-existing

⁸⁴In other words, it is only a state with demonstrated dominance, one that commands obedience from its population that can effectively govern. The ‘despotic power’ characteristic of the state could fit well into Hobbes’ Leviathan, while the ‘infrastructural power’ concepts explain classical liberalists’ rule-governed states. As will be discussed later in the chapter, the African state did not have the luxury of maturing from one phase of state development to another. At their inception or at least at the point when they were handed over to Africans, the states were expected to exercise authority while at the same time perform effectively.

⁸⁵Sovereignty is both internal and external. Internal refers to the supreme authority to make and enforce laws for the territory and external refers to the interaction with the outside world.

⁸⁶Jackson notes that at independence, although African states did not have what Schwarzenberger refers to as the “sociological, economic, technological, psychological wherewithal to declare, implement, and enforce public policy domestically and internationally,” they were generously granted juridical sovereignty by their formal colonial powers (cited in Zaum, 2007: 3).

political community. The second follows the first assumption. If the state is a product of a pre-existing political community, then the institutions and discourse of the state are organic to the political community, which gave birth to it. A third assumption is the concept of 'own territory'. This suggests that a state is first and foremost indigenous—a collective of people already on their land with shared political aspirations. A state established in such a context is primarily *emergent* rather than *superimposed* on the context (Eisenstadt et al, 1988).

Contemporary conceptions of the state have abandoned its organic nature and placed emphasis on building rational legal bureaucracies from the outside. George Jellinek⁸⁷ (cited in Speiser and Handy, 2005: 9) sums up the current understanding of the state as “a community where citizenship is realised and where state authority is seen as a legitimate capacity to rule over people...” This definition makes no allusion to pre-existing political consciousness and organic political institutions in the context in which the state is to be established. Rather, it assumes that the state can operate in a context devoid of political community and institutions, until it produces them. Arguably, nowhere else was this concept of statebuilding minus state formation⁸⁸ applied effectively, compared to Africa (Eisenstadt et al, 1988). Colonialism dismantled and/ or perverted pre-existing emerging political communities, reconstructed indigenous demography and established a colonial state to exercise control over them (Clapham, 2001).

⁸⁷George Jellinek is credited for the three-part notion of the state, which is drawn from his *Staatsrechtslehre*. Speiser and Handy notes that this notion has had broad acceptance in the 20th century.

⁸⁸State formation is an evolutionary process in which dynamics of territorial growth, contraction and withdrawal lead to the formation of hierarchical political structures.

2.3 STATEBUILDING AND SURVIVAL

In the following section I discuss how states in Africa were developed and survived in terms of the performance thesis which Zartman identifies as: a) mobilising collective identity and nationbuilding; b) operating public institutions or bureaucracies; and c) guaranteeing the security of the population (1995).

2.3.1 Collective Identity and Nationbuilding

As a sovereign authority, the state is expected to provide and/ or represent the collective identity of the people in its territory, as well as serve as the arena of politics (Zartman, 1995). This entails, to a large extent, nationbuilding or building of a political community.

2.3.1.1 Nationbuilding: A Working Definition

Nationbuilding involves “a process whereby individuals and communities are socialised into a larger political community and to which they remain devoted and loyal” (Ake, 1967: 486, cited in Seyon, 1972: 20). The glue that tends to hold such a community together includes “common language, territory, economic life, and psychological make-up manifested as a shared history and culture” (ibid). Others shy away from linking nationbuilding to primordial materials. Ernest Renan prefers to describe the project as a grand solidarity building exercise, which produces a community that prides itself in the sacrifices they have made for their community and those they are prepared to make in the future (Renan, 1882, cited in Ozkirimli, 2005: 19). Such a community need not be genetically related. What makes their community seem primordial is the valour that runs through their individual veins to

make the ultimate sacrifice on behalf of their community. Miller (1995) indicates that the continued willingness to make such sacrifice from generation to generation is only made possible because each member *believes* that they belong together and they share common existential characteristics. The *belief* is codified and maintained from time to time through a range of socialisation processes, including history and education, and in the case of Poro communities through the *rites de passage*. Arguably Seymour et al (1996) offer a more contemporary definition of nationbuilding: "...a community of equal, rights-bearing citizens united in patriotic attachment to a shared set of political practices and values" (p. 32). Here the emphasis is on human rights, politics and patriotism, leaving out primordial elements.

In addition to its eclectic and continuous nature, the process of nationbuilding, according to Stein Rokkan, is undertaken vertically and horizontally. He describes vertical nationbuilding as a process that "brings together the bottom of society and a distant and aloof state structure and elites at the top" (1975: 570). The aim of the vertical process is to create and mobilise public acceptance of state identity, including its values and practices. Rokkan identifies four inter-related phases in vertical nationbuilding: a) economic and cultural unification of the range of elites at the top; b) enlisting the masses in the civic arena through education and conscription in the military; c) facilitating the active participation of masses in public affairs; and d) ensuring equitable distribution of public welfare across society (ibid).⁸⁹ The horizontal dimension, on the other hand, is concerned with coalescing the social values, histories and aspirations of the various communities as the heritage of the collective. It is about bonding and bridging in order to construct a collective identity.

⁸⁹While shying away from indicating how long it takes to achieve the phases, Rokkan contends that it took Europe several centuries to achieve nationhood.

In pre-colonial Africa, as is the case in Poro-governed societies, horizontal nationbuilding tends to precede vertical nationbuilding. Whatever the case, a nation or a politically cohesive community is finally consummated when, in the words of Seymour et al (1996), the process achieves “value consensus” and “cultural homogeneity” (p. 32). Calhoun adds that the ‘value consensus’ and ‘cultural homogeneity’ should be entrenched in “immediate knowledge system” and “unquestioned belief” (1997). Acton (1967) however challenges the ‘cultural homogeneity’ goal while embracing ‘value consensus’. He would prefer, and I concur, cultural plurality rather than cultural homogeneity. He insists that the goal of nationbuilding need not lead to ‘uniformity’ of identity. The process should aim for diversity and harmony, celebrating the ‘heterogeno-national’ rather than ‘homogeno-national’ state. Such was the practice in pre-colonial Africa, where multiple ethnic groups created coalitions of multiple ethnicities and nationalities glued together in solidarity.

Also important to Rokkan are the drivers of the process. The dominant classical view of the drivers of nationbuilding is the politics of enmity. Parker et al (1992: 5) indicates, “[a] nation is ineluctably shaped by what it opposes” and by which “...it is forever haunted.” But do we need an image of the enemy to exist, or just the consciousness of difference? As Tamir (cited in Ozkirimli, 2005) argues, although human beings need the ‘other’ to critically reflect on their culture, this does not need to evoke fear, enmity or dehumanisation. Rather the difference can be “...a source for comparison, learning, borrowing...” (ibid). Rokkan (1975) and Einstadt et al (1988) identify more positive drivers. Einstadt et al (1988) argue that nations are the outcomes of the natural evolutionary process of cultural congruency achieved through

interaction, while Rokkan identifies leadership as an important driver in addition to interaction. He argues that leadership can accelerate or stifle the process of building nations or political communities. Keeping in mind that the essential characteristics of ‘nation’ or political community include ‘value consensus’ and ‘cultural homogeneity’, or ‘plurality’ achieved through ‘territorial boundedness’, ‘immediate knowledge system’, ‘unquestioned belief’, and effective leadership, how have post-colonial African states fared in the nationbuilding project?

2.3.1.2 African State and the Nationbuilding Project

Lofchie’s observation, made two decades into independence in Africa, adequately captures the predicament of statebuilders in the continent:

“While the nationalist in Europe and some other parts of the world could appeal to a reasonably clearly delimited people already in part aware of their identity through long experience some share in a common destiny, normally including a common language, the African statebuilders are expected to undertake the entire task of nationbuilding, all at once...” (Lofchie, 1971: 8, cited in Seyon 1977).

To understand the development of political community in the context of the African state, one needs to understand policies and practices adopted in the various colonies of Africa. This is necessary because many post-independence African states were created with institutions and cultures from the colonial era. Did the colonialists have the transformation of their colonies into independent states as part of their long-term goal? And if so, did they contribute to building political communities? How did the inheritors of the colonial states fare in furthering the political community building exercise (if they inherited one) and what have been the implications?

Colonial Policies and Implications for Nationbuilding: The colonial project in Africa was carried out with diverse policies and instruments. While the British pursued “Indirect rule”, the French adopted “Direct rule” and assimilation of their colonies into the French civilisation (Duignan and Gann, 1975). The British were aware that they would eventually leave and were intent on maximising colonial gains on the cheap, while the French were intent on achieving their psycho-spiritual mission of civilisation and Christianisation (Page and Sonnenburg, 2003). Educational systems in the two policies also varied. The British had separate education for their colonies, while the French opened their educational system to their colonies (Duignan and Gann, 1975). In the practices adopted by indirect rule, systematic efforts were made to keep African societies fragmented, while the French were keen to separate Africans from Africa (ibid). Indigenous mechanisms for building political communities, including indigenous authorities like the Poro, were either dismantled or corrupted.⁹⁰ Belgium pursued a ‘paternalistic’ policy, which assumed that what was best for Africans was to improve their material wellbeing while exercising authority over them. Germany and Portugal focused on exploiting the labour of their colonies (ibid). They, especially Germany, adopted repressive policies to tame their colonies. All of the colonial masters systematically avoided educating the African about African history. All developed stereotypical attitudes about African cultures and religions and reproduced the stereotypes as ‘civilising education’. Despite over two centuries of colonial dominance, no efforts were made to engage any of Rokkan’s four-phase models of evolving political communities.⁹¹ Aside from imposing territorial delimitations, constituting armies, producing national flags and civil administration,

⁹⁰The British indirect rule policy also established dual polities. For instance, the settler state of Sierra Leone was governed under the British Crown while the ‘natives’ in the Protectorate were governed under the range of hinterland jurisdictions.

⁹¹It can be argued that rudiments of civic consciousness, which contributed to the struggle for independence, were present at independence. These were building blocks for building civic communities in the new states. Unfortunately the independence leaders moved swiftly to destroy the civic foundations.

no efforts were made to achieve ‘value consensus’ and ‘cultural homogeneity’ or ‘cultural pluralism’; no ‘knowledge systems’ and ‘unquestioned beliefs’ developed for the emerging political communities, and no public arena where civic engagement could grow was developed.⁹²

Post-independence nationbuilding: It is fair to say that although the state which was handed down had few qualities of political communities, opportunities for nationbuilding were present at independence. At the dawn of independence, African communities in the various territories were mobilised and excited about national freedom. The question of belonging or not belonging to the imposed territories did not arise. All were mobilised against the perceived or real ‘enemy’, the colonial powers. The popular movements that gave rise to most of the independence struggle maintained healthy relations with the new elites. There were some attempts at constructing political communities. Some like Kwame Nkrumah, in addition to his dream of a United Africa, hoped that political communities could be galvanised through soccer. Others like Leopold Senghor of Senegal and Julius Nyerere of Tanzania constructed new ideologies to define their people. Many abandoned the multi-party system they negotiated at independence for single party politics in the name of dismantling ethnic cleavages and constructing broader political communities. But instead of rallying their disparate societies through the one-party system, the new political class turned the one-party system into a vehicle for autocracy (Davidson, 1992). Neither soccer nor single party politics or Africanist ideologies delivered

⁹²To the colonialists, it was too risky to build political communities in the colonies. Besides, they may have assumed that Africa did not need to bother with political communities, assuming that the ‘colonial centres’ by default would produce the identity and meaning necessary to keep Africans under some sort of political tent—state or otherwise.

cohesive political communities to Africa. If at all, single party politics entrenched ethnic cleavages and hegemony.

To protect themselves from the disgruntled populations, the inheritors of the colonial states adopted and perfected hybrids of the range of colonial policies—from repression, to divide and rule, to indirect rule (now rebranded as neo-patrimony and clientelism), to extraction and capital flight (also branded as political graft).⁹³ They also insulated themselves from their society. Hassan Kukah graphically describes the insulationist tactics:

The relationship between civil society and states in Africa seems to have some of the basic characteristics of a fortified city. In the fortified city, communication between those inside and those outside is severely restricted by the nature of the fort itself. So there are naturally outsiders and insiders. The thicknesses of the wall, its height, its impenetrability, are what make it a respectable fort... These characteristics are supposed to inspire awe and intimidation in the minds of observers... The result, of course, is that the fortified city is a barricade, a siege: those inside cannot come out and those outside cannot go in (Kukah, 2003: 49)

The outsiders resorted to other means to ensure their personal well-being, security and sense of identity. For instance, many continued with indigenous economic and social institutions and security systems in parallel to whatever elements of the state reached their rural communities (Kimathi, 2005). Kukah and Kimathi's arguments graphically illustrate some aspects of the political behaviour in Africa, but it is only half the story. While elites might have fortified their positions in the state, they preyed on society to sustain the bloated patronage system they presided over. Natural

⁹³For instance, as indicated in Chapter 1, rather than build on advanced efforts at nationbuilding which the Poro sustained over six centuries, the colonialists and their heirs demonised the institution, violently dismantled its structures and relegated it to dormancy. In other words, the majority of post-colonial African leaders seemed content with the colonial state handed down to them with its centralised administrative structures, extractive and exploitative government institutions, incomprehensible bureaucracy, military capacities and hurriedly crafted constitutional order.

endowments in rural communities were exploited while the livelihoods and ways of life of rural peoples were ravaged. Indigenous institutions like the Poro and Sande also established themselves as rural kleptocrats—abandoning all regulatory regimes of the sodalities. Also, those outside took advantage of any opening to jump into the fort and sometimes throw overboard those who kept them away, in the form of coups and insurgencies. They then continued the fortification tactics.⁹⁴

2.3.1.3 Outcomes and Consequences

Fifty years on (over 160 years in the case of Liberia), African statebuilders are yet to transform the multiple social cultural systems in their loosely demarcated territories into political communities. This lack of a cohesive social frame within which the multiple communities could derive collective meaning and identity has undermined the building of legitimacy and loyalty, social and public trust, as well as shared meaning and values. Pye and Verba’s emphatic statement made barely five years into independent statehood in most of Africa—that “unless those individuals who are physically and legally members of a political system... are also psychologically members of that system, orderly patterns of change are unlikely”—is substantiated by the disastrous failure of the state system in most of Africa (1965: 529, cited in Seyon 1977: 6). The absence of a sense of collective identity and shared meaning has given way to “political apathy, social atomisation and irresponsibility” (Benner, 1997: 190-206). This calamity is a rude reminder that a politically conscious community is a

⁹⁴In addition, as will be discussed later in Chapter 3, the Americo-Liberians in Liberia and the Creole settlers in Western Sierra Leone maintained a separation between their settler state and the indigenous population. The recurrent contentious issue throughout Liberia’s history had been whether to expand the state and its national tent to include the indigenous population, instead of the indigenous people resisting the state system. In both cases, as was the case in most of Africa, the failure of the state was primarily driven by the exploitation and reinvention of indigenous political systems such as the Poro and Sande as institutions of ethnocracy and gerontocracy.

necessary condition for viable statehood. It remains the outstanding project which contemporary statebuilders in Africa cannot and must not overlook.⁹⁵

2.3.2 Public Institution and Service Function

The second most important function of the state is the maintenance and operation of public institutions. In Weber's rational-legal state, the basic tenet is that "individuals in public positions possessing power over their fellow citizens exercise that power in accordance with a legally defined structure directed towards a publicly acknowledged goal" (Clapham, 1985: 44). Without such a stable politico-legal framework, the state is unable to accumulate human, social and economic capital for its sustenance (ibid.). Here I briefly interrogate the origin and effectiveness of public institutions in colonial and post-colonial Africa, and to make the case that while the African state held fast to authority or the "African Leviathan", their rot began from failure of the bureaucracies and the meaningfulness of the alien discourse to the local.

2.3.2.1 Public Sector: A Working Definition

The goal of public institutions is to deliver services in a range of sections including security, health, education, roads, etc. Max Weber's bureaucracy has four major characteristics: a) it establishes and operates based on fixed jurisdiction; b) it is an ordered system with superiors and subordinates; c) management is based on written

⁹⁵It was naïve on the part of statebuilders to imagine that post-colonial states could survive without politically conscious and cohesive communities (Ozkirimli, 2005). Even those who still doubt the links between a politically cohesive community and state efficacy acknowledge that its absence greatly weakens the state and undermines the building of trust and the culture of accountability (Clapham, 2003). Karl Marx, in the preface to *A Contribution to the Critique of Political Economy* argued emphatically "...it is not the consciousness of man that determine their existence but their social existence that determines their consciousness." If one were to rephrase Marx's argument, one can say that it is not the atomised, interest-seeking individual citizen who creates a conscious political community, but that a conscious political community creates individual citizens. This argument presupposes that rather than develop individuals, African states needed to pay attention to the creation of conscious communities. It was not enough that once the colonial states had established relatively ordered and peaceful territories with the various ethnic communities, that these could automatically translate into politically conscious communities.

procedures; and d) specialised individuals and specialised knowledge are required for its operation.⁹⁶ Weber points out that public institutions mature into these characteristics over a long period of time (cited in Borgatti, 1996).⁹⁷ The viability of public institutions, drawing from Weber’s description and the common expectations from citizens, I argue, can be measured by three core indicators: a) the quality and coherence of the institution; b) its distributive capacity; and c) extent of public consent and cooperation. These core indicators, as illustrated in Table 2.1, are further manifested in a range of behavioural indicators, which tend to be unique from context to context.

Table 2.1: Indicators of Institutional Crisis

Coherence	Consent and Cooperation	Distributive Capacity
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Conflict between public institutions on mandates and responsibilities • Resonance and acceptance of public and societal values • Politicisation 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Visibility and loyalty to alternative institutions • Resistance to tax payment, or tax evasion • Explicit disrespect for public goods and facilities 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Exclusion • Disproportional allocation of state resources to public sectors • Disproportional delivery of services (e.g. urban-rural)

If one applies the above indicators to public institutions in Africa, one is confronted with the fact that nearly all states in the continent have failed to operate efficient and effective public institutions. For instance, before the civil wars consummated their collapse, public institutions in Liberia and Sierra Leone had degenerated not only into states of disrepair, but their rot had begun to engulf their respective societies. It is fair to say that at independence, most African states inherited relatively well-functioning bureaucracies, albeit with variations. The economic health of most countries at independence testifies to the relative effectiveness of the bureaucratic structures. Bello (2009) indicates that during the period when the African states were being

⁹⁶Available at <http://www2.pfeiffer.edu>, accessed 04/07/2007.

⁹⁷Stephen P. Borgatti provides an excellent summary of Marx Weber’s rational bureaucracy on www.analytictech.com/mb021/bureau.htm.

handed to their respective inheritors, the net food export of the continent was 1.3 million tons a year.⁹⁸ From all indications, a number of African states inherited considerable financial reserves at independence. So what went wrong? Why did the relatively healthy bureaucracies disintegrate so quickly? Some say it is at the colonial origin of public institutions (Acemoglu et al, 2000)⁹⁹, while others argue it is at their maintenance in post-independence Africa (Chabal and Daloz, 1998; Baryat et al, 1999; Speiser and Handy, 2005) and yet others trace it to the tropical and diseased climatic conditions (Gallup, Sachs and Mellinger, 1999). Let us review the dominant causal debates on the inefficacy of the public sector in sub-Saharan Africa.

2.3.2.2 Colonial Public Sectors

Acemoglu et al (2000) trace the rapid institutional disintegration in Africa to the colonial construction of the public sector. They argued that colonialist policies in establishing and managing bureaucracies were informed by the environmental conditions of the colonies. Where weather and diseases made it uncomfortable for long-term residence, as in the case of West Africa, the colonialists established “extractive institutions”, while in colonies with more favourable habitable conditions, the bureaucracies were more “constructive” (ibid). In the favourable colonies, the colonialists built state bureaucracies akin to those in their respective centres. These included “checks and balances on state power, fostering private entrepreneurship, trade and innovation” (Acemoglu et al, 2000: 1375). They also built the infrastructures—roads, real estate, railways, utility systems, etc. Conversely, the extractive policy included “legal constructs endowing the state with large powers and

⁹⁸For more details, see Bello, Walden (2009) *The Food Wars*, Verso: London.

⁹⁹For more detail on the links between colonial bureaucracy and those of post independence African states, see Acemoglu, Daron, Johnson and Robinson (2000), “The Colonial Origins of Comparative Development: An Empirical Investigation,” NBER Working Paper #7771

few constraints, and which were designed to effectively transfer natural resources to the colonisers while stifling private initiative and commercial development in the colonies” (ibid). Colonial educational policies also accounted for the quality of human capital developed in the colonies. In favourable conditions, the colonialists established considerable human capital development capacity, which they managed themselves. In unfavourable colonies, these resources were few. In both instances, the colonialists managed most of the professional functions while locals were mostly clerks, errand officers and guards. As a consequence, the abrupt departure led to the rapid decline of the bureaucracy and public institutions. Sachs and McArthur (2001) disagree with Acemoglu et al’s links between colonial practice and failure of the public sector in Africa. Instead they argue that geographically related variables such as malaria and low life expectancy are to blame for low productivity and weak bureaucratic performance in Africa. It seems to me, however, that the arguments Sachs and McArthur advance in their critique of Acemoglu et al’s work tend to reinforce the core argument which Acemoglu et al advance that inhospitable conditions, whether health or geography influenced colonial practices and post-colonial human capacities. The evidence in the difference between West Africa and the rest of Africa in terms of infrastructural and institutional development is undisputed. However, sub-Saharan Africa’s woeful public sector performance cannot be attributed to colonial legacy and geographical determinants alone. We must also investigate the place and power of agency, especially since the state was handed down to Africans.

2.3.2.3 Bureaucracy in Post-independence Africa

African scholars like Francis (2005), Olukoshi (1998), Mohan and Zack-Williams (2004), Zack-Williams et al (2000), among many, while insisting that colonialism shares most of the blame for bureaucratic failure in Africa, concede that post-colonial nationalists and those who came after them have and continue to fail Africa. They identify the politicisation and de-professionalisation of state bureaucracy, graft, mediocrity, patronage, etc. as vices which the nationalists introduced and/ or perfected in the colonial states. Also, rather than pay attention to the development of the state bureaucracy, inheritors of the African states leaned towards politics and authority—the ‘African Leviathan’. As a consequence, this school argues, decline of state bureaucracy was accelerated at an unprecedented pace on the day the state was handed to the nationalists. Most western scholars however insist that it is Africa’s so-called nationalists who corrupted the excellent state system bequeathed to them at independence, with historical, sociological and cultural materials from the continent (Chabal and Daloz, 1999; Speiser and Handy, 2005). The only blame that colonialists share, they argue, is the manner in which they handed over the state. Jackson (1993) contends that the root of the problem was in the takeover:

“Africans were catapulted by the rush of events into the state system of the latter twentieth century with very limited preparation for large scale self-government and still attached to indigenous practices and institutions of which most were rooted in kinship duties and clan or tribal identities that were contrary to the obligations and other requirements of modern sovereign statehood” (Jackson, 1993: 140, cited in Speiser, 2005: 15).

Others trace the problem to the African context. They argue that conditions in Africa have been particularly anathema to the public institution model defined by the

Western state system (Herbst, 2000; Jackson, 2001; Reno, 2000; Clapham, 2001). Daloz and Chabal (1999) went even further to question any claim that bureaucracy and governmentality were evolving in pre-colonial Africa. They argue strongly that state institutions are not just any “centralised political structures presiding over the destiny of a given people in a given geography”, nor can anything like it emerge from organic political formations in non-western societies (1999: 54). Rather, development of the modern state is independent and as an [*pre-designed*] entity, its viability depends on being emancipated from the society in which it is transplanted (ibid). Beier (2005) observes that this type of claim is born out of the presumption that “...the state is the sole legitimate expression of the political... absent of the state; no advanced politics could be imagined to exist” (p.11). Such claims in my view are too simplistic, because they tend to reduce Africa’s complex political malaise into a single cause-and-effect, while upholding the Western state system as a universal model.

While the greed and terror which overwhelmed Africa are inexcusable, the bickering about who is or isn’t to blame tends to divert much needed energy from rethinking governmentality and bureaucracy in failed and post-collapsed states in Africa. I want to move the debate back to the question of structure, agency and context. The claim that a structure can be transplanted and not be affected by its context and the people for whom it was constructed is not only naïve, it is also the height of chauvinism. If the proposition that interactions between structures, agencies and contexts results in reproduced structures, agencies and contexts, then the questions we should be asking are: a) how potent are each of the three elements in the configuration process? And b) what is likely to emerge in light of the individual quality?

In addition to the colonial and contextual factors, there were also exogenous factors that contributed to the bureaucratic decay in Africa. The most popular culprit is the infamous structural adjustment policy (SAP). Influenced by the Wilsonian neo-liberal thesis, the Bretton Woods institutions (BWIs) argued that by reducing state bureaucracy to efficient levels, deregulating the private sector and allowing import-export balances to be dictated by market forces, economies of developing countries would resuscitate and experience growth (Olukoshi, 1998). At the heart of SAP was the notion of allowing the ‘invisible hand’ the chance to advance development. The policy failed to appreciate the fact that there must, first and foremost, be a core mercantilist class in the context to nurture the growth of the primacy of the private over the public in the economic realm. Notwithstanding the sometimes non-existent foundation for private entrepreneurship in most African countries, the BWIs demanded that nearly all African countries implement SAP in order to continue to do business with the BWIs.¹⁰⁰ Nearly all African countries acquiesced under such pressure and religiously implemented the infamous policy. Unfortunately, the promised prosperity became an illusion (Olukoshi, 1998).¹⁰¹

¹⁰⁰Olukoshi (1998) outlines the key policy conditionality as: “devaluation of national currencies, trade liberalisation, foreign currency transaction, price and interest rate deregulation, promoting of cost-cutting and deficit-reducing measures, retrenchment of workers in the public sectors, liquidation of public sector firms, among others (p. 2). It also called for cutbacks on social projects like housing, education, health, etc.

¹⁰¹Proponents of SAP argue that to blame Africa’s woes on a policy, which in actual fact intended to address a glaring African economic and governance disease, is to take the blame game too far. While agreeing that the blame game will take Africa and Africans nowhere, it makes sense to learn from mistakes; and SAP was one of those mistakes with disastrous consequences in Africa. SAP was analogous to or even arguably an economic extension of the evangelical and missiological expedition of colonialism and neo-colonialism. It fails to acknowledge that political, social and economic conditions are not the same in all states. It was absurd to assume that its universal prescription would heal all diseases. Most importantly, the retraction of the public sector assumes that there was an emerging or existing mercantile class who would step up to the plate. The error in this assumption turned Africans into mere consumers of western commodities, leading to the astronomical rise in imports and near disappearance of export capacities on the continent. Some proponents of SAP have acknowledged that rather than prosperity, the policy which they implemented with evangelical fervour has not only failed, it has accelerated the failure and collapse of most states in Africa, although there is yet to be formal apologies or some reparations for this significant policy failure across the developing world including its biggest casualty—Africa.

2.3.2.4 *Persistent Explanations for Bureaucratic Decay in Africa*

Despite compelling evidence that suggests that public institutions in Africa failed due to the combined effect of endogenous and exogenous factors, many scholars cling to recurrent myths to explain the institutional woes in Africa. Since these myths often drive the diagnosis on which the international community tends to base their prescriptions for state collapse, I will discuss the two dominant myths. These include: a) neo-patrimony is inherent to Africa; and b) there is no public and private differentiation in Africa.

Neo-patrimony originates from Africa: Chabal and Daloz (1999), Speiser and Handy (2005), Reno (2001) and Erdmann (2001) are among the many scholars who allege that African leaders dusted out what they claimed was Africa's arcane patrimonial order and merged it with the rational-legal model from the West to produce neo-patrimony.¹⁰² Speiser and Handy argue that while the establishment of African states on the relics of colonialism made them inherently fragile, state failure and collapse is directly a consequence of neo-patrimony, which African elites erected after independence. While I acknowledge that neo-patrimony and its manifestations have undermined post-colonial Africa's social, political and economic development, the claim that it originated in Africa and only gained currency in post-colonial Africa is suspect. Evidence suggests public institutions in African colonies and those at the colonial centres were quite different. Gyekye (1997) contends that colonial governors personalised public institutions and ruled through decrees, with no accountability to

¹⁰²Weber defines neo-patrimony as "a form of organisation in which relationships of a broadly patrimonial type pervade a political and administrative system which is formally constructed on rational legal lines" (Clapham, 2001: 48). He goes on to point out that in a neo-patrimonial system, the "state is simultaneously illusory and informal, the rule of law is feebly enforced, and the ability to implement public policy remains mostly limited" (ibid). Out of a neo-patrimonial order comes clientelism and corruption, both of which have severely undermined public institutions in Africa.

the governed. They selected a few chiefs, many of whose communities were in revolt against them, and imposed them as proxies of the indirect rule system (p.218).¹⁰³ Secondly, the culture of exploitation and arbitrariness exercised during colonialism, coupled with the disconnected yet mutually exploitative relations between the colonial capitals and their so-called protectorates, gave way to “...the general attitude amongst citizens that it is possible to injure the state without injuring oneself...” (Gyekye, 1997: 220). Gyekye observes that this attitude “...opens the floodgates of bribery, corruption, carelessness about state property or state enterprise, and other unethical acts deleterious to the development and welfare of the state” (ibid). This is not to excuse the nationalists who, upon assuming state responsibility, perfected and perpetuated these vices.

A third observation that escapes the notice of most scholars is the bifurcated attitudes most Africans demonstrate when interacting in the state on a ‘public’ level, and another when interacting at communal levels. Gyekye indicates that citizens tend to maintain positive attitudes to the community, believing that any injury done to the community directly affects oneself (p. 230). On the other hand, they maintain negative attitudes when interacting at the state level. A participant confirms Gyekye’s observation thus:

“Public space and public goods in Poro societies were defined as sacred... no one was allowed to abuse them or claim them as their own... one family did not benefit from them in exclusion of others, nor were positions allocated based on personal relationship...” (Key Informant, Monrovia, 2006).

¹⁰³For instance, the first general council in which the people of Sierra Leone had some say was established in the 1958 constitution—3 years before independence (Alie, 1992). Similarly, freed slaves in Liberia jealously protected their settler state from the indigenous majority. The over 95% indigenous population was granted partial citizenship in a state to which they were tax-paying subjects only in 1951, nearly 94 years into statehood (Sawyer, 1992). It took a bloody coup in 1980 (133 years after independence) for indigenous Liberians to fully experience real political franchise and citizenship. It is important to reiterate here that both Liberia and Sierra Leone operated dual legal and institutional systems—for the settler states on the one hand, and the protectorates on the other—for well over a century. After independence, the state-protectorate divides simply metamorphosed into a rural-urban divide with disproportional allocation of resources in favor of urban dwellers, while the infamous indirect rule system now manifests itself as ‘clientelism’ (Herbst, 2000).

I argue that resistance¹⁰⁴ culture established during colonialism is one reason for the demeaning attitude towards public goods. Fanthorpe (2007) observes well when he said that the Poro in Liberia and Sierra Leone have served both as instruments of political order and control and instruments of egalitarian resistance to state control (p.9).¹⁰⁵ Although public cultures and practices in the colonies as described above fit very well in Weber's description of the neo-patrimonial order, some scholars still insist that what was left behind was the Western model and that neo-patrimony was the outcome of Africa's adaptation of the model (Speiser and Handy, 2005). Even where they acknowledge the difference between public structures and practices in the colonies and metropolises, most scholars insist colonial authorities were constrained to adapt the rational-legal model to African conditions, but make no connection between the colonial adaptation and post-colonial public culture and structure.¹⁰⁶

Lack of public-private differentiation: In Weber's rational-legal state, it is argued that the decision-making capacity and functioning of a state is measured by its degree of independence from society (Bayart, 1993; Daloz and Chabal, 1999). The fragility of African states, it is argued, is a consequence of the difficulty (if not impossibility) of separating the private from the public in African cultures. Others insist that it is this private-public inseparability that creates the fertile ground for neo-patrimony (Reno, 2001; Hyden, 1999). This claim is misleading and it is certainly a consequence of either the lack of understanding of, or persistent obliviousness to, the socio-political

¹⁰⁴In reaction to the British and Liberian authority outlawing the Poro institution, traditional authorities spearheaded a number of revolts including war, destruction of facilities belonging to the occupying powers and the use of spiritual powers against colonial interests.

¹⁰⁵Dean and Levi (2003) identify the common forms of resistance which indigenous societies applied against the imposing state as "dissimulation, false compliance, pilfering, feigned ignorance, slander and cynicism, and sabotage" (p. 18-20). These resistance practices were exacerbated when African elites appropriated the state for themselves and excluded the general populace.

¹⁰⁶Chabal, Daloz and Jackson even conclude their works by blaming African elites for "Africanising" or "traditionalising" Weber's rational-legal state, and the colonial masters for leaving Africa in a hurry and abandoning the western state model to Africans to be bastardised and thrown into disrepute.

and historical realities of Africa. In my view, authors who make the claim of private-public inseparability in Africa fail to acknowledge the fact that with the introduction of the state, all African societies were subjected to interacting within two or more publics—the ‘publics’ constructed in indigenous political systems and those imposed through colonialism and the state system produced from it. Ekeh first introduced the concept of ‘two-publics’, indicating the ‘publics’ of indigenous Africa, which Fanthorpe (2007) calls “primordial publics”, and the state ‘public’ (Ekeh, 1975). As part of their resistance strategy and fortification of the state, most African societies gravitated to the norms and practices of the ‘primordial’ publics, while seizing every opportunity to exploit Weber’s ‘instrumental’ macro-public.¹⁰⁷

Besides, whether western or indigenous African political systems, the quality of private-public interaction, as Migdal (2001) points out, is a consequence of mutual consent emanating from the merger and common expression of shared public-private values (p.42). Despite the rigid rules that governed private-public differentiation in most African societies, the ‘multi-micro-publics’ enjoy a considerable level of cooperation and acceptance primarily because rules governing them are based on “explicit or implied consent” (ibid: 34). The consent is born from the fact that both the public and private are products of society, and are not arbitrary constructions or impositions. Peter Evans (1995) reminds us that while private-public or state-society separation is necessary for a functioning bureaucracy, public or state structures must be anchored within society to ensure their legitimacy and relevance.¹⁰⁸ Because there

¹⁰⁷While Ekeh’s concept of ‘two-publics’ clarifies the confusion that drive the dominant thinking, it tends to also lump the range of ‘micro-publics’ in Africa’s multi-ethnic, multi-national states under one rubric. The researcher here proposes to speak of multi micro-publics and the macro-public of the state. Most African societies gravitated to the norms and practices of the ‘primordial’ public while seizing every opportunity to exploit the macro-public.

¹⁰⁸Kimathi (2005) points out that, inheritors of the colonial states furthered the urban bias, marginalising rural dwellers while privileging urban dwellers through resource allocation. They continued with the periphery-centre flow of resources from the rural to the capital cities and then onward to Western banks for their personal benefits.

has been neither merger amongst the multi micro-publics, nor merger between them on the one hand and the macro-public of the state on the other, there are fierce competitions amongst the ‘multi-micro-publics’ as well as between the ‘micro-publics’ and the ‘macro-public’.¹⁰⁹ While contestation amongst the micro-publics undermine societal cohesion, contestation between the micro-publics and the macro-public weakens the state and sets it on the path of decline.¹¹⁰

2.3.3 Guarantor of Security

2.3.3.1 Security: A Working Definition

Hobbes argues that security is the single most important condition for developing civilised and prosperous existence in any society, and that the state is its sole provider (MacPherson, 1968, cited in Buzan, 1989). Although he refers to the aspiration for “well-being” and “prosperous” life as the natural outcomes of security, Hobbes claims that it is insecurity, not security and the conditions of well-being, which drive rational people to shelter together in the commonwealth of the state (Wolfers, 1962: 16-17). The degree of insecurity a state faces is, therefore, measured by its perception of fear

They also continued with the infamous indirect rule system under a new brand name—‘clientelism’. The term refers to a complex chain of personal bonds between political patrons or bosses and their individual clients or followers. These bonds are founded on mutual material advantage: the patron furnishes excludable resources to dependents and accomplices in return for their support and cooperation. Present day clientelism thus tends to flourish in insecure political and economic environments, both rural and urban, and is integral to the politics of survival for both patrons and clients (Migdall, 1988). Martz (1997: 10) has pointed out that clientelism is “an enduring mechanism of control in society... identifiable in all times and settings.” As a consequence, the state with its control and centralisation of all resources of African societies, as Clapham (2001) notes, has become the biggest prize for which African elites continue their violent scramble.

¹⁰⁹Just as during colonial times representatives of paramount chiefs presiding over rural communities at the behest of the colonial authorities had their representatives in the capitals, authorities of the ‘micro-publics’ seem to perceive individuals from their communities in the state system as their ambassadors who are expected to represent their interests.

¹¹⁰I am not attempting to continue the blame game. The intention of this exercise is to attempt to fully define the origin and complexity of the public institutional crisis in Africa (with particular attention to Liberia and Sierra Leone). Also, it would be unfair to claim that whatever was left behind did not have some redeemable elements, even if they were introduced in the last few years of colonialism and embedded within the colonial discourse. Where I agree with Chabal, Daloz and others is the allegation that African elites failed at independence to seriously review the institutions and public values they inherited and make them “appropriate” and “meaningful” to conditions and change dynamics, which prevailed in Africa at the time. Instead, African elites appropriated the colonial exploits for their personal benefits (Clapham, 2001).

and extent of vulnerability of its territory, institutions, shared values and human and material resources (ibid). While Hobbes' definition of security seems to suggest that collective security is inherent to society, the emergence of the state resulted in the usurpation of societal security for state security under the "national security" doctrine (Buzan, 1989). The national security doctrine makes five fundamental assumptions: a) security is inherently political and the state is both the sole securitising object and guarantor of national security; b) threats to national security are external and reside in the intentions and behaviours of other states; c) as a sovereign authority, the state has settled the question of order, unification, legitimacy and collective identity on the domestic front, thus ensuring domestic peace; and d) the state is benign and will only use organised violence in the interest of state-making and consolidation (ibid). Nothing in the classical security doctrine makes the distinction between the state and the regime, nor were preventive measures put in place to control how state actors or regimes exploit the immense powers and instruments of violence put in the care of the state. In fact it was assumed that state violence against its own population was always meant for the greater good, for statemaking (Buzan, 1989).

2.3.3.2 Security in Post-independent Africa

The consequences of entrusting the sheltering together for personal wellbeing and security to colonially constructed states have been colossal in Africa. Rather than forge cooperation and consensus amongst its pre-colonial authorities, African states resorted to regime security, ethno-politics and elitism. They entrenched themselves in power through state terror and patronage, thereby undermined the sheltering together under the state tent for 'wellbeing' and 'prosperity' to which Hobbes refers. Barely 15 years into statehood in Africa, Martin van Creveld warned that, "[any]

state...which cannot safeguard the lives of its members, subjects, citizens, comrades ...is unlikely either to command their loyalty or to survive for very long..." (1975: 42). Van Creveld's observation became real in Africa once the superpowers, whose proxy war kept the lid on the grievances boiling within most African states, withdrew their support. The myth of the state's monopoly over violence, as a result, has begun to unravel and given way to what du Toit (1999) and Job (1992) refer to as "insecurity dilemma". Boys and girls aged as young as seven years now march into the public realm to lay claims to the predatory state and thereby displace old dictators for new warlords, thanks to the availability and efficient use of the AK-47 (Doe, 2001). The random and widespread violence which their long repressed rages have caused them to unleash has not only shattered state institutions, but cut at the seams of the fabric of society; thus leading to the total collapse of state and society. These post-Cold War developments have prompted international calls for a rethink of the so-called national security doctrine, which gave the state the exclusive rights to the security of its territory and people. Holsti (1996) points out that the traditional realist framework that singles out the state as the sole securitising object—custodian of sovereignty, and defender of society against external threats—is seriously out of sync with today's realities. He calls for the widening of the security discourse to include non-military issues that impact human security (ibid).

An avalanche of concepts and theories has followed since Holsti made his groundbreaking call. Buzan et al (1997) arguably offer the first comprehensive and compelling response. They question the singular and exclusive position of the state as the only securitising object, while at the same time remaining the sole custodian of security. They call for widening the scope and content of securitised objects by

including *individuals*, *nation* and *regime* as equally salient securitising objects (ibid). Buzan et al make the case that just as the state can be mobilised to make the ultimate sacrifice to defend itself, similar sentiments should be evoked when individuals and their national collectivity are threatened (ibid). The United Nations Development Programme (UNDP) in the 1994 Human Development Report takes the case of security for humans to the international policy arena. The report identifies seven threats to security and proposes humans instead of the state as the central securitising object.¹¹¹ The human security approach departs from traditional understanding and application of security in three fundamental ways. First, it returns human beings and the threats defined from their perspectives to the centre of the security discourse. Second, rather than focus on containment of threats, human security seeks to systematically prevent threats before they endanger the wellbeing and prosperity of human beings and their communities. Alkire emphasises that human security “urges institutions to offer protection which is institutionalised, not episodic; responsive, not rigid; preventative, not reactive” (Alkire, 2003: 2). The third difference is that the human security notion of security seeks to preserve and promote the vital core of life. Alkire defines the vital cores as *agency* (freedom ‘to be’ or the ability and freedom to independently determine one’s existence and wellbeing), *survival* (freedom from threats to life), *community* (freedom to interact and belong to a community), and *dignity* (respect for individuals, their values, beliefs and worldviews).

Aside from calls to rethink the securitising objects, there are also calls to broaden the scope of security beyond the national. Given the proximity and porosity of borders of most third world countries, especially in Africa, coupled with the phenomenal rise in

¹¹¹The UNDP’s seven threats to security include physical, economic, community, environmental, political, health and food.

transnational organised crime and bad neighbourliness, Buzan et al observe that classical international relations is in grave error for confining security to state parameters. They call for complementing the 'national security' structure and doctrine with 'regional security' structure and doctrine (cited in Francis, 2005: 91). Agreeing with Buzan et al, Dahl (1999) makes the case that because the "...boundaries of a country... are much smaller than the boundaries of the decisions that significantly affect the fundamental interests and security of its citizens", the tent under which people shelter must include sub regional and regional tents if effective and durable security is to be assured (p. 319). Dahl argues further that regional security brings particular benefits that cannot be obtained through national security. For instance, sub regional and regional security can: a) enhance awareness about transnational threats; b) reinforce regional cooperation, confidence building and good neighbourliness; and c) enhance effectiveness in the security sector by strengthening coordination and integrated responses (ibid).

While there are obvious advantages, especially for fragile African states, to shelter together under regional as well as national tents, there are also challenges with the concept. In most cases, regional cooperation tends to be an excuse for regional hegemony to bully smaller states and extend their authority beyond their borders. Rivalries between Anglophone and Francophone West Africa and the visible dominance of Nigeria in the Economic Community of West African States (ECOWAS), has led to apprehension amongst countries of the sub region about the implications of ceding some of their national responsibilities for security to a sub regional body. This fear was substantiated during the seriously flawed interventions of the Economic Community of West African States Monitoring Group

(ECOMOG)—the sub regional peacekeeping force established at the behest of Nigeria to end wars in Liberia, Sierra Leone, Cote d’Ivoire and Guinea-Bissau.¹¹² These realities account for the difficulty in the practical application of regional security policies, particularly in West Africa, although heads of states appear to be positive about the regional proposals (van Nieuwkerk, 1998). Besides the fear of hegemony, Nieuwkerk indicates that too much emphasis on regional security, given limited financial support, may leave much needed overhauling work on national security institutions undone (ibid). It may also create the false impression that strengthening regional security architecture automatically guarantees national security (ibid).

Notwithstanding its disadvantages, today’s threats with their transnational characters make a compelling case for regional security, even if a cautious case. Adebayo Oyeade and Abiodun Alao (1998) are more enthusiastic about the concept. In their edited book, *Africa After the Cold War: The Changing Perspective on Security*, the authors argue that the abandonment of African states by Western powers presents a golden opportunity to construct a “Pan-African security system”, with economic integration and cooperation as well as collective conflict resolution functions (1998: 189). Besides, it is important to point out here that African heads of states seem to have come to the conclusion long before the concept was written—that with their marginal place in global politics and sheer abandonment by world powers, sheltering together remains their only option for survival. All regional and sub regional institutions in Africa are actively developing regional security architectures, including conflict early warning systems—a domain that was only recently exclusive to the

¹¹²The researcher extensively elaborates this case in Chapter 3.

state. ECOWAS, as a case in point, has taken the lead in Africa in overhauling its policies and institutions. Heads of States of ECOWAS revised the 1975 Treaty establishing the ECOWAS and a range of other supplemental protocols to establish the principle of supra-nationality. The principle in theory allows the sub regional body to intervene in member states in cases of gross human rights violations, internal violence with threats to sub regional security, crisis of governance, the forestalling of inclusive politics and trans-border insecurity, among others. The treaty also explicitly enjoins upon member states to ensure that all their peoples enjoy their fundamental human rights as well as uphold pluralism and market economy.¹¹³

2.4 STATE COLLAPSE: CAUSES AND MANIFESTATIONS

The performance thesis, which is the dominant view in the international system, as indicated earlier, suggests that a state fails when it ceases to govern or perform its three core functions discussed in the previous section. These include institutional reference or public institutions and services, security and collective identity. As institutions decline and state performance falls in doubt, it leads to a crisis of legitimacy which often manifests itself in “illegal, informal and criminal use of state resources and powers; poor service delivery; corruption and personalisation of public assets” (Newman and Schnabel, 2002: 1). Doornbos identifies five salient precursors to state collapse: a) the privatisation of state assets; b) the breakdown of the patronage system and open protests against the establishment by former allies; c) the mismatch

¹¹³Numerous authors have adequately addressed the development of regional and sub regional security architectures in Africa. I present this snapshot to link the concept to the growing challenge of state reconstruction. While regional security is gaining currency in international discourse, state reconstruction efforts seem to be making limited efforts in operationalising the link between regional and national security. For instance, as will be discussed in chapters 6 and 7, the training of the national police forces in Liberia and Sierra Leone as well as their armed forces have very little demonstrated links to transnational policing. Ongoing security sector reconstruction in Liberia, in particular, has no emphasis on the development of immigration policies and the training of border guards. There is also no place for cross learning between the police and immigration forces of countries in the troubled Mano River basin.

between the nature and orientation of state institutions and divisions within society; d) deepening conflicts over resources; and e) increased reversion to culture and other forms of primordial identities (2003: 34).¹¹⁴ In addition to the precursors to state collapse, Zartman argues that the threshold of collapse is determined by societal collapse. Implying a symbiotic relationship between the state and society, Zartman posits that it is the simultaneous breakdown of societal institutions—associational life, social coherence and the absence of civic support and demand functions—and state bureaucracy which consummate the long and degenerative process of state collapse (1995: 5-7).

Perhaps one of the strongest arguments in Zartman's groundbreaking book, *Collapsed States: The Disintegration and Restoration of Legitimate Authority*, is the claim of the symbiotic relationship between the state and its society. This argument is telling, given the all-out war which African statebuilders waged against African societies in the hope of dismantling indigenous authorities and gaining legitimacy for themselves to consolidate the state. They seemed to have assumed that the state was potent enough to recreate its own society—one that would represent the norms of the Westphalian state and imbibe its liberal values. To the contrary, the exploitation and in some instances destruction of societal institutions and systems of relationship, inadvertently severely undermine the viability of the state. I must also add that the corruption and destruction of African indigenous systems predates colonialism and

¹¹⁴Others identify as salient precursors the decline of rule of law and the security sector, including political meddling with rulings of the courts; restrictions on media freedom; identity polarisation and xenophobia; dissatisfaction and opposition which then draws increased repression; and the use of security forces to keep order. While the numerous structural and accelerating indicators identified by scholars and security experts may precede state collapse, it is not a given that their presence is automatically followed by collapse. Countries like Guinea, Burundi, Nigeria and Cameroon, to name just a few, have managed to pull themselves from the brink of collapse and are gradually strengthening their respective states, although all the proximate and accelerating factors associated with collapse were present. Arguably what is the common life support during the critical periods of these countries was the semblance of authority (military, charismatic, tradition, etc) that remained both in the state and society at large.

the post-colonial states in most of Africa. The colonial project was built on the exploitation of indigenous systems during the slave trade, while post-colonial statebuilders perfected the work done during the colonial period. For instance, the politics of indirect rule exercised in most of Africa first by the colonial powers and later the nationalists, I would argue, originated from the profoundly immoral slave trade. During the trade, indigenous leaders who turned despots abandoned their systems of accountability for the whims of their patrons, who anchored along the coast awaiting their human cargoes from the hinterlands. The slave trade period and the period of colonialism that followed destroyed most indigenous systems of authority and accountability at the seams (Dunn and Tarr, 1988). Indigenous institutions as guarantors of social order became what Arthur Abraham refers to as personal amorphous structures ruled by despots.¹¹⁵ Aside from the exploitative strategies, earlier stereotypes which reduced Africa to possessing a mere primitive nature undermine constructive engagement with political agencies and structures of Africa. As a consequence the African state, arguably, is the least pervasive and permeable of the colonial states, compared to those established and contextually remoulded in Asia and Latin America.¹¹⁶

However, while I agree with the performance thesis, my proposition is that situating state collapse in the performance thesis alone does not tell the whole story. Besides, some of the core assumptions of the performance thesis are not that obvious. For instance, to establish direct causal links between civic disengagement and institutional

¹¹⁵It is important to note that decay of indigenous institutions during these periods vary from context to context, as is the case with state decay. In some African societies, indigenous systems resisted and are relatively intact, while in others the corruption led to serious degeneration of indigenous institutions. The point being made here is that collapse is the consequence of the interaction of degenerated societal institutions and the fragile state.

¹¹⁶Unlike Africa, the recognition of the political agency and structure of Asia allows for state-society “fusion” rather than state-society collision in Africa. The consequence was the establishment of dual polities and authorities—the colonial polity and ‘hinterland’ polities. At no time therefore did Africans abandon indigenous systems and authorities.

decline in my view is suspect. I will argue that most African states survived because of civic disengagement, rather than civic engagement. Rather than generate the vision around which African states could unite their populations, African elites resorted to the pursuit of what I call inverse legitimacy.¹¹⁷ Inverse legitimacy is a two-sided coin. On one side is state insulation and fortification and on the other is civic disengagement and societal fragmentation. In justifying the first side of the coin, state elites convinced themselves that the state is their personal prize for chasing out the colonial powers. They therefore feel justified to exercise a monopoly over its resources. On the other side, disenchanted with the mismanagement of the state, African societies have come to accept that the state belongs to the group of elites who speaks its language, wear its costumes and are versed in its polity; hence, they have adopted the practice of *disengagement* and/ or *acquiescence*. In the view of *inverse legitimacy*, therefore, states actually held together, albeit fragily, because there was no support and demand from their citizens—no legitimacy. There was also no pressure to perform. Similarly, Martin Doornbos's direct causal links between reversion to primordial materials and state collapse is suspect. At what time in the history of the state did Africans abandon indigenous materials for the service of the state? These questions compel us to look elsewhere for more convincing evidence to explain the collapse of the African state.

Ottaway (2003), Ghani et al (2006), and Mohan and Zack-Williams (2004), among others, seem to offer an alternative explanation that could complete the puzzle. The authors trace state collapse to the *crisis of authority*—the weakening or death of the

¹¹⁷Surhke, 1994; Duffield, 1994; and Kaplan, 1994 aptly refer to the case the researcher makes under this concept, although they do not name the situation inverse legitimacy.

‘African Leviathan’.¹¹⁸ This crisis of authority is caused primarily by two inter-related factors. First, it is caused by the withdrawal of the protection of the rival superpowers. During the Cold War, Ghani et al (2006) indicate, superpowers focused more on support to individual leaders rather than building state institutions in developing states, particularly in Africa. In the states under “Superpowers tutelage, those who agitated for accountability and efficient institutions were demonised and sometimes imprisoned, marginalised or repressed” (ibid: 32). Now that many of the states have lost their economic and strategic relevance, the ‘African Leviathan’ is left to fend for itself and to ward off its envious, greed-stricken elites and deeply aggrieved society. The exposure of the myth of the omnipotence of the state has sparked violent scrambles for its ‘spoils’ (Allen, 1995). Ottaway insists that the distinction between *crisis of authority* and *crisis of institution* is not semantics. It is a telling indication of what stage most African states were at in their development when the superpowers withdrew support. While performance is one avenue for generating authority and legitimacy, it is not the only source. African elites have depended on violence, patronage and loyalty to Western powers for regime survival. Here authority was more negative— colonising their societies through fear while filling the bellies of the elites they were unable to eliminate. In this view, what broke down was not performance. It was exposure of the impotence of the state.

2.5 CONCLUSION

In this chapter I revisited the old debates on the origin of the state because I am of the view that collapse presents us with the opportunity to start afresh—to ask the core

¹¹⁸Mohan, Giles and Zack-Williams, Alfred in their edited book, *The Politics of Transition: State, democracy and economic development in Africa*, James Currey: London (2004) coined the phrase ‘African Leviathan’ to argue the relevance of the notion of the Leviathan as propounded by Thomas Hobbes.

questions of state formation and statebuilding. I described how, at their inception, African states failed to make themselves relevant to their respective societies. The bureaucracies were neither appropriate nor relevant to the historical, sociological and economic realities of their respective societies. Rather than initiate dialogues with indigenous institutions, the nationalists reverted to state fortification and insulation after independence. They continued the colonial campaign of suppressing or exploiting Africa's political and economic agencies. I also noted that corruption in African indigenous systems predates colonialism and the post-colonial states in most of Africa. Most importantly, although African states may have gained independence, they still have their umbilical coils neatly tied to their former colonial powers. This was more so during the Cold War.

Drawing from this analysis, I contend that collapse is not entirely a bad thing. It can certainly not be a bad thing that the myths of terror and the monopoly over its use by a few against the majority are laid bare. What is worse in my view is to remain oblivious to the transformative and state indigenisation opportunities collapse may be presenting. This has so far been the case in most post-war states in Africa. It has certainly been the case in Liberia and Sierra Leone. In these two countries, as will be discussed in subsequent chapters, the fundamentals of statebuilding—mobilising political communities, evolving vibrant and responsive institutions, reconciling and coalescing the range of micro authorities, etc., remain outstanding tasks despite the overwhelming international response to their cataclysmic collapse. I argue throughout the thesis that unless these are addressed deliberately and systematically, many African states would continue to collapse or survive on external 'life-saving' oxygen, which is increasingly shrinking by the hour.

CHAPTER 3

HISTORICAL CONTEXT OF POLITICAL ORGANISATION AND STATEBUILDING IN LIBERIA AND SIERRA LEONE

The colonial state was a double-sided affair. Its one side, the state that governed a racially defined citizenry, was bounded by the rule of law and an associated regime of rights. Its other side, the state that ruled over subjects, was a regime of extra-economic coercion and administratively driven justice (Mamdani, 1996: 19)

3.1 INTRODUCTION

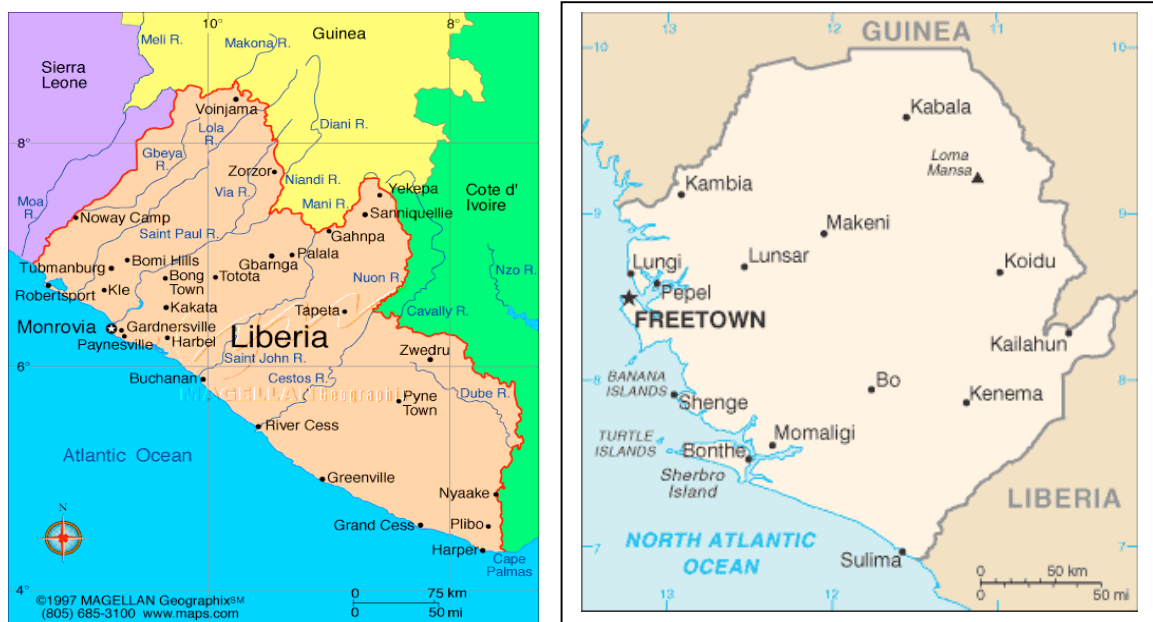
For more than a decade, Liberia and Sierra Leone shocked the world with horrifying images of children aged as young as seven years actively committing horrendous crimes of catastrophic proportions.¹¹⁹ This story continued until 2002 (for Sierra Leone) and 2004 (for Liberia), when the United Nations joined with West African leaders to end the nightmare. Since then, scholars, policymakers and even ordinary people have attempted to find explanations of some sort as to why Liberia (the oldest republic in Africa) and Sierra Leone (once known as a haven of peace) would so violently disintegrate.¹²⁰ None of the causal factors enumerated by scholars are unique to both countries. In fact, these can be found in even greater degrees in many African countries, compared to Liberia and Sierra Leone, and yet those countries are still surviving, albeit dangerously. Besides, I am of the view that some of the cited causes are symptoms of a confluence of causes set deep in the foundations of both states and their respective societies. I argue in this chapter that no one cause can

¹¹⁹Journalist Sorous Samora and the Hollywood film 'Blood Diamond' captures the pogrom to which especially Sierra Leone was subjected.

¹²⁰Moran (2006) summarises the dominant theories. Some say the violent collapse is a consequence of the combined effects of unbearable population explosion, rapid ecological degradation, deep-seated tribal feuds, and global devaluation of the primary goods on which the states depend; others say it is an expression of relative deprivation where the marginalised have displaced the privileged; yet others point to post-colonial '*politics of the belly*', arguing that the neo-patrimony allegedly inherent in African cultures has driven greedy politicians and warlords into violent scrambles for the state. Those who draw on anthropology propose that the perennial '*politics of secrecy*' characteristic of the Guinea Coast of Liberia, Sierra Leone, Guinea and Cote d'Ivoire reached its dead-end in Liberia and Sierra Leone; thus, demystifying the states and thereby exposing them to loot and vandal.

explain the collapse of any state. I contend that in order to understand the causes of state collapse—particularly in Liberia and Sierra Leone—it is imperative to dig deep into the historical, demographic, political, economic and social foundations on which the collapsed states were established. This is necessary if firmer and more durable foundations are to be built in the new emerging states and societies. Therefore the chapter offers an in-depth review of the geopolitical contexts, noting political orders predating the state, dynamics of state formation and the interactions between indigenous political institutions and the fledgling states. It concludes with discussions on how and why the trends of collapse in both Liberia and Sierra Leone could not be reversed.

3.2 GEOPOLITICAL CONTEXTS OF LIBERIA AND SIERRA LEONE



Sierra Leone and Liberia are situated on the West Coast of Africa in an area generally known as the Upper Guinea Coast. Sierra Leone covers 27,925 sq. miles (73,326 sq. km.) with a population of about 6.2 million inhabitants, while Liberia covers land area almost double the size of Sierra Leone (43,000 sq. miles or 111,369 sq. km), but with

a population of 5 million (2006 and 2008 estimates, respectively). Liberia and Sierra Leone share borders in the east and south-east (for Sierra Leone) and west (for Liberia), while their northern and southern (south-west for Sierra Leone) frontiers border Guinea and the Atlantic Ocean, respectively. Liberia borders Cote d'Ivoire in its eastern frontier. Pedro da Cintra, a Portuguese sailor who travelled in the region around 1462, named Liberia and Sierra Leone.¹²¹ The territorial integrity of both countries was concluded in the first decade of the 20th century both between France and Britain, the dominant colonisers of the region, and between the countries and colonisers.¹²²

3.2.1 People and Demography

Historical and anthropological accounts suggest that the current territories of Liberia and Sierra Leone have been inhabited for at least four millennia, although evidence of the earlier inhabitants is at best scanty. What is for certain though, is that today's inhabitants of both countries are relatively recent migrants. They migrated to this region in the last millennium, with the earliest settling in the region over five centuries before being joined by a new wave of migrants, mostly from the collapsing Ghanaian, Malian and Sudanese empires. Arguably, the earliest migrants were the Kru (predominantly in Liberia) and Limba (in Sierra Leone) around 1000-1400 AD

¹²¹He named Sierra Leone, *Serra Lyoa* (lion range) and Liberia, "*Malagueta Coast*". Both countries were named based on their natural endowments. Sierra Leone draws her name from the rolling hills in Freetown, while Liberia's was based on the highly valued malagueta pepper with which it was then well endowed. Later European sailors fondly referred to Liberia as the "Grain Paradise".

¹²²In these negotiations it is reported that Liberia, the only independent African state at the time, ceded most of its lands to the French colonies of Guinea and Cote d'Ivoire, and to the British colony of Sierra Leone to avoid the complete take-over which both powers threatened if their demands were not met. More specifically, Dunn and Tarr (1988) report that Britain annexed the Gallinas territory to Sierra Leone in 1885, while France expanded Guinea into Liberian territories, including the Guegadou and Macenta, and also expanded Cote d'Ivoire into San Pedro and Tabou, all of which were areas in the original map of Liberia.

(Dunn and Tarr, 1988).¹²³ In the four centuries after 1400 AD, new waves of migrants joined the earliest groups. These included the Baga, Bullom, Krim and Vai who settled in the west of Sierra Leone; the Temne and Loko in the north-west and the Limba further north in Sierra Leone. The Banta settled in the south-west (Alie, 1990). As for Liberia, the post-1400 migrants included Vai from Sierra Leone, the Mano, Kpelle, Belle, Bassa and Dey from the region known today as Ghana. The Grebos, Krahn, Gio and Mandingo were the latest of this group. They are said to have migrated from present day Cote d'Ivoire and Guinea (Dunn and Tarr, 1988; Sawyer, 1992).

Barely 100 years after the latest intra-continental migration, a new set of migrants from Europe and the New World¹²⁴ began to arrive, first in Sierra Leone and later in Liberia. They too joined their earlier compatriots in search for freedom from the dungeon of slavery and the marginal conditions that the New World and Europe had to offer their freed slaves. Re-captive slaves from the Congo and other parts of West Africa increased their population. Between 1787 and 1808, over 50,000 freed and re-captive slaves had settled in Sierra Leone (Alie, 1990) while about 17,000 settled in Liberia between 1822 and 1867 (Dunn and Tarr, 1988).

3.2.1.1 Demographic Composition

By the time the migration to Sierra Leone and Liberia reached their heights, the countries were populated by a peculiar mix of peoples, all—except the Krus and

¹²³The Kru, it is suggested, originated from the Gao and Timbuktu areas of the present day Republic of Mali and migrated down south to this region between 1000 and 1400 AD. Others suggest that they migrated westward from the Niger delta (Sawyer, 1992). The Limba in Sierra Leone do not have any history of migration. They claim they are among the original inhabitants of the region (Finnegan, 1965). Other accounts suggest that the Mel language group, including the Kissi in Liberia and Sierra Leone, like the Limbas are descendants of the original inhabitants of the Guinea Coast (Atherton, 1969).

¹²⁴A phrase used to refer to the Americas, of which the United States of America is a part.

Limbas—with fascinating myths about their journeys to the lands apparently destined as refuges for those seeking freedom. Both countries are populated by 17 ethnic groups each, with the Mende and Temne constituting more than half of the total population of Sierra Leone and the Kpelle and Bassa ethnic groups constituting over a third of the population in Liberia. Table 3.1 illustrates the demographics of Sierra Leone and Liberia.

Table 3.1: Demographics of Liberia and Sierra Leone (Sources: Sawyer, 1992 and Alie, 1999)

Country	Language Group	Ethnic Groups	Location	
Sierra Leone	MANDE	Mende	Southern and Eastern Provinces	
		Vai/Gallinas	Pujehun Coast	
		Kono	Kono District	
		Loko	Bombali District	
		Koranko	Koinadugu	
		Soso	North-western Frontiers	
		Mandingo	Dispersed over country	
		Yaluka	Norther Koinadugu	
	MEL	Temne	South-western, half of Northern Province and Freetown	
		Bullom/Shebro	Bonthe and Moyamba	
		Kissi	Eastern frontier, Kailahun and Kono	
		Gola	South-eastern Frontiers	
		Krim	Coastal Pujehun and Bonthe	
	OTHERS	Limba	Bombali, Kambia and Koinadugu	
		Fula	Bombali, Koinadugu	
		Krio	Western Area	
		Kru	Freetown	
Liberia	MANDE	Mende	West	
		Vai	West	
		Mano	North	
		Gbandi	North-west	
		Kpelle	Central	
		Loma	North-west	
		Mandingo	North and north-west	
		Gio	North	
		MEL	Gola	Western
			Kissi	North-west
	KWA		Kru	South-east
		Grebo	South-east	
		Dey	Central	
		Bassa	South-central	
		Krahn	South-east	
		Others	Freed Slaves	Central and Coastal Cities

3.2.1.2 *Reasons for Migration*

Many historians suggest a number of factors for the mass migration towards the south from hitherto flourishing empires established in the Sahelian region of Africa. Some attribute the move to invasions by Muslims from North Africa, which led to the collapse of the Ghana and later Mali Empires. The peripheral ethnic groups in the empires apparently moved southward and sought protection in the dense forest regions of the Upper Guinea Coast—now Liberia, Guinea, Sierra Leone and Cote d’Ivoire (Banton, 1957). Others suggest that with the discovery of the coast and its sure supply of salt, peripheral tribes in the empires moved south to access this valuable commodity (ibid). Yet others point to the expansion of the Sahara desert resulting in shrinking farm and grazing lands. The dense rain forest with its virgin vegetation became an obvious attraction for those seeking greener pastures (Dunn and Tarr, 1988).

There are also mixed reasons for the relocation of the freed slaves from Europe and America. Henry Clay, an abolitionist, in his attempt to justify the colonisation project of the American Colonisation Society (ACS) to his fellow Americans, maintained that repatriating blacks to Africa would “rid America of the useless, pernicious and dangerous portion of its population while at the same time spreading civilisation and Christianity to benighted and degraded Africa” (cited in Dunn and Tarr, 1988: 32).¹²⁵

In England, it was the Sommerset case, in which his lawyer claimed that the “air of England was too pure to accommodate slavery”, that accelerated the new moral

¹²⁵He also reminded slave owners that the presence of free slaves in full view of their slaves was a threat to the integrity of slavery and a potential source for revolt (ibid). Finley, another abolitionist, argues that the project could atone for “...the injuries inflicted [on the black race] by our fathers...” (cited in Sawyer, 1992: 35). American merchants, on the other hand, envisaged unimpeded access to the flourishing palm oil, coffee and ivory trade along the West Coast of Africa if they placed their own contact persons in the region (Alexander, 1969).

awakening to abandon the slave trade (Seyon, 1977).¹²⁶ It prompted the establishment of a philanthropic group known as the Society for Effecting the Abolition of the Slave Trade in 1786. The sentiment was reinforced at the end of the American War of Independence, where many black slaves fought on the side of Britain in exchange for freedom (Alie, 1990). At the end of the war, the number of free but impoverished blacks who littered the streets of London increased unbearably. The Society responded by establishing the Committee for the Relief of the Black Poor, with the responsibility of providing relief to black paupers in London (Asiegbu, 1961). The Committee proposed the relocation of blacks to Africa, where they would engage in agriculture to provide for their own well-being (ibid).

Beneath the claim to atonement and prospects for proselytising and civilising, Sawyer (1992) argues that the project was mostly driven by fear. Racist United Kingdom and the New World were petrified by the prospects of free blacks laying claims for centuries of violations meted out against them. Thomas Jefferson, a strong believer in ‘divine retribution’, Sawyer points out, attributed the steady increase in the free black population to God’s readiness to exact justice for evil done to their race. Jefferson was quoted as saying, “I tremble for my country when I reflect that God is just: that His justice cannot sleep forever” (quoted in Staudenraus, 1961: 2 and cited in Sawyer, 1992: 36). Seyon (1977) makes a similar claim when he cites the Santo Domingo slave revolt in Haiti as the key event which spread fear amongst slave owners

¹²⁶In the case of James Sommersett, a slave belonging to Charles Stewart, Lord Mansfield’s landmark ruling, which argues that even if there were no laws and statutes against slavery in the United Kingdom, slavery was a violation of natural laws, became the mantra for the slave emancipation campaign not only in the UK but also in the Americas. The ruling was passed in 1772. For more information on the Sommersett case, please read Jerome Nadelhaft’s “The Sommersett Case and Slavery: Myth, Reality, and Repercussions”, *Journal of Negro History*, Vol. 51, No. 3 (July 1966) available www.direct.gov.uk/en/slavery, accessed May 22, 2006.

throughout the New World and Europe (p. 16).¹²⁷ From the reasons outlined, one can deduce two categories of people who migrated to Liberia and Sierra Leone—those who came in order to preserve their freedom and way of life and those who came to explore the possibilities of living as free people. While both consciously made the move in pursuit of freedom and security, the distinction in the reasons for their move and the conditions from which they began the journey had profound effects on the social and political orders they produced, as well as efforts at nationbuilding in their new societies, a subject to which I return later in the chapter.

3.3 PRE-COLONIAL POLITICAL ORDER

State-based and stateless institutions constituted political order in the Guinea Coast long before the region was exposed to colonialism and the arrival of the freed slaves. This section attempts a review of the pre-colonial political systems.

3.3.1 Stateless Political Systems

Stateless societies are basically small autonomous neighbouring units with emphasis on mechanisms, as opposed to conferring overwhelming powers on individuals and institutions, to regulate individual and group behaviours (Benson, 1996). Imposition and exercise of powers, whether by individuals or institutions, is considered an act of tyranny in the extreme, for which stateless people would prefer violent resistance to acquiescence (ibid.). Little is known about stateless societies in Africa and how their political systems affected hierarchical, centralised political systems such as the state. Benson attributes the dearth of knowledge to Eurocentric prejudice, which equates the

¹²⁷Seyon cites Dubois, who pointed out that the revolt was “...probably the prime [reason] for the selling of Louisiana by Napoleon for a song and... rendered more certain the final prohibition of the slave trade by the United States in 1807.”

lack of recognisable political institutions in stateless societies to the lack of history and the tradition of preserving it.

The *Kwa*-speaking people created arguably the most sophisticated stateless societies in Liberia and Sierra Leone, and yet they are the least studied. Missionaries mostly recorded the few accounts available on the structure of governance of *Kwa*-speaking people. According to Moran (2006), Methodist Bishop John Payne's account is the most comprehensive. Having lived nearly two decades amongst the *Glebo* (now known as *Grebo*) of Cape Palmas—one of the well recognised stateless sub-groups of the *Kwa*-speaking people—Payne was “impressed with the checks and balances, the division of civil and religious authority, and the visibility of people of all ages and genders in public life and decision-making” (cited in Moran, 2006: 3). Moran also recalls assertions made by Jan Martin that the *Kwa* political system conformed to “recognisably democratic principles [and seems] the purest of democracies” (Martin, 1968: 15, cited in Moran, 2006: 4).

Generally the *Kwa*-speaking people live in small, separate and socially as well as politically autonomous societies, although these autonomous units tend to forge strategic alliances among themselves in times of external threats. Each unit is headed by an elder, usually the oldest of the council of elders. There is also a spiritual priest who, it is believed, protects the unit from sorcery and other negative supernatural powers. Unlike Sawyer's (1992) account, which suggests that women are excluded from decision-making related to war, Moran's (2006) account describing women as essentially the security council with veto powers over all major decisions—including the decision to go to war—is more accurate. There is also, just like the *Poro*, a

fraternity of warriors to whom all married men belonged. These are responsible to defend the community (Moran, 2006). In this view, security is community-based, in which each household is represented. Decision-making amongst the *Kwa* was and still is based on broad participation. All age groups and genders are invited to an open forum to deliberate on all matters, including serious matters such as allegations of witchcraft (ibid). Moran has rightly observed, individual autonomy is highly valued by the Kwa-speaking people. “From the newborn infant to the [frailest] elder”, Moran points out, “[everyone] is understood as having individual desires, plans and intentions...” which is acknowledged and given space both in the private and public spheres (p. 30).

Fox describes the political system of the Kwa as “...rampant and unmitigated democracy... swayed by the impulses of malice, revenge or covetousness...and anarchically chaotic” (cited in Moran, 2006). Others refer to them as “unruly natives” (Biyi, 1930). Benson challenges this Eurocentric stereotype of stateless societies. He insists there are rules and institutions to ensure order in stateless societies. Rules such as “cooperative policing, participatory dispute resolution, restitution, ostracism, freedom of contract, mutual insurance”, Benson (1996) contends, “offer better assurances for stability and durable peace compared to the coercive institutions of state based societies” (p. 34). More importantly, a combination of sanctions and incentives and the collective process by which they are applied, Benson argues, make it impossible for a so-called “’god-father’ or ‘king’ to emerge and impose extortionary structures of governance on stateless society” (ibid). The fact that the

tenets of stateless politics still influence the Kwa-speaking people in Liberia and Sierra Leone is ample proof of the durability and stability of the system.¹²⁸

3.3.2 State-based Political Systems

Of all the groups migrating from the Mali Empire, ethnographic accounts credit the Mendes for introducing state-influenced political institutions to the Guinea Coast (Liberty, 1977; Kappel et al, 1986; Huberich, 1947). They adopted the Poro and Sande sodality institutions introduced by their Mel cousins, perfected the institutions and produced what d’Azevedo described as “political-ritual complexes” (d’Azevedo, 1961, cited in Sawyer, 1992). By the 17th century, the sophisticated, highly hierarchical and sodality-based political systems of the Mendes, along with their excellent military structures, had penetrated most of the other groups in the region, except the Kwa-speaking people. European travellers to the region in the 17th and 18th centuries were so impressed with the emerging political structure, especially among the Mendes, that one of them, Olfert Dapper, reported that “...the local population enjoyed a high standard of political and social organisation with strong resemblance to those of the North African Berbers, who had been one of the most advanced and powerful nations in the world” (Liberty, 1977: 13).

Arthur Abraham indicates that the Mendes operated two types of states—the personal amorphous and territorial states (Abraham, 1978). The personal amorphous state was held intact and stability was maintained only according to the ability of the king or

¹²⁸This work is not about stateless societies. I have engaged with this socio-political system to make the point that in Liberia and Sierra Leone, state-based and stateless societies coexisted. Whether one would have assimilated with the other is unclear.

despot (cited in Alie, 1990).¹²⁹ The second state system was the territorial state. Territorial states had fixed boundaries with well-defined structures of checks and balances. The kings and chiefs operated with lieutenants who, according to Alie (1990), were first among equals. In both the personal amorphous and territorial states, an electoral college drawn from the Poro council elected the kings. Although the king provided leadership, the Poro council remained in a supervisory role, ensuring that both the king and people upheld customary laws (Abraham, 1978). Even though the Mendes are credited for introducing state-like structures in Sierra Leone and Liberia, the Temnes, deducing from all accounts, seem to have had more structured political systems and larger kingdoms (see Dorjahn, V.R. 1966; Alie, 1990). Figure 3.1 illustrates the structure of leadership in all Temne kingdoms.

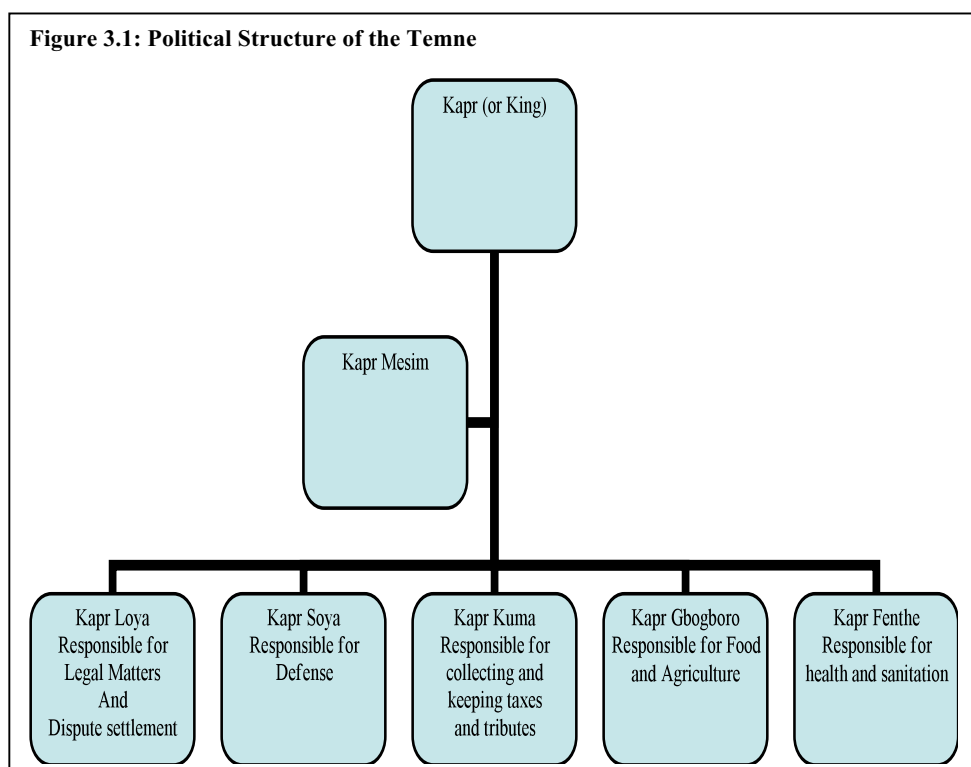


Figure 3.1: Political Structure of the Temnes (adopted from Alie’s description of the Temne political structure)

¹²⁹D’Azevedo’s (1963; 65) description of the Gola and Vai political systems in Liberia would also fit in the personal amorphous category.

Temne kings ruled with the assistance of a number of lieutenants as described in Figure 3.1. The immediate deputy of the *Kapr*, or king, was the *Kapr Mesim*, responsible for all intelligence issues. Alie equates this role to that of the modern day prime minister. The *Kapr Mesim* served as regent on the death of the king. Other leaders included the *Kapr Loya* with responsibility for all legal issues and dispute resolution; the *Kapr Kuma* responsible for collecting taxes and tributes and managing the finances of the kingdom; the *Kapr Gbogboro* to supervise agricultural matters; the *Kapr Fenthe* to ensure the health and sanitation of the kingdom; and the *Kapr Soya* to lead warriors during war (Alie, 1990: 14). Before Temne king and principle chiefs were enthroned, they underwent the *kantha*, an elaborate installation ceremony that was administered in the Poro ‘secret bush’ over a period of one year. The Temnes were always particular about the competence and character of their leaders. During this intense leadership course, the prospective kings and prominent chiefs were taught their responsibilities to the people and how to conduct themselves as custodians of the kingdom. Upon graduation, the king emerged as “custodian of the land and keeper of the Sacred Things of Ruler-ship” (Alie, 1990: 18). Even after the kings assumed full authority, the Poro councils still ensured their actions were in “conformity with the injunctions and norms of the society” (ibid).

Perhaps of the three dominant political systems in pre-colonial Sierra Leone, the Limba’s was least hierarchical and authoritative and seemed to have adopted some principles of stateless political systems, including the importance of the individual voice in the public realm. Among the Limba, the Poro was more a social institution with emphasis on its educational and spiritual values and less on the political.

D’Azevedo, drawing from his extensive work among the Mel language group, made far-reaching conclusions about the political systems that existed before states were formed in the Upper Guinea Coast. He argues that political developments in the region were largely based on “...intricate ethnic and structural compromises...” with four broad categories: the ‘migrant band’, the ‘conservative village chiefdom’, the ‘exploitative expanding chiefdom’ and ‘confederation’ (cited in Sawyer, 1992: 23). Sawyer observes that increasingly in the last half of the 19th century, powerful kings such as Siaka, Duma, Dwala, Fagban, Botswain and Sao Boaso established large ‘personal amorphous’ confederacies, amalgamating kingdoms and exercising authority over them. However, because these were essentially ‘personal amorphous’ confederacies, Sawyer (1992) points out, they disintegrated after the death of the powerful despots. As a consequence of the dominant predatory politics at the close of the 19th century, the Guinea Coast, according to d’Azevedo and reinforced by Sawyer, was in political turmoil prior to the founding of Liberia and Sierra Leone. Despite this claim, Sawyer concludes his work by contending that the Guinea Coast region had “well-defined political and social organisations” prior to Liberia and Sierra Leone (Sawyer, 1992: 67-69).

Aside from the contradictory conclusion, Sawyer’s, and by extension d’Azevedo’s work, is limited in many ways. First, both fail to discuss the fact that by the end of the 17th century and up to the 19th century, there were already extensive external interferences in the political development of the Guinea Coast. The thriving slave trade that was at its height in the same period in which Sawyer and d’Azevedo situate their works, had already had profound effects on political systems in the region,

especially in areas where slave raiding was concentrated. The ‘personal amorphous’ polity, which essentially means the rule by despots with no accountability to the Poro councils, was mostly a consequence of this infiltration. Dunn and Tarr (1988) sum up the physical, moral and institutional degradation caused by the trade thus:

“[The slave trade in the Upper Guinea Coast]... led to increased importation of firearms, intensified warfare for slaves, acceleration of political autocracy, and economic monopoly, the undermining of many traditional societies, and the loss of the most productive population...” (Dunn and Tarr, 1988: 16)

Dunn and Tarr contend that the “numbness of conscience” necessary to engage in such a profoundly immoral trade had already perverted most cultures and values in the region, and transformed indigenous political systems for the worse before colonisation and the establishment of the settler states (ibid). To not keep this political development separate from emerging indigenous political systems, prior to its pervasive and disruptive effects, I argue, justifies Western claims that African cultures and polities were benighted and criminal prior to the redemptive missions of the West—whether through the slave trade or its metamorphosis, the nearly two centuries of colonialism. Such a picture ignores accounts by earlier Europeans which consistently reported that societies in the Guinea Coast had developed highly sophisticated and diverse political systems, including the stratified, hierarchical but varied political systems in the north and the egalitarian democracies particularly south-east of Liberia.¹³⁰

¹³⁰Besides, description of the Kwa society does not fit in the broad categories of d’Azevedo and Sawyer. All accounts are agreed that the Kwas’ disgust for despots and hierarchy still influence their societies. This remains evident in their revolt against the Liberian state, which imposed the Poro-based hierarchical system within their societies (see Dunn and Tarr, 1988 and Moran, 2006). Besides, even though the Kwa-speaking people had encountered Europe long before the Poro-governed societies, they resisted the adoption of autocracy and warlord politics. That consistency, though recorded in numerous literatures both on the region and amongst stateless societies elsewhere on the continent, escapes the analysis and generalisations of Sawyer and d’Azevedo.

The most important limitation of d’Azevedo and Sawyer’s works is the tendency to generalise political institutions in the Guinea Coast. Brown (1967) observes that even though there remained a clear distinction between the social and political organisations of the coastal people and those of the interior, this distinction has been overlooked in numerous works. She points out that when the freed slaves and the colonial-lord landed along the coast of West Africa, the coastal people they first encountered held strong prejudices against the interior people—prejudices which, among other factors, delayed penetration into the interior.¹³¹ This distinction, she insists, cannot be abandoned for the sake of generalisation. As will be discussed later in the chapter, the prejudice also contributed to the delay of state penetration into the interiors of both countries. Benson’s (1996) claim that the bottom-up, voluntary and cooperative structure of governance in stateless societies contrasts with state-based extractive, political and top-down structure of governance reinforces Brown’s claim. Benson goes on to emphasise that the distinction between stateless and state-based structures of governance are so extreme that merger between them is difficult (if not impossible). Where I concur with Sawyer and d’Azevedo is their observation that neither the colonial powers nor the subsequent statebuilders made efforts to comprehend the political dynamics of the region before introducing the Westphalian state. As a consequence, the destructive configuration dynamics between indigenous on the one hand and between indigenous institutions and the state on the other, I surmise, have undermined the viability of the state to extents less reckoned within analyses of institutional causes of state collapse in Liberia and Sierra Leone.

¹³¹In Liberia and Sierra Leone, as a consequence of the divide between coastal and interior people, a dual system of governance was established with separate legal systems between the coastal and the interior people. In Liberia the dual state system still persists, while it was abandoned at independence in Sierra Leone, although it strongly influences state behavior towards the interior.

3.4 THE BIRTH OF THE WESTPHALIAN STATE IN SIERRA LEONE AND LIBERIA

Although Liberia and Sierra Leone share a common origin, their transformation into independent states progressed from different trajectories. In the case of Liberia, the refusal of European traders to recognise the sovereign right of the Commonwealth of Liberia to impose levies on commercial activities within its territory and the failure of the United States to come to the defence of the settlers, prompted the quest for independence (Dunn and Tarr, 1988). Governor Joseph Jenkins Robert summoned a Constitutional Convention to accelerate statehood. The Convention agreed on a constitution, a declaration of independence and a national flag (ibid).¹³² On 26 July 1847, after 25 years of colonisation by a philanthropic organisation—the American Colonisation Society—the settlers assumed the authority of their newly declared sovereign state. In the Declaration of Independence, the repatriates “affirmed their faith in Liberia’s destiny as one nation under God, guided by the Almighty towards the achievement of their destiny of liberty and unity...” (cited in Dunn and Tarr, 1988: 45). The passionate Declaration of Independence mobilised the “Nations of Christendom” so much that one after the other, they accorded recognition to a state conceived and assumed by a small band of freed and re-captive slaves (ibid).¹³³

Not only did Liberia’s Declaration of Independence move Europe’s Christendom, Azikiwe (1934, cited in Dunn and Tarr, 1988) argues, it provided hope to the black race “[arousing] the lethargy of millions of African... to a realisation of the

¹³²Details of the process leading to independence can be found in Anderson, Robert Earle 1952; Boley, G.E. Saogne 1983; Cassell, C. Abayomi 1970.

¹³³On 21 November 1848, Britain was the first to recognise Liberia’s independence. France, the second colonial power in the region followed on April 17, 1852. She was followed by Germany and Denmark in 1855 and Belgium in 1858. Even though Liberia claims to be a pseudo colony of the United States, it was not until 1862 that the United States recognised Liberia’s independence. The Netherlands followed the United States in the same year. Norway and Sweden followed in 1863, with Austria and Spain in 1866 and 1894, respectively.

political destiny of the black man in the history of the World” (cited in Dunn and Tarr, 1988: 26). Sawyer (1992) observes differently. He argues that the declaration of independence was more a last resort to preserve economic interests rather than an assertion of a spirit of liberation, and as such cannot qualify as the source of inspiration for Africa’s struggle for independence. Whatever the motive, Sawyer concedes that one claim to fame that cannot be denied the settlers is the fact that, unlike their cousins in Sierra Leone, they braved all odds to declare to racist Europe and the New World that the black race had a destiny in self-governance. “Under the divine guardian of Providence and beaming with pride, the settlers reminded the World that Liberia was a nation wrought with their own black hands” and which they sustained ever since (Miller, 1975: 108, cited in Sawyer, 1992).¹³⁴

Although Sierra Leone was the first colony for freed slaves and the number of repatriates who settled there were five times more than those settled in Liberia, independence was only realised in Sierra Leone in 1961 (175 years later). Three mutually reinforcing reasons arguably account for the delay. First, unlike in Liberia, many of the repatriates inhabiting Sierra Leone came from Britain, whose colonial policy made it possible to support and co-opt the young colony under the British Crown. Secondly, the demand for self-autonomy amongst the repatriates in Liberia was aroused far earlier than amongst repatriates in Sierra Leone.¹³⁵ As a consequence, rather than a declaration of independence as the philanthropic and commercial project waned, settlers in Sierra Leone were quick to volunteer themselves in 1808 as subjects of the British Crown (see Fyfe, 1962; Wyse, 1989 and

¹³⁴Besides, history reminds us that statebuilding, especially in Europe, was never for the assertion of freedom or nationhood. Rather it was an elitist project aimed at protecting the interest of a few who arrogated to themselves the right to rule the mass of people within their defined territory. Coercion was and still is the *prima* instrument for asserting the state (see Tilly, 1975).

¹³⁵This led to fierce resistance to find shelter under the British Empire, when the fragile state was invited many times to seek the protection of Britain by hoisting the British flag.

1981; Walker, 1976). Like all of colonised Africa, it was the end of the Second World War that triggered the consciousness for independence in Sierra Leone—and even this drive did not come from the Krios, who are descendents of the freed slaves.¹³⁶ By the end of 1958, the Sierra Leone political landscape was teeming with political parties, many of which were mobilised along ethnic lines (Kandeh, 1999). Notwithstanding the fragmentation, all political elites were unified around the demand for independence. Sir Milton Margai capitalised on the point of convergence to establish a coalition of political parties, the United National Front (UNF), with the aim of pursuing independence. The UNF sent a delegation to London with a common political platform and a single voice for independence in late 1960. One year later, on April 27, 1961 Sierra Leone was accorded independence.¹³⁷

3.4.1 Foundations of Liberia and Sierra Leone

With juridical legitimacy generously accorded both countries, the statebuilders focused on laying foundations for the new states, at varying degrees. The key pillars of the statebuilding project included: a) the formulation of political ideas and the nature of the state; b) establishing a constitutional order; c) building political institutions; and d) forging national unity. It is important to point out that this process was much more deliberate in the case of Liberia, while Sierra Leone like most

¹³⁶The colonial powers including Britain, realising severe loss of economic and military powers and mounting pressure from African independence leaders, embarked on an accelerated process to devolve political independence to their colonies. It is important to note that the British Colonial power in Sierra Leone systematically silenced the Krios to avoid them from agitating for independence. As a consequence, the voices of the Krios were absent at independence.

¹³⁷The independent state was negotiated within the Commonwealth. The Queen still remained the Commander in Chief represented by the Governor General, who retained the powers to appoint the government including the Prime Minister and his cabinet. The decision created dissent amongst the delegates. Siaka Stevens, who later became the country's third Prime Minister and longest serving President, was the key member of the delegation who rejected the arrangement. Stevens wanted total independence away from the colonial authority, something he later achieved during his leadership.

colonised African states simply continued with the polity, social arrangements and institutions created by the colonialists.

3.4.1.1 Political Idea of Liberia and Sierra Leone

There were two schools of thought on the political idea of Liberia—the integrationists and the assimilationists (Sawyer, 1992). The assimilationists argued that Western civilisation and institutions were far superior compared to “primitive African” institutions and cultures, and were therefore destined as the light to which all societies must aspire (Sawyer, 1992). To effectively undertake the civilising project, this group argued, it was best for Liberia to remain an exclusive settler state interacting selectively with neighbouring African societies and gradually civilising them (ibid). The integrationists, on the other hand, maintained that Liberia could not be in Africa and be apart from Africa. Edward Wilmot Blyden, a leading exponent of this school, strongly argued thus:

“Can we make a nation without the aid of the aborigines? Were it not for them should we have any commerce worthy of the name? When we went before the world to ask to be received into the family of nations, did we not base our request upon the native population? Was it not them we professed to represent? Just as at that time it was to our interest to avail ourselves of their numerical assistance to secure national recognition, so now it is our wisest policy, apart from philanthropic duties to fraternise with them in order to secure national strength and respectability” (Blyden, 1862, cited in ‘The Voice’ Vol.1 No. 1).

The assimilationists, whose argument were based both on their Christian faith as well on the fear of being subsumed under the majority indigenous population, prevailed.

Consequently, the politics of separation and exclusion became the faithful expression of the Liberian state.¹³⁸

Unlike Liberia, where the debate regarding the political direction of the country continued throughout the existence of the state, there is no evidence in the literature to suggest that a similar dialogue took place even between the various indigenous populations or among the Krio intelligentsia in Sierra Leone, during or after colonial rule. It seems that the polity of the state was considered a given. From the British colonial practice, one can infer that the political idea promoted in Sierra Leone was also that of assimilation. Both the Krio and indigenous communities were simply assimilated into the British values and polity. Alie (1990) alludes to this proposition when he pointed out that the founders of the Sierra Leone Colony envisioned a ‘civilised’ society that would not only terminate the slave trade, but would also evolve as “an agency for the social and spiritual regeneration of the whole Negro world” (83). A similar messianic aspiration informed freed slaves in Liberia.

However, unlike Liberia, where the decision for assimilation was made entirely by the settler society, the Krios in Sierra Leone were effectively marginalised during the colonial era, so much so that their presence at independence was politically negligible. Instead, the Krios, given their intellectual dominance, controlled the state bureaucracy while the ‘British-trained’ indigenous intelligentsia controlled politics. The distribution of state functions between the indigenous population and the settler society minimised the politics of exclusion and the so-called civilised-primitive

¹³⁸ Azikiwe (1934), a great admirer of the Liberian project, regretted that the new state and its founders failed “to recognise the political acumen and the social and material cultures of indigenous Liberians...”, a failure he claims resulted in the persistent insecurity and impoverishment of the indigenous population and thus contributed to the generalised social and political malaise which deprived Liberia of the much needed ‘national strength to which Blyden referred.

divide, which undermined the viability of the Liberian state. Notwithstanding, the early assumption of political powers by the indigenous population in Sierra Leone did not translate into the explicit integration of indigenous (particularly Poro and Sande) discourse in the polity and notion of governance in the new state. Instead, the intelligentsia class, thanks to the indirect rule system, faithfully assumed the messianic project of civilising and Christianising their fellow aborigines. Consequently, the political discourse based on which Liberia and Sierra Leone were established was deeply embedded in the psycho-political myth of redemption and the conversion of heathens into civilised Christians.

3.4.1.2 Constitutional Orders

Having agreed on the idea of the state, the settlers and colonialists embarked on building constitutional orders. Prior to independence, all constitutions in both countries vested powers in the colonial authorities (Britain and the American Colonisation Society). This changed, especially for Liberia, during independence. The 1847 Constitution was the settler's first attempt to define their own constitutional order, but this did not translate into independent thinking and creativity. Everything about the 1847 Constitution and national symbols were near replicas of those of the United States (Sawyer, 1992). Besides, the process of constitution-making ignored the social and political order of indigenous societies. Rather than explore the political orders of the complex societies in the territory, the Constitution-makers enshrined dual jurisprudence in law, with the so-called civilised settler societies along the coast subject to the Constitution, and the 'uncivilised lot' of the interior governed under

“hinterland jurisdictions”, whatever they were (Dunn and Tarr, 1988).¹³⁹ The 1847 Constitution prevailed, notwithstanding, until 12 April 1980 when the settler state was ended in a bloody military coup d’état.

In 1981, under the military authority of the People’s Redemption Council (PRC), Liberia had what pundits considered the greatest opportunity for a people-centred constitution-making process. With the apparent breakdown of the dividing walls between the ‘primitive’ and ‘civilised’, scholars hoped that the process would afford all Liberians the space to hammer out differences and usher in a new dawn filled with hope for a united country (Calvert and Johnson, 1997). Political scientist Amos Sawyer, a staunch critic of the 1847 Constitution, was handed the mantle to lead the 25-member National Constitution Commission (NCC). The NCC adopted a public-centred approach to engage Liberians from all walks of life (Sawyer, 2005). Momentum gathered, and aspirations nurtured through the constitution-making process seemed threatening to the undeclared intentions of the military regime. As a consequence, the broad-based process was terminated. An opportunity to agree a new compact for Liberia and set the state on the path of rule of law became a total fiasco.¹⁴⁰

Similarly, having been governed under various colonially constructed constitutions, Sierra Leoneans embarked on the development of an Independence Constitution in

¹³⁹The divide between the civilised and uncivilised was passed into law in 1848 by the Legislators of Liberia, all of whom were Americo-Liberians. Later, around 1904 under the leadership of Arthur Barclay, the settler state enshrined hinterland jurisdiction and imposed it on all societies in the hinterland. The primary aim of the hinterland law was to govern “areas as are wholly inhabited by uncivilised natives in the same manner as if those areas were within the Hinterland Districts. The laws focused on providing protection for so-called civilised travelling into the hinterland and those desiring to live amongst the uncivilised (Revised Rules and Regulations Governing the Hinterland of Liberia, January 7, 2000). It is important to note that the hinterland governance system was borrowed from the colonial powers in Sierra Leone.

1958, although with the colonial authority at the helm. The constitution, for the first time, conferred citizenship rights on all people within the territory, including the indigenous population who were hitherto mere subjects of the British Protectorate. Prior to this constitution the interior, like Liberia, was governed under a separate jurisdiction, while the ‘civilised’ within the Sierra Leone Colony enjoyed the protection of laws of the British Empire. In 1961 an Independence Constitution, which was a slight modification of the 1958 Constitution, was approved. It was followed in 1971 by another constitution with primary focus on the transformation of Sierra Leone into a republic. Seven years later, President Siaka Stevens’ government rewrote the constitution to transform the country into a one party state.¹⁴¹ In 1991, Sierra Leone also had the opportunity to develop a constitution with broad-based participation, but even this failed to address foundational governance flaws, which have undermined the full expression of the independent state.

Although the 1983 and 1991 constitution-making exercises in Liberia and Sierra Leone, respectively, provided some space for popular constitution-making, citizens of the two countries have never had the chance to engage in what Sawyer calls an “enlightened discourse regarding the nature of state and mechanisms and institutions of governance that would better meet the aspiration of its people” (Sawyer, 2005: 36). The process has been manipulated to address particular idiosyncratic interests of political elites. An effort at engaging societies so as to evolve institutions and mechanisms of governance “whose historical, cultural and political development” is rooted in the societies has been negligible (Sesay, 1995: 165). Such a process, I

¹⁴¹Each constitution-making process in Sierra Leone had limited broad-based participation of the people and focused on serving the particular interest of the political regime of the day. For instance, the 1971 constitution was designed to strengthen Steven’s grip on power while the 1978 constitution entrenched his All People Congress as the sole political actor in the country.

argue, is critical to state indigenisation after collapse. The emphasis of ‘constitutional choice-making’ or the indigenisation of constitution making is not so much on the outcome—the content and text of the law—but rather on the process of making the law. When a people reach consensus on what should guide their interaction and define meaningful rules within their own discourse, the likelihood that such laws would be respected and collectively monitored increases.¹⁴²

3.4.1.3 Structure of Governance in the Interiors of Liberia and Sierra Leone

In crafting their structures of governance for the interior, authorities of the Sierra Leone Colony and Liberia officially recognised the formidable hold of the Poro and Sande on all aspects of life in most of the interior regions of both countries. The Tribal Authorities Ordinance of 1938, the Chiefdom Treasuries act of 1938, and the Tribal Authorities (Amendment) Act of 1964 all backed by the 1952 Constitution define and established the chieftaincy system in Sierra Leone. Designed to further the British Colonial indirect rule policy the chieftaincy system was essentially the reinvention of the Poro political and governance structure. The Kapr (highest Poro chief) became paramount chiefs; the concept of the Kapr Mesim whom Alie (1990) refers to as the equivalence of prime minister was renamed as speaker although his role to enforce laws and directives of the paramount chiefs are similar to those in the Poro system. A council known as “men of note” replaced the Poro Council. The core mandate of the chieftaincy system was to keep the peace and extract taxes from its subjects. The only difference between the chieftaincy system and Poro governance system was the accountability structure. Rather than being accountable to the Highest

¹⁴²Benson (1996) and Collins (1995) in their description of the state system in Africa, allude to the need to pay attention to the shared theory or discourse which informs the state system in most of Africa.

Zoe, councils of zoes, and the ancestors, the paramount chiefs derived their powers from the colonial authorities in Freetown. These new powers were effectively exercised with the help of chiefdom police and the court system. In 1972 in the bid to consolidate power Siaka Stevens abolished the local council system and dealt directly with paramount chiefs. In the 1937 Native Administrative System there were district commissioners, who represented the central government in the interior as administrators. While the indirect rule structure of governance was firmly established on traditional hierarchical Poro structures the introduction of commercial benefits through tax and labour extraction and the use of the chiefdom police to enforce law and order transformed the traditional authorities into petty bourgeois and local despots (Richards, 1995).

In the case of Liberia efforts to establish local government structures date back to 1848 when the Department of the Interior (DI) was created to administer the hinterland.¹⁴³ The core mandate of the DI included the institution of rules and regulations to pacify and halt hostilities that were rife among the various ethnic groups and between the ethnic groups and the settler state in the interior region (Sawyer, 1992). In the 1930s President Arthur Barclay expanded on the local governance structure by drawing on the Sierra Leone Native Administration system. He divided the interior into three (Western, Eastern, and Central) provinces. The provinces were subdivided into districts, chiefdoms, and clans. This was later redefined as Counties, Statutory Districts, Administrative County Districts, Chiefdoms, and Clans, while urban entities include: municipalities, cities, and

¹⁴³The 1949 Revised Rules and Regulations Governing the Hinterland of Liberia defines 'hinterland' as "that portion of Liberia not included in the organised counties". For more information on the divide between the interior and settler state administrative systems, please see Draft Profile of the Ministry of Internal Affairs (2005).

townships.¹⁴⁴ He also invited the colonial authority in Freetown to help Liberia establish a Frontier Force similar to the chiefdom police in Sierra Leone to assist in the control of the hinterland people. Liberia also made attempts to reinvent and co-opt the Poro structure and politics of governance in the new hinterland governance structure. Paramount chiefs were drawn from Poro royal lineage and as was the case in Sierra Leone served for life. Young Poro initiates were enlisted in the Liberia Frontier Force. Unlike Sierra Leone where the local government structure became part of the settler state and was enshrined in the 1952 constitution local governance in Liberia was purely limited to maintaining order in the disorganized ‘tribal regions’ which were never considered part of Liberia until late 1950s. Therefore provinces and their subdivisions did not receive any budget allocation from the Central Government. They were also excluded from receiving any logistics that would facilitate the discharge of their functions. Like marauding institutions they were given sweeping powers backed by the Liberia Frontier Force to extract resources and support from their respective local population.

3.4.1.4 Consolidating State Regime in Sierra Leone

As pointed out in the previous section, at independence Sierra Leone had already defined territories and dual legal and administrative systems in operation. Although state structures were generally established and handed to the independence leaders in Sierra Leone, the challenge was the consolidation and stabilisation of the political regime. As colonial authority declined, tensions between the polarised and ethnic-based political parties destabilised Sierra Leone barely three years after independence.

¹⁴⁴In 1964 President William Tubman abolished the idea of provinces and introduced the county system. Today Liberia has 15 Counties, 32 Statutory Districts, 119 County Districts, 215 Chiefdoms and 476 Clans; 126 Cities with 237 Townships.

Arguably the greatest threat to state survival in Sierra Leone was the early intervention of the military in the fledgling polity (Zack-Williams, 1997). Two years after the independent leader Sir Milton Margai died in 1964, the succession struggle sparked political turmoil in the young state. The Governor General, Sir Henry Lightfoot, with disregard for the political tension, appointed Albert Margai, brother of the late Prime Minister, as the successor. This decision infuriated the political elites, including those from Albert Margai's own Sierra Leone People Party (SLPP).¹⁴⁵ With persistent resistance to his leadership, Albert sought greater legitimacy by calling for early elections, but the strategy further weakened his grip on power (Alie, 1990). Three weeks before the election on 8 February 1967, as an apparent intimidation strategy, the wounded government uncovered an alleged coup plot in which it implicated Deputy Force Commander Colonel John Bangura, a member of the rival Temne ethnic community. The Prime Minister quickly signed a defence pact with neighbouring Guinea and fortified the Sierra Leone border with Guinean troops (Fyfe 1979). None of his political machinations helped Albert Margai. His SLPP lost the 1967 elections to Temne-based rival All People Congress (APC). In response to the overwhelming victory of APC, the Governor General appointed Siaka Stevens, leader of the APC, the next Prime Minister.

Following this massive political failure, Albert Margai turned to the military. Army Commander Brigadier Lansana, whom Albert elevated, swiftly intervened, seizing power barely a day after Stevens was inaugurated Prime Minister. He imposed martial law and detained the Governor General and the new Prime Minister, but Stevens later fled to neighbouring Guinea. A successful counter coup organised by

¹⁴⁵ Albert responded to the opposition with summary dismissals and reorganisation of the political landscape, replacing his brother's politics of inclusion with Mendeism by populating the echelons of power with Mende political elites.

Major A.C. Blake and Major B.I. Iai-Samba ended the General's rule just three months after he seized power, and arrested him and Sir Albert Magai. The new coup leaders formed the National Reformation Council (NRC), but dissidents headed by Colonel John Bangura, claiming that the NRC were set out to perpetuate themselves in power, overthrew them one year later (Keen, 2005). The Bangura-led Anti-Corruption Revolutionary Movement (ACRM) immediately recalled the former Governor General Sir Henry Lightfoot-Boston, but when he declined they appointed Banja Tehan Sie as Acting Governor General (ibid.). The ACRM commanded the Governor General to recall and install in power the All People Congress, victors of the 1967 elections. Siaka Stevens was recalled from exile in Guinea, ostensibly after obtaining a crash course on regime entrenchment and totalitarianism from the illusive Sekou Toure.¹⁴⁶ Immediately after his inauguration, Siaka Stevens clamped down heavily on opponents in the Sierra Leone People's Party, arresting, torturing, incarcerating and forcing others into exile. An alleged attempt on Steven's life by a group of soldiers, including John Bangura, the king-maker whose military intervention restored Stevens, gave the President the much-needed alibi to finally silence his opponents and eliminate all sources of threat to his leadership. Stevens wasted no time in hanging the coup plotters, including Brigadier John Bangura. After sending out a clear message of tyranny, Stevens accelerated the transformation of Sierra Leone to a republican state on 19 April 1971 and became its all-powerful

¹⁴⁶Most scholars believe that Stevens' exiled life in neighboring Guinea, where Ahmed Sekou Toure had succeeded in establishing a police state and crushing all dissent, inspired his new political tactics. This new political culture shocked key leaders of the APC and sparked internal revolts. In 1970, two of the president's closest associates, Dr. M. S. Forna and M.O. Bash Taqi, Ministers for Finance and Development, respectively, resigned their membership in the APC and formed an alternative party. In his letter of resignation to Prime Minister Stevens, M. O. Bash Taqi wrote, "It gives me greater pain to see that you have embarked on a road of rapid destruction of those high ideals and fundamental principles for which we fought so vehemently over the last years." In like manner, Dr. Forna described Prime Minister Stevens as the "evil spirit behind the use of force and violence" and referred to his acts as "a display of infantile vanity and manifestations of a megalomaniac syndrome" (Alie, 1990). Stevens responded with more violence and suppression, crushing the newly formed party and successfully imposing order and presiding over Sierra Leone's turbulent political landscape for 17 years.

Executive President. Seven years later, the president changed the constitution and made Sierra Leone a one party state and himself, its president for life.

3.5 PORO AND THE STRUGGLE FOR SURVIVAL

The birth of the states of Liberia and Sierra Leone, with the inherent Westphalian notion for absolute control over territories and peoples, set in motion a long struggle between the Poro and state authorities on the one hand and the proselytising religions of Christianity and Islam on the other. Just like the states struggled for survival, the Poro's own survival struggle continued, which in effect it has faced since the days of slavery. The focus here is to explore how the clash between indigenous politics and those of the Westphalian state, as well as indigenous notions of religion and spirituality and Islam and Christianity on the other, reshaped and recreated societies and the Poro and Sande sodalities of the entire Upper Guinea Coast region.

3.5.1 Collisions between State and Poro Political Authority Building

Remaining oblivious to revolts from indigenous rulers, the Legislative Council of the Sierra Leone Colony on 31 August 1896 proclaimed the surrounding territories Protectorates of the British Crown without consulting the indigenous peoples of the interior, while Liberia undertook the incorporation of indigenous societies as subjects (not citizens) of Liberia in early 1900. Both authorities embarked on state expansion, primarily to increase sources of revenue, suppress alleged violence and disorder in the interior, and stop the lingering West-Atlantic slave trade (Fyfe, 1979). By the end of the 1800s and 1930s, the Sierra Leone Colony and the Liberian government, respectively, had sufficiently pacified and firmly established state jurisdiction over

indigenous societies around them (Sawyer, 1992). Despite relative calm in the interior of both countries, sovereign authority over the interior still resided with indigenous authorities, particularly with the Poro. To wrest power and authority from indigenous institutions, the Sierra Leone Colony and Liberia outlawed all sodalities, especially the Poro sodality, and declared it illegal and a criminal offense to employ Poro rules as a means of interfering with trade, around 1897 and 1912, respectively (Ellis, 1999). Membership in all sodalities in the case of Liberia was punishable by 20 years imprisonment, while the government entered and destroyed most Poro shrines. This unleashed long-held grievances and resentments against the colonial authorities. Christopher Fyfe (1962) indicates that the accumulated grievances amongst the indigenous population against the colonial government in Sierra Leone “broke in a wave of fury to sweep forever all taint of alien influence...” (87). In the case of Liberia, all indigenous sodalities, especially the Poro, increased capital punishment of defaulters, sabotage of government programmes and forced initiation of government agents in the hinterlands. The repression and counter resistance resulted in generalised chaos, widespread insurrection and full-scale wars between indigenous societies and the colonial authorities (ibid).

The British violently crushed revolts by indigenous societies and capitalised on their victory to weaken the Poro, especially in its political function and control over trade routes in Sierra Leone.¹⁴⁷ This was more so after the 1898 Hut Tax War between the British colonial authority and Poro authorities.¹⁴⁸ The colonial authority however

¹⁴⁷The contestation between the Poro and the British Colonial rule lays the foundation for conflicts between the political class of post-colonial Sierra Leone and the Poro. The conflict was essentially one of political economy as the issue was of control of trade routes and extraction of taxes. It also had to do with the pervasiveness of Islam and the dominance of the Poro in the North.

¹⁴⁸Intransigent kings, chiefs and warriors were either summarily executed or forced into exile. Large kingdoms were splintered into smaller chiefdoms to prevent them from consolidating. This, however, does not suggest that the institution’s influence disappeared completely from the political and especially security arena.

recreated the authority structure through the chieftaincy system. They strengthened the authority of the chiefs with the exercise of violence through the frontier police and economically through the extraction of taxes and the exploitation of labour. The countervailing authority of the Poro Council was replaced with the colonial authority while the kantha process for preparing chiefs to be diligent custodians of the Sacred Thing of Rulership was replaced by schools for chiefs, which was established by the colonial authority. Rather than learn to uphold and defend the Sacred Thing of Rulership of the Poro communities the new chiefs were schooled to defend the interests of the distant colonial authority.

While the colonial powers in Sierra Leone used their victory over indigenous revolts to strengthen control over the interior, the apparent failure of the Liberian authority to outlaw the sodality forced it to explore an alternative strategy for control—adopting the strategy of penetration and co-optation. The Liberia authority supposed that infiltrating and adopting the Poro sodality to the government's own purposes, while at the same time suppressing the much smaller sodalities especially of the Kru and Grebo ethnic groups, was a preferred option (Ellis, 1999). The government consequently made a distinction between the Poro and other sodalities, insisting that the latter was barbaric and therefore illegal, while embracing the former as partner in moulding individuals to social norms, maintaining adherence to traditional values and providing security and order in the interior (Brown 1967). President Arthur Barclay made attempts to centralise the hitherto decentralised Poro to facilitate state control of the sodality. The government designated Mt Gibi in Margibi County as the apex for all Poro sacred sites. They also appointed a 'super-Zoe', backed by the Liberian government, who was to subject all other Zoes to its authority (ibid). President

Arthur Barclay¹⁴⁹ also voluntarily underwent the initiation rites and became a member of the Poro sodality. Several of his government officials and all other presidents after him joined the Poro sodality (ibid). By the end of the 1930s, observers indicate that the Poro became a state institution almost with equal status as that of the Freemasons in Liberia (Gibbs, 1965; d'Adeazo, 1962).¹⁵⁰ As will be discussed in a subsequent section, the marriage set the stage for political instrumentalisation of the Poro sodality, as Poro paramount chiefs and high Zoes joined ranks with the Liberian state to exercise repressive authority over their people and thereby enrich themselves. Poro able-bodied men became the foot soldiers of the settler state, and were sent to the Southeast to tame the 'unruly' Kwa-speaking people. Consequently, most chiefs in Poro-governed societies in Liberia also abandoned their roles as custodians of the "Sacred Thing of Rulership". Instead, they also became proxies of the settler state imposing taxes over the interior for their personal benefits, subjecting indigenous authorities to the authority of the state; and grouping especially small autonomous units of the stateless Kwa-speaking people into large chiefdoms and imposing the chieftaincy system on them.¹⁵¹ All this notwithstanding, neither the policy of suppression in Sierra Leone or the policy of penetration and co-option in Liberia

¹⁴⁹President Arthur Barclay (r. 1904-1914) is credited with consolidating the Liberian state and imposing its so-called hinterland structure of governance on indigenous societies. His brother Edwin Barclay completed the task of state consolidation in 1930-1943, with a focus on building state bureaucracy. Just like Arthur Barclay, who ascended to the presidency at the height of colonial infiltration into the interior of Liberia, Edwin Barclay took over from President Charles DB King, who was prosecuted for allegation of slave labour. The King scandal called into question the viability of the Liberian state and evoked calls to subject Liberia to international trusteeship (Dunn and Tarr, 1988). With strong military support through the LFF and backed by the United States military, Edwin Barclay took steps to crush internal rebellion. Declaring and winning the longest battle with the Kwa-speaking people in the Southeast, the President once and for all effectively brought all territories of Liberia under the sovereign authority of the state. In 1935 the President designed and supported the Civil Service Act and with it professionalised the administrative machinery and insulated it from presidential maneuvering. Edwin Barclay pursued an endogenous economic policy, arguing that a sustainable economy is one that is anchored in domestic technology and entrepreneurship (ibid).

¹⁵⁰Harley (1941) indicates that several credible sources exist to suggest striking similarities between the Poro rites and those of Freemasonry to suggest a common origin. It can be suggested therefore that the apparent marriage between the Poro authority and the Americo-Liberians whose social and political life was also influenced by Freemasonry was easy due to the similarity of their respective sodalities.

¹⁵¹The hinterland governance strategy arguably sparked widespread discontent and resistance to state authority and institutions. It also destabilised indigenous societies and generated a generalised malaise throughout the Sierra Leone Colony and Liberia. In reaction, the Poro made its boundaries more impervious and intensified repression of Poro-dominated communities, apparently to increase the cost of defaulting.

insulated the state from encountering and being affected by indigenous institutions, especially the Poro sodality. In fact, while the British might have crushed the war-making powers of the Poro, they did not diminish its ability to serve as a force for counter-hegemonic resistance.

3.5.2. Collisions between the Poro and other Religions

In addition to the violent collision with the state, the Poro has and continues to collide with various denominations of Islam and Christianity. As indicated earlier, one theory for the migration of Poro practicing ethnic groups further south in West Africa was the conversion of the various monarchies in the Sahelian region of Africa to Islam. The converted empires condemned the Poro as the practice of Satanism and proscribed its practice in the empires. Present day Muslims still condemn the practice as Satanism. They therefore not only avoid the practice but also continue to sabotage its operation—seizing every opportunity of inter-group wars to destroy shrines and kill the Poro’s spiritual leaders. The Muslim-dominated Liberia United for Reconciliation and Democracy (LURD) and the United Liberation Movement (ULIMO) have been accused of systematically attacking Poro shrines and high priests and even selling some of the Poro’s sacred masks.¹⁵² Similar confrontations exist between the Poro and Christianity. At the beginning of the Liberian and Sierra Leonean states, missionaries who established evangelism posts in the interiors began with the vilification of the Poro. Over time, however, mainstream denominations like Catholicism, Methodism and Lutherans changed their combative approach and co-opted some aspects of the Poro and Sande practices. They noted some of the values

¹⁵²A key informant alleged that one of the most powerful symbols of the Power, which was only viewed and touched by the highest Zoes, was looted during the war by LURD in Liberia and sold for millions of dollars in Mecca.

of the Poro social regulatory functions and the similarity between some of the Poro and Sande belief systems and those of Christianity. For instance, Christian missionaries drew on the Poro's myth of rebirth, monotheism, the spiritual roles of ancestors, etc. to convey the Christian message of sacrifice, rebirth, the power of the saints and the belief in life after death. These similarities facilitated the proselytising aim of the Christian missionaries. Since the 1980s, the fast-growing 'born-again' groups of Christians have challenged the apparent cooperation between Christianity and Poro spirituality. They too have denounced the Poro as Satanism and any association with it as 'being equally yoked with the devil', as one Key Informant indicated. The 'born again' groups in both countries have forced new converts to denounce their association with the Poro and even disassociate from their relatives who remain practicing members of the Poro and Sande. This religious or spiritual crisis is having a devastating effect on the social cohesion and coherence of Poro-dominated communities. The crisis has intensified since the end of the civil wars in both countries. While collisions in the political spheres of the Poro and the state has undermined political stability, a crisis of spirituality and social values engendered by collisions between Poro on the one hand and Islam and 'born-again' Christianity on the other, continues to destabilise or delay the restoration of social foundations.

3.6 NEO-PATRIMONY AND KLEPTOCRACY IN LIBERIA AND SIERRA LEONE

A combination of factors including economic bankruptcy, indigenous revolts, and threats of encroachments on the territories of Liberia and Sierra Leone progressively altered the nature of the colony and settler state.¹⁵³ In the case of Liberia, by the time

¹⁵³Until the mid-20th century, Liberia operated a "common patrimony" in which each settler had a stake. The 'patrimony' was managed by a merchant 'settler oligarchy' who sustained both the oligarchy and the 'Common

William V.S. Tubman¹⁵⁴ ascended to the presidency in 1944, Sawyer (1992) points out, “countervailing influences exercised by the norms, customs, and traditions associated with the ‘settler state’” and by extension the interior of Liberia, had receded (p. 146). A president-dominated political culture was at work. Tubman took advantage of these opportunistic conditions to establish a fully functioning neo-patrimonial order. As a non-Monrovia¹⁵⁵ political actor, Tubman was aware of the difficulty of penetrating the highly bonded, sodality-based Monrovia political class. The indigenous population, whose demand for inclusion in the Liberian state had grown louder, provided the ready alternative political base for the president. He quickly moved to announce policies that were popular to the majority indigenous population (Dunn and Tarr, 1988). Tubman called for a “new era of understanding and cooperation among the various ethnic communities of Liberia” (ibid: 54). He revised the law to enfranchise women and members of indigenous communities who paid taxes and own properties valued over \$100 (ibid). On the economic front the president declared an open-door policy—directly opposite to his predecessor, Edwin Barclay, who pursued endogenous economic policy. The economy took a dramatic upward trend and Liberia witnessed a phenomenal rise in foreign direct investments.¹⁵⁶ The large investment in the resources of Liberia helped Tubman to transform Liberia’s tax-dependent government to a rent-seeking government. The shift emboldened the President’s grip on power since he crafted policies that favoured

Patrimony” through a “combination of religious, economic, and sodalitous allegiances” (Dunn and Tarr, 1988: 146). The seat of power was primarily established in and controlled by the Monrovia-based settler class until William V.S. Tubman, a settler from south-eastern Liberia took over as President.

¹⁵⁴William V.S. Tubman is the 18th and longest serving President in the history of Liberia. He is also credited with instituting and presiding over neo-patrimonial politics in Liberia.

¹⁵⁵Tubman hailed from Maryland, the latest settler state in Liberia. It also took much longer before the Maryland settlers agreed to joining Liberia. They were therefore considered outsiders from mainstream politics. Aside from historical dissimilarity, Maryland is in the far east of the country and given the impassable road network, hardly interacted with the settler core in Montserrado and Grand Bassa counties.

¹⁵⁶From 1950 to 1961, Liberia’s economic growth was the highest in the world. With less than 0.3% of the continent’s population, the country benefited from more than 13% of all foreign direct investments in Africa (Dunn and Tarr, 1988).

his full control of the newly found wealth. Tubman reduced the professional and functioning bureaucracy he inherited to benevolent pageantry and mediocrity, using the immense wealth gained from the economic boom.¹⁵⁷

Unlike Tubman, who inherited an all-powerful Executive and instituted a neo-patrimony, Siaka Stevens created his own political order of presidential dominance, and with it institutionalised the politics of kleptocracy. The kleptocratic order Stevens instituted in collaboration with his Lebanese cronies permeated every sector of state bureaucracy and became a culture in Sierra Leone.¹⁵⁸ Aspiring civil servants had to pay recruiting officers for appointments to lucrative posts at diamond mines and border points. By the time Stevens stepped down for his hand-picked successor, Joseph Momoh, Kandeh (1999) indicates, the Kleptocratic order conspicuously manifested itself in the open involvement of politicians and civil servants in diamond mining and smuggling; the profiteering and hoarding of goods; the signing of bogus contracts and pocketing of salaries of ‘ghost’ workers; and the stealing of public materials and equipment (Kandeh, 1999:351). The predatory nature of the regime undermined the construction of legitimate political institutions and set the conditions for “widespread discontent, social disorder, armed insurrections, and eventual state collapse” (ibid).

¹⁵⁷President Tubman boasted of being responsible for the newly found wealth and therefore entitled to its distribution. This in my view helped to dismantle governance rooted in accountability and transparency and establish the foundations for predatory governance—the conditions which tend to produce war economies in time of instability.

¹⁵⁸Kandeh (1999) alleges that Stevens turned over the diamond and fishing industry to his Lebanese cronies headed by Jamil Sahid Mohammed. Mohammed was virtually the Prime Minister under Stevens. He attended cabinet meetings, occasionally vetoed ministerial appointments, reversed ministerial decisions and routinely violated government regulations (ibid). As chief patron of the APC, Jamil had over 500 Lebanese and Palestinian personal security guards.

3.6.1 Decline of Neo-patrimony, Kleptocracy and State Decay

Both Tubman and Stevens willed to their chosen successors—William R. Tolbert and Joseph Momoh, respectively—economies on the brink of bankruptcy and an outburst of hitherto repressed social forces, whether student movements or the so-called progressives (Sawyer, 1992; Kandeh, 1999). In an attempt to create their own political identity, both successors made attempts to break away from their predecessors. William R. Tolbert quickly announced himself as distinct from William Tubman and declared that the era of ‘father of the nation’ politics was over. He insisted that Liberia’s return to ‘higher heights’ depended on a policy of ‘total involvement’ with uncompromising values for hard work and professionalism (Dunn and Tarr, 1988).¹⁵⁹ To turn towards Africa, Tolbert terminated diplomatic ties with Israel and established diplomatic relations with the Soviet Union and a number of socialist countries. He refocused the economy inward with emphasis on agriculture and embarked on infrastructural development.

While Tolbert’s “Total Involvement for Higher Heights” policy was welcomed by the intelligentsia of the indigenous class, it was resented by the traditional core who accused him of “moving too fast, breaking with tradition, and showing disrespect and ingratitude to the old order that had produced and elevated him to the presidency” (Sawyer, 1992: 189). Besides, it was not long before the President began to contradict his so-called policy. His merit system contrasted with the total monopoly of the economy by his brothers and cronies. Calls for public scrutiny of government

¹⁵⁹Tolbert immediately gave a head start to his ‘Total Involvement for Higher Heights’ policy. He refurbished, modernised and launched Edwin Barclay’s policy of professionalised bureaucracy, emphasising merit as the basis for recruitment in the civil service; released all political prisoners of the Tubman era and enlisted some in his government; and encouraged scrutiny of public officials (Dunn and Tarr, 1988).

performance were limited to those outside of the president's close rank. Returning to the old order, the president declared emergency powers and reinstated Tubman's security state (Lowenkopf, 1976). The indigenous intelligentsia to whom he gravitated at the inception of his presidency not only abandoned the President, they were actively plotting for his removal. Moves to return to the traditional core also did not materialise. Without a political base and "entrapped by his own inconsistencies", Tolbert remained in limbo; thus exposing the 'proverbial weak link' of the settlers' hold on power" (Dunn and Tarr, 1988). Sooner than later the irrepressible tide of change overtook the government, bringing to a bloody end the Tolbert regime and by extension the nearly 150-year settler hold on power.¹⁶⁰

Similarly Joseph Momoh in Sierra Leone presented himself at his inauguration as a 'no nonsense' president who was determined to break with kleptocracy. "...Those people who made it a habit to ignore stipulated rules and regulations by virtue of their standing or connection in society... as from this moment their days have come to an end..." he reminded his jubilant audience (Alie, 1990). The President declared his

¹⁶⁰One incident, which goes down in history as the primary trigger to the end of Tolbert's regime was the April 14, 1979 rice riot. In April 1979 the Government of Liberia announced a policy to increase the price of a 100 lb bag of rice from US\$22 to US\$30. The Progressive Alliance of Liberia (PAL), one of the two¹⁶⁰ staunch political pressure groups at the time, rejected the government's policy and threatened to mobilise national demonstrations. PAL claimed that the government's decision was intended to allow windfall profits for the already wealthy importers (many of whom were immediate relatives of the president) to the detriment of the "toiling masses" (Dunn and Tarr, 1988). On April 14 1979, in defiance of the Government's ban on public demonstrations, PAL mobilised thousands of disgruntled youths in and around Monrovia to take to the streets. For the first time in the country's history, the people had taken to the streets to express their grievances. The police and soldiers, ordered by the Government to enforce the ban, disregarded the president's order (ibid). More than 100 persons were killed, 500 wounded and properties worth millions of US dollars looted. Even though leaders of PAL were charged with treason and imprisoned, the president bowed to pressure and extended executive clemency. Pundits suggest the clemency and subsequent backtracking from executive decisions exposed William Tolbert as a weak president, a weakness PAL and other 'progressives' unrelentingly exploited until the regime was toppled. One year later, the Progressive Peoples Party (PPP; a political wing of the PAL) called for the resignation of the Tolbert government, to be replaced by "a coalition of progressive forces" (ibid). The announcement invited a nation-wide strike until the president resigned. Calling this an affront to state authority, the president arrested and charged the PPP leaders with treason. As they awaited trial, the president invited students and traditional leaders to a public forum on the grounds of the Executive Mansion to seek their endorsement for the execution of capital punishment. Disapproving crowds, who threw missiles at the president, interrupted the gathering. Tolbert retreated in humiliation from the booing crowd. Barely a month after that fateful gathering, on 12 April 1980, 17 non-commissioned officers stormed the presidential residence and assassinated the president, bringing an end to nearly 150 years of settler oligarchy in Liberia. A path of self-destruction was charted and maintained ever since.

'New Order' policy and called on all Sierra Leoneans and foreigners doing business in the country to support the new policy. Unfortunately, unlike Tolbert, Momoh's 'New Order' was weighed down by the corrupt and opportunistic regime he inherited. In addition, the President's own dearth in political acumen combined with unrealistic expectations for political transformation undermined any good intentions he might have had. Rather than persist on the path of political transformation, the President simply perfected corruption and introduced a lackadaisical leadership. Even though the declining economy could hardly support a politics of kleptocracy and neo-patrimony, the Momoh regime entrenched these vices (Kandeh, 1999). Overwhelmed by generalised discontent and military incursions in the East and bogged down by a crushing debt burden, the Momoh regime was in a complete state of disorder. It was easy therefore for a band of disgruntled soldiers to march into the state house and overthrow the regime in 1992; also bringing to an end 25 years of APC hold on power (Zack-Williams, 1997).

3.6 CONCLUSION

So far I have demonstrated that prior to the establishment of the Westphalian state, the Upper Guinea Coast was politically dynamic. In nearly all societies of Sierra Leone and a large part of Liberia, there were complex societies bonded by thick and well-protected boundaries; where a mix of secular and supernatural structures exercised absolute sovereignty; and the culture of silence and political ambiguity operated. The introduction of Europe from the days of slavery, to colonialism and later the establishment of the Westphalian state, added alien elements to the configuration

process by placing emphasis on *assimilation* and *centralised* hierarchies.¹⁶¹ I also demonstrated that pre-collapsed Liberia and Sierra Leone rested on a social philosophy which later found expression in what Dunn and Tarr describe as “Rudyard Kipling’s ‘white man’s burden’”, where the freed slaves and the British colonialists perceived themselves as “Josephs” destined to redeem Africa from its ‘primitiveness’.

Secondly, like all other state-builders, Liberian and Sierra Leonean state builders surmised that juxtaposing the Westphalian State on indigenous institutions was achievable with no repercussions for state institutions. That exercise failed monumentally. The so-called evangelical and civilised state-builders soon adopted the Poro mechanisms for generating authority in Liberia, while the British ceded power to a recreated version of the Poro in the indirect rule system. The Americo-Liberian political class got themselves initiated in the Poro in the hope that they would transform the sodality into a political instrument. While this was the case, Poro elites used their newfound position to exploit the state and their people. As for Sierra Leone, although the indigenous intelligentsia who assumed state power claimed to be well groomed in British civilisation, they seemed to have demonstrated primordial allegiance to their respective communities, as evidenced in the political fragmentation that greeted the young independent state.

Thirdly, too often scholars tend to pitch the origin of the African state to so-called independence events. This claim is highly problematic if one considers the definition of statebuilding. Prior to independence and under the authority of the colonialists, as seen in the case of Sierra Leone and partly Liberia, African states were broadly

¹⁶¹The implications of assimilation and centralisation on the viability of the state and nationbuilding are discussed in chapter three.

established with defined and internationally agreed borders, bureaucratic institutions—although with a periphery-centre socio-economic pattern—and some defined authority and government. What changed at independence was not a shift from colony to statehood. Instead, it was a shift from ‘colonial state to ‘independent neo-colonial state’.

Fourthly, very few African states including Sierra Leone have revisited the theory of statehood, the question of nationbuilding and the nature and structure of governance since the colonialists transferred power. Those who embarked on the foundational project have only done so after the colonial state they inherited collapsed through bloody coups or civil wars.¹⁶² The lack of political dialogue with the range of micro-sodality-based authorities in especially Liberia and Sierra Leone continues to undermine opportunities for evolving shared theories and structures of governance. The emphasis on dialogue is not to suggest that dialogue is an end in itself. It is a platform and an opportunity to evolve a social compact that is responsive to the context. As Sawyer points out, many African states including Liberia and Sierra Leone still need to embark on national dialogue that will facilitate the reinvention of a state that is representative of their historical, demographic, geographical and socio-economic realities.

Finally, the 1940s (for Liberia) and the 1970s for (Sierra Leone) witnessed a significant shift in the political system. Both William V.S. Tubman and Siaka Stevens consolidated the centralised state and perfected the politics of graft and

¹⁶²The case of Uganda and Ghana are classic example. Tanzania is perhaps among the few, if not the only, African states that revisited these questions after independence. The majority of the states continue the train of the colonial state. The recent end of Apartheid afforded South Africa this rare opportunity to embark on the state and nation building project. Rather than claim independence in the 1960s as the beginning of state building in Africa, the researcher would argue the period only marked the transition from ‘colonial’ to ‘independent neo-colonial’ statehood.

patronage. An economic boom and the growing agitation for political independence throughout Africa provided the conditions favourable for kleptocracy and neo-patrimony. The decline of these resources coupled with their own political ineptness undermined the leadership of Tubman and Stevens' successors, thereby bringing to an end the kleptocratic order in Sierra Leone and patrimonial politics and mediocre government in Liberia. How and why both orders failed and the implication for their violent collapse is the subject of Chapter 4.

CHAPTER 4

ANALYSIS OF THE CIVIL WARS AND INTERVENTIONS

“The phenomenon of state collapse prompts an avalanche of questions: What are the significant features of state collapse? How do we define it? What triggers it? Are some state systems or contexts more prone to it than others and if so under what kind of conditions? What are the implications of collapse both internally within the state system concerned and externally with respect to relations with the world outside? ... What lies beyond collapse and how should we visualise and propose to handle the connections between state collapse and state formation or political reconstruction in the contemporary era?” (Doornbos, 2003: 48)

4.1 INTRODUCTION

Contemporary conflicts such as those waged in Liberia and Sierra Leone defy traditional constructs and frameworks for understanding conflict, war and state insurrection. As observed by David Keen (2005), the two-party logic of war is inadequate to explain the cocktail of warlords and factions who featured in both civil wars. Secondly, the traditional ‘war as honour’ concept is severely challenged by the apparent lack of discernable ideological motives, as well as the random nature of the civil wars (Collier, 2003; Misra, 2008). The dishonour and disrepute such wars have brought to the glorified notion of warfare celebrated by Carl von Clausewitz, Niccolo Machiavelli, and more recently Frank Fanon has prompted some scholars, especially Robert Kaplan (1994), to dismiss contemporary wars as “new barbarism”. Kaplan’s “new barbarism” thesis has been adequately addressed by scholars like Francis (2005), Misra (2008), Richards (2001) and Keen (2005), among others. I have no intention to recount its obvious flaws. However, the point worth noting here is the realisation that the global insecurity risks these wars tend to pose have made them too costly to ignore. Most importantly, as Humphreys and Weinstein (2008) argue, how we understand the nature and operations of contemporary civil wars is critical to the determination of appropriate and effective interventions. There has therefore been a surge in the number of scholars, cynics included, who are in search of explanations of

some sort to deepen our understanding of post-Cold War civil wars. So far the explanations are as diverse as they are controversial.

Nevertheless, some of these controversial theories continue to inform both internal and external interventions—sometimes with success, sometimes with disastrous failure. In this chapter I engage the dominant causal theories including the greed and grievance thesis, ethnicity thesis, culturalist thesis and spillover effects and regionalisation of civil wars thesis. In light of the causal analysis, I review the core intervention strategies that culminated in the peace agreements. Despite growing efforts to consign contemporary civil wars to the category of exceptionism and peculiarity, I come to similar conclusions made in the late 1970s by Paul Wehr (1979)—that there is no one cause but a confluence of causes, which can better explain civil wars including those of today. To set the stage, the chapter begins with a sketch of accounts of the civil wars in section 4.2. It is followed by discussions of the dominant causal theories in section 4.3. Finally, section 4.4 analyses the range of peacemaking interventions and their impacts on prospects for durable peace.¹⁶³

4.2 SKETCH OF THE CIVIL WARS

On 24 December 1989 the National Patriotic Front of Liberia (NPFL) under a new leadership, Charles McArthur Taylor, made a third comeback with 150-armed men to topple the tyrannical regime of Samuel Kanyon Doe.¹⁶⁴ The NPFL crossed into

¹⁶³I focus the intervention section on all interventions that led to brokering the final peace agreements leaving discussions on post-conflict interventions aimed at state reconstruction to Chapter 6 and 7.

¹⁶⁴The National Patriotic Front of Liberia was established and headed by the late Thomas Quiwonkpa, who was the second top ranking officer of the 17 non-commission officers who toppled the Tolbert regime. With increasing tensions between him and President Samuel Kanyon Doe, Quiwonkpa was dismissed as Commanding General of the Armed Forces of Liberia and appointed as Secretary General of the People Redemption Council. He escaped and went into voluntary exile, where supported by some prominent Liberians, he established the NPFL. As

Liberia through Cote d'Ivoire, into the Gio and Mano towns of Butuo and Karnplay in Nimba County. Already agitated by Doe's repressive policy against them, the Gio and Mano overwhelmingly welcomed the NPFL. In less than six months, a groundswell of popular support engorged the rank of the NPFL—expanding the small band of fighters into an army of over 20,000 (Sawyer, 1992).¹⁶⁵ As discussed later in the chapter, in August 1990 under the name—ECOWAS Peace Monitoring Group (ECOMOG)—ECOWAS leaders dispatched 4,000 strong peacekeeping troops to Liberia. This marked the beginning of ECOWAS's long and treacherous journey in peacekeeping and the launch of a new 'peace and security' chapter in sub regional economic cooperation (I return to this subject later in the chapter).¹⁶⁶ Seven years into ECOWAS's intervention in Liberia, general and presidential elections were held in 1997. Charles Taylor, the biggest of the warlords, emerged victorious. However, elections, the popular response of the international community to internal conflict, did not win the peace. Disgruntled warlords returned to the bush just about two years into Taylor's leadership. The Liberians United for Reconciliation and Democracy (LURD) and the Movement for Democracy in Liberia (MODEL)—with apparent support from the governments of Guinea and Cote d'Ivoire—mounted sustained military pressures on the Taylor Government. Already reeling under a range of economic and military sanctions the Taylor government capitulated and Taylor himself accepted to go into exile July 2003. In August of the same year the

discussed further in the chapter, the NPFL had made two attempts to topple the Doe regime but failed with catastrophic consequences, particularly for the Gio/Mano ethnic groups of its leader, Thomas Quiwonkpa.

¹⁶⁵ Like wild fire, the NPFL extended its control to every corner of Liberia, confining President Doe and his ethnic-based Armed Forces to the Executive Palace and its adjoining military Barclay Training Centre.

¹⁶⁶ Amidst fierce combat against NPFL, ECOMOG landed and established itself in Monrovia with support from the breakaway Independent National Patriotic Front of Liberia (INPFL) and the Krahn-dominated Armed Forces of Liberia (Sawyer, 1992). The alliance with factional troops soon became a liability to the regional peacekeepers, when, barely a month into ECOMOG's arrival in the country, President Samuel Doe was captured by the INPFL in the offices of the ECOMOG commander while visiting the latter's Burshrod Island base, and dragged away as the apparently bewildered regional troops looked on. Nigeria unilaterally dismissed Quainoo, flew him home and replaced him with a Nigerian commander (ibid). Nigeria maintained the leadership of ECOMOG throughout their intervention in Liberia after the woeful failure of the Ghanaian leadership.

ECOWAS with support from the international community brokered a peace deal known as the Comprehensive Peace Agreement (CPA). The United Nations backed the CPA with a robust 15,000-strong Peacekeeping Mission, which contributed to some political stability and facilitated post-settlement elections. They continue to consolidate stability and the state in Liberia.

Similarly, although Sierra Leone's own political, economic and social decay had reached breaking point, it took the spillover effects of conflict in Liberia to ignite another cataclysmic flame of violence in Sierra Leone. It was March 23, 1991 when about 100 fighters calling themselves the Revolutionary United Front (RUF) crossed over from territories held by the NPFL in Liberia, into the Kailahun District in eastern Sierra Leone.¹⁶⁷ Like its counterpart in Liberia, the RUF positioned itself as the redeemer who would pull Sierra Leone out of the socio-economic abyss in which APC kleptocracy had plunged the country (Kandeh, 1999). It promised to return proceeds from the abundant wealth extracted from rural communities back to the communities in a communist style (Reno, 1995). This rhetoric was initially appealing, particularly to the youth from the rural areas and urban slums that swelled the ranks of the RUF.¹⁶⁸ ECOMOG, also at the behest of Nigeria, intervened in the conflict in 1994 and succeeded in brokering a peace deal in 1996. But while the peace deal was being negotiated, Sierra Leone held general and presidential elections—disregarding protests from RUF. Barely a year after the elections, disgruntled

¹⁶⁷The RUF, having co-trained with leaders of NPFL in Libya, joined ranks with the NPFL to first launch what became a regional onslaught in Liberia. From the NPFL bases, the RUF launched their insurgency against the deeply entrenched one-party rule of the All People's Congress (APC).

¹⁶⁸Unlike in Liberia, where the war spread to the capital in six months, it took four years before the RUF incursion was felt throughout Sierra Leone, particularly in the populated capital city. The war was contained along the eastern fringes of Sierra Leone for a long time partly because RUF and its Liberian and Burkina Faso troops abandoned their earlier "millenarian appeal" for banditry, murder, torture, mutilation and rape as a way of subduing the local population. They also gravitated towards the diamond fields and abandoned further offensives against the SLA. RUF used its stolen wealth to equip itself and launch a renewed and sustained offensive against the SLA and its allied forces. By 1994 the RUF had spread across the country.

elements from the Sierra Leone Army—the self-styled Armed Forces Revolutionary Council (AFRC)—joined ranks with the RUF to depose the government. It took another bloody intervention of ECOMOG, backed by a range of government forces, traditional hunters from the Poro and other sodality groups and mercenaries to reverse the coup and restore the elected government. The war persisted until 1999 when ECOMOG, backed by the international community, brokered a peace deal known as the Lome Peace Agreement (LPA). ECOMOG, as in Liberia, stayed the course until 2000 when the UN approved over 17,000 troops to keep the peace and support post-conflict recovery. The war officially ended in 2002. Sierra Leone has since been on the path to recovery, having had two peaceful presidential elections since the end of the civil war.

Much has been written about the chronology of events in the bloody and protracted civil wars.¹⁶⁹ I have no intention to recount the tragic accounts. This brief account is intended to lay the basis for the detail analysis I embark upon in subsequent sections. For now it is worth keeping in mind that even though leaders of the sub region intervened in the early stages of the conflict, both conflicts persisted until the international community through the United Nations acted concertedly to intervene. Secondly, although the conflicts began with single actors who challenged the state, during the course of the conflict a range of actors—including 10 warring factions in Liberia and dozens of civil militias and mercenary outfits in Sierra Leone—populated the war theatres in both countries. The death toll in Liberia was a colossal 300,000 (more than 10% of the population), while in Sierra Leone it was estimated at 50,000 (Human Rights Watch 1997 and 2002, respectively). Physical scars of the wars are

¹⁶⁹For more chronological accounts of the civil wars, please see Sawyer (1992) *The Emergence of Autocracy in Liberia-Tragedy and Challenge*, Institute for Contemporary Studies Press: San Francisco; and Keen (2005) *Conflict and Collusion in Sierra Leone*, James Currey: Oxford.

also overwhelming, with nearly 35,000 civilian and over 5,000 ex-combatants with serious physical disabilities. What caused the wars and such massive destruction is the subject of the next section.

4.3 CAUSAL THEORIES ON LIBERIA AND SIERRA LEONE CIVIL WARS

4.3.1 The Greed and Grievance Debates

4.3.1.1 The Primacy of Grievance

Azar (1990), Gurr (1993), and Kogan and Zisserman-Brodsky (1998) are among earlier conflict theorists who postulate that civil wars are an expression of cumulative “communal” or “fraternal” grievances (Kogan Iasanyi and Zisserman-Brodsky, 1998: 212). Such grievances, according to Azar, are a result of depriving individuals and communities from resources to satisfy their “security, development, political access, and identity needs” (Azar, 1990, cited in Miall et al, 1999: 73). Two factors must be present before deprivation can be a source of violence mobilisation. Firstly, Azar notes that deprivation must be in relative terms where the deprived coexists with other groups who have or are perceived to have privileged access to the satisfiers of needs; and secondly there must be the lack of recourse. Jose Ortega y Gasset contends, “Violence is the means resorted to by him who had previously exhausted all others in defence of the rights of justice.” He posits that the absence of recourse is equal to the erosion of culture and the erosion of culture unleashes the primitive passion of violence (ibid).

Did relative deprivation and impunity or the lack of recourse feature prominently in the degenerative history of Liberia and Sierra Leone to justify the grievance thesis? Kieh (2004), Sawyer (1992), Kandeh (1999), Keen (2005), Abdullah (1998), and Richards (1996) seem to agree that grievance had a central role in the conflagrations. Kieh observes that at the threshold of the civil war in Liberia, there was a serious crisis of need as the "...ruling class could not provide modicum of basic human needs" (2004: 65). Besides, the Samuel Doe regime successfully replaced the Americo-Liberian hegemony with his brutal Krahn hegemony. The exclusive and hegemonic politics was further exacerbated by Doe's violent clampdown on dissent. Reflecting on the period leading up to the Liberian civil war, Sawyer recalls that "As the rape and plunder intensified..." Doe instituted armed repression and terror (1988: 4). In the end, Sawyer notes, "...the populist democratic rhetoric gave way to fascist law and order and nationalism gave way to ethnicism..." (ibid). Most importantly, the period after the failed 1985 coup led by Thomas Quiwonkpa¹⁷⁰ saw a rise in community vigilantism as state security increasingly became the assassination squad targeting everyone protesting the Doe regime, especially individuals from the Gio and Mano ethnic communities. Across the country, whatever was left to guarantee recourse had completely eroded.

Similarly, in Sierra Leone, Keen (2005) points out, that 25 years of APC centralised rule produced generalised frustration, anger and apathy. As for Paul Richards (1996), aside from frustration from exclusion from political decision, the suppression of youth by chiefs and Zoes of secret societies in rural Liberia and Sierra Leone was the

¹⁷⁰Thomas Quiwonkpa, a member of the Gio and Mano ethnic groups, was one of the last remaining members of the 17 non-commissioned officers, aside from Samuel Doe, who fled the country when Doe plotted to eliminate him, as he did the others. Quiwonkpa returned in 1985 to overthrow the Doe government, but failed after Doe's Israeli-backed squad reversed the coup.

primary reason for the youth outburst which culminated in the civil wars (ibid). The youth, he notes, rushed to participate in the rebellion in the hope that change in the system would facilitate their return to school, while at the same time settling scores with the rotten system which suppressed them for so long. Kandeh is more emphatic. He contends, "...Sierra Leone's descent into state terrorism...heralded the dawn of a 'new barbarism'" (Kandeh, 1999: 350). Outputs of the wars also strengthen the case for grievance. Consistent evidence of attacks on state and indigenous authority symbols and the very nature of the violence is strong indication of revolts against both state and indigenous repressive authorities. Citing a consultancy report on Sierra Leone's National Recovery Strategy, Fanthorpe (2005) notes that: "The extensive, wanton damage to government buildings [and Poro shrines and chieftaincy structures] during the war is by any logical analysis indefensible, and was part of a systemic attack on all symbols of governance..." (p. 30).

4.3.1.2 The Primacy of Greed

Paul Collier and Anke Hoeffler (1998) lead an emerging thesis, which dismisses as irrelevant the primacy of grievance in contemporary civil wars. Drawing from their studies of over 90 countries, the authors contend that greed, not grievance, is the central explanatory variable for contemporary civil wars. They call on scholars to "...forget about the political and cultural arguments [of grievance] and focus instead on the greed of rebels and especially on their trade in natural resources' (cited in Humphreys, 2005: 510). Collier and Hoeffler surmise that, given the growing failure of the state to monopolise violence, the greed-violence nexus is set to flourish (cited in Keen, 2005). Neil Cooper (2003), concurring with the greed thesis, makes an emphatic claim: that all today's warlords and criminals intend is to capture the state

and exploit it as “vehicle for enhancing and legitimising profit making” (p. 186). Since greed is opportunistic, Collier and Hoeffler emphasise the conditions which facilitate greed, including: a) presence of lootable or “diffused” natural resources, b) limited economic opportunity for youth, and c) ethnic dominance (2002).

It will not be farfetched to suggest that Collier and Hoeffler may have been inspired by the wars in Liberia and Sierra Leone, given the closeness of their analysis to both scenarios. The greed-inducing conditions they outline are overwhelmingly evident in both countries. Liberia and Sierra Leone are endowed with abundant lootable resources, including alluvial diamonds (in abundance in Sierra Leone and considerable quantity in Liberia), gold, bauxite, timber, etc.¹⁷¹ The state in both countries—in the 1950s for Sierra Leone and the 1920s and 1950s for Liberia—transformed their economies from “tax-dependent” to rent-seeking, when they discovered a range of natural endowments. As Francis (2001) observes, the discovery of diamond, in Sierra Leone in the 1950s led to the abandonment of the budding agro-economy in favour of one driven by the ‘precious diamond’. Similarly, Sawyer (1992) indicates that with the launch of the over 2 million acre Firestone Rubber Plantation in 1926 and the iron ore mining companies that followed in the 1950s, Liberia shifted from agriculture and its thriving mercantile economy. The shifts were not without grave socio-economic, political, environmental, and security consequences. Socio-economically, the shifts affected the quality of the labour force, the demography and indigenous social order. Demand for muscular rock-hewing, earth-digging and rubber-tapping young men provided no incentive for education,

¹⁷¹Johannes Muntschick in his article ‘The Great War’ calls the lootable resources in Liberia and Sierra Leone, “diffuse resources”. He defines diffuse resources as those lootable natural endowments which are widespread and easy to access and exploit with unskilled labor. He notes that most of Liberia and Sierra Leone’s natural resources—diamond, ores, bauxite, gold and sometimes timber—are diffuse resources.

technological capacity development, entrepreneurship and diversification of the economies (Francis, 2001; Sawyer, 1992). Secondly, movement from one diamond field to another “...spurred major migrations and produced a floating population [mostly youth]” that was removed from communal values and norms (Keen 2005: 16). Thirdly, the pursuit of the precious diamond created interest-seeking atomised individuals with whom the value of solidarity—the hallmark of the sodality-governed Upper Guinea Coast—had lost its usefulness. Worst of all the diamond fields and rubber plantations became a production ground for communal grievances and militarised youth groups.¹⁷² Politics also changed fundamentally. Sawyer (1992) observes that since the government of Liberia no longer depended on taxes because of the abundant wealth, governance was striped of accountability. In Sierra Leone, Francis (2001) and Kandeh (1999) indicate that ‘diamond politics’ helped entrench the politics of predation and kleptocracy. Bad governance and gravitation to the exportation of primary goods and the unimaginable greed dragged and kept both countries below the human development ladder, with Sierra Leone the least of all 179 countries while Liberia is 176th according to the UNDP 2008 Human Development Report.¹⁷³ As Kandeh points out, the stealing of diamonds by politicians and their cronies deprived Sierra Leone not only of revenue, it also hastened its contraction and eventual collapse (1999: 352). De Soysa’s observation for resource-rich communities in third world countries—that such endowments tend to be more a “curse” rather than “blessing”—is overwhelmingly true for communities in especially rural Liberia and Sierra Leone (2000: 113).

¹⁷²Deeply aggrieved youth and members of host communities berated self-seeking state and local authorities who exploited their labor and communal endowments to feed their gluttony. They dreamed of the opportunity for revenge.

¹⁷³Available on <http://hdr.undp.org/en/statistics/>, accessed February 26, 2009.

The nature and outputs of the war also remove any shred of doubt one could have drawn on to challenge the greed thesis. The predatory socio-political environment created the opportunity for greed-stricken warlords to instigate violence and establish war economies. D.F. Davis et al (1997: 2 cited in Kieh 2004) assert that, “Neither political philosophy nor long running historical tribal clashes were at the roots of the Liberian civil war, instead it was motivated by greed.” Only six months into the war in Liberia and less than a month in Sierra Leone did the National Patriotic Front of Liberia (NPFL) and the Revolutionary United Front of Sierra Leone (RUF) establish vast machinery to loot resources in the areas under their control.¹⁷⁴ The accessibility of the “diffused resources” also spurred the proliferation of warring factions, including fortune-seeking sub regional and international mercenaries.¹⁷⁵

Notwithstanding the strong case made for the greed thesis, there are some flaws. Much has already been done to cut to size Collier and Hoeffler’s work from technical or scientific points of view. Nafziger and Auvinen (2002) challenges the selection of the data and the reductionist nature of their model; Misra (2008) argues that while some of their arguments resonate with some civil wars, the generalisation of the conclusions to all contemporary civil wars undermines the validity of the work. This is evident in the failure of their thesis to convincingly explain civil wars in Sri Lanka, South Sudan, Cambodia, Palestine, etc. As for Humphrey (2005), it is the ambiguity in their conceptualisation of greed and grievance and the apparent misapplication of the greed argument to what is certainly an issue of grievance, which throws the study

¹⁷⁴It is estimated that between 1992 and 1996, Taylor personally received \$455 million US dollars from the exploitation and sale of natural resources in the areas under his control. He legitimised his greed by getting the Liberian legislator to pass a bill which gave him exclusive authority over all resources in Liberia when he became president.

¹⁷⁵Nearly a dozen in Liberia and over two dozen in Sierra Leone, including a range of international mercenary groups like Executive Outcomes from South Africa, Sandline and Ghuka from Britain and numerous soldiers on hire from nearly all countries of the West Africa sub region.

in doubt. In addition to the scientific arguments, and despite the compelling case I have made for greed vis-à-vis Liberia and Sierra Leone, there still remain fundamental contextual questions.

Firstly, proponents of the greed thesis placed the blame squarely at the feet of warlords. Unsurprisingly, the inherent profit-maximising value of liberalism and the laxity in its free market system, which favours illicit markets, has gone unnoticed in their exposition. While condemning Taylor and Sankoh in the UN Security Council and Western capitals, leading Western governments, including some members of the Security Council, were Taylor and Sankoh's business partners (Atkinson, 1997; Ross, 2003; Global Witness, 2002). Musah (2003) argue that conditions which favour violence and state subversion in Africa cannot only be limited to the presence of lootable resources, youth and ethnicity, as Collier and his colleagues would have us believe. He posit "...the interplay between irresponsible governance, illegitimate resource appropriation, and transnational corporate greed..." is integral to war economies (p. 167). As for Mbembe (2001), the blame should be laid squarely at the feet of International Financial Institutions for turning the sovereign African state into mere markets. Mbembe contends that:

"Privatisation of the sovereignty of African states largely overlaps the struggle to concentrate and then privatise the means of coercion because of the control of the means of coercion makes it possible to secure an advantage in the other conflicts under way for the appropriation of resources..." (2001: 78).

Mbembe goes further to draw a direct causal link between "...deregulation and the primacy of the market" on the one hand, to "...the rise of violence and the creation of private military, paramilitary, or jurisdictional organisations" on the other (2001: 79).

Secondly, there is no mention of any resemblance of the post-independence politics of predation and kleptocracy and the colonial institutions of extraction and plunder, which gave birth to the independence states, to the exercise of what is being called greed in contemporary wars. If the arguments of Francis (2005), Clapham (2003), Kandeh (1999) and Keen (2005), among others, that the states of Liberia and Sierra Leone operated as kleptocracy before the wars is anything to go by, then the so-called greed characterisation of war behaviours is simply “politics by other means”. The only difference would be that the plunder is not limited to the privileged elites. Mass men, women, boys and girls are actively participating in the scramble (Doe, 2001).

Thirdly, in Freud’s famous psychoanalysis theory, all humans irrespective of race or creed are more likely to pursue the gratification of their insatiable wants in the absence of restraints. This view also challenges the claim that greed is a product of contemporary wars. If greed is innate and can only be restrained by effective regulatory regimes, shouldn’t the cause of violence-for-greed be found in the lack of effective regulators?

Fourthly, proponents of the greed thesis had popularised a dichotomy between greed and grievance, although in his subsequent works Collier has conceded that there is a place for grievance. He acknowledges that:

“The political entrepreneurs who instigate rebellions may seek start-up finance [and labour] from a constituency that is indeed willing to pay for vengeance; hence greed may need to incite grievance. Thus, grievance and greed may be necessary for sustained rebellion: grievance may enable rebel organisation to grow to the point at which it is viable as a predator; greed may sustain the organisation once it has reached this point” (Collier, 2000: 852).

With this acknowledgement, Collier and his colleagues seem to have settled the contention. However, the symbiosis suggested in their proposition provokes new questions: at what time does greed beget grievance and vice versa? Even if grievance begets greed and greed takes over, what happens to the legitimate grievances? Do they get thrown out with the bath water?¹⁷⁶

4.3.2 Identity: Ethnicity in Liberia and Sierra Leone

Within and outside the greed and grievance theses, ethnicity has been touted as one of the major causes of the civil wars in Liberia and Sierra Leone (see Ellis, 1999; Kieh 1998; Sawyer, 1988; Ndumbe, 2001). It is therefore necessary to explore how and to what extent ethnicity featured in both conflicts and what lessons can be drawn to inform effective responses. There are two schools which influence the debate on ethnicity. Each school defines the phenomenon differently. The primordialists, who I will refer to as the classical school, define ethnicity as “...solidarity based on inheritable attributes such as common culture, belief systems, and practices...” (Esman, 2004: 19). In the view of the primordialists, ethnicity is evoked at the irrational, instinctive level. Its critical mobilising factors are real and/ or perceived threats to the “genetic continuity” as well as the “dignity and collective self-esteem” of an ethnic group (ibid: 32-33). The instrumentalists dismiss the claim to a genetic basis for ethnicity. They argue ethnicity is a political construction—a myth on which political bigots thrive to further their personal aims. Following from the greed thesis, this view suggests that ethnic conflict is a rational calculation to gain advantage in the

¹⁷⁶It seems that has become the case in Liberia and Sierra Leone. Dismissal of the wars as “gangsterism” (Sawyer, 2003) and “lumpenism” (Abdullah, 1998) seems to have led to the glossing over of legitimate grievances that instigated the wars. Post-war Liberia and Sierra Leone have returned to the status quo. The youths have returned to their rock-hewing and rubber-tapping in conditions more appalling than before the wars, while the elites have begun to once again distend their bellies with stolen public wealth.

control of resources and not in the preservation of group dignity, esteem and genetic existence. Claim to these instinctive factors, they contend, is a façade (Crawford and Lipschutz, 1998). The instrumentalists therefore define ethnicity as a “situation where different tribal groups oppose one another in the bid to have access to the state and the resources it controls” (Kaufmann, 1996: 23). I am of the view that collective or communal grievances are real and comprise genetic and socially constructed materials. I also surmise that these materials are easily manipulated in multi-ethnic societies such as Liberia and Sierra Leone, in which all resources are centrally controlled by the state. I contend therefore that the materials that are mobilised to ignite ethnic violence exist on a spectrum of primordialism and instrumentalism and that the either/ or debate is unnecessary. The questions we should therefore be concerned with in the case of Liberia and Sierra Leone are: was ethnicity a factor in the conflicts? If so, to what extent did it lean to the primordial or instrumental end of the spectrum?

Keih (1998), Kandeh (1999), and Ndumbe (2001) indicate that ethnicity was a cause in both conflicts, but downplay its primordial significance. Ethno-politics dots the political development of Sierra Leone, while class and later ethnic hegemony shaped the Liberian state and its political culture. At its independence, the Sierra Leone state was polarised along ethnic lines, especially between the two dominant regionally divided Temne (Northern) and Mende (Southern) inhabitants.¹⁷⁷ There was also the Krio/ upcountry divide—similar to the Congo/ Country divide in Liberia. Milton Maigai, the independence leader, made attempts to downplay ethno-politics, but with his early death followed by the leadership of his ‘ethnic-ideologue’ brother Albert

¹⁷⁷Temne dominate the North and Mende, the South. This divide has helped characterise Sierra Leone politics as Northern and Southern politics. The two rival parties represent the two ethnic groups—the All People Congress (APC) of the Temnes and the Sierra Leone Peoples Party of the Mendes (SLPP).

Maigai, the flames of ethno-politics were made more inflammable in the young state.¹⁷⁸ While ethno-politics was established at the inception of Sierra Leone, settler-indigene politics defined Liberia. The Americo-Liberians, as indicated in Chapter 2, established ‘Apartheid-like’ dominance over the majority indigenous communities. As a consequence of the so-called native-settler divide, all indigenous ethnic groups overwhelmingly welcomed the 1980 coup as a victory over the settler Americo-Liberian class. The unity the 1980 coup mobilised amongst the ethnic groups was however short-lived, as President Samuel Kanyon Doe replaced the settler hegemony with his Krahn hegemony.

Notwithstanding the influence of ethnicity in the political development of both countries, the role and impact of ethnicity in igniting and sustaining the wars remains a subject of contention. Ndumbe (2001: 1) has argued that the Sierra Leone civil war was “...a struggle of various ethnic groups to control the diamond-rich mines...” but he fails to substantiate his claim in the evidence of the civil war. Neither the RUF nor the Armed Forces Revolutionary Council (AFRC) was organised along clearly defined ethnic lines. Also, none of the war propagandas in Sierra Leone claimed ethnic exclusion and grievances. Imposing an ethnic tag on the Sierra Leone war seems to me an attempt to fit the war into the general stereotype, which tends to dismiss all African conflicts as ethnic. Esman posits that for a conflict to be ethnic, three inter-related factors must be present (2004). Firstly, there must be a leader, an ethnic ideologue, who, drawing from history, constructs an ethnic ideology. The ideology, whether primordial or instrumental, must articulate a grievance of exclusion

¹⁷⁸Under Albert’s leadership, 52% of the officer corps in the Sierra Leone Armed Forces were Mendes, as opposed to 26% during the leadership of his brother (Keen 2005). Siaka Stevens and the Northern APC leadership also followed suit. By the time Stevens handed over the affairs of the state to Joseph Momoh, Kandeh (1999) indicates, nearly all members of the officer corps were from the North (cited in Keen, 2005).

(for the instrumentalists) or threat to the genetic existence or dignity of the ethnic group (for the primordialists). Secondly, there must be a process of formulating a discourse or rationalisation for the ethnic struggle—a sort of well-organised propaganda that continuously whips up ethnic sentiments. Thirdly, there must be ethnic-based activist groups who are willing and organised to carry out the ethnic violence. And adding a fourth dimension to Esman's list, I argue there must also be evidence of horizontal violence against the perceived rival ethnic group(s). None of Esman's characteristics were evident in the Sierra Leone civil war. While there is a strong political history of rivalry between the Temne and Mende, there was no evidence of confrontations between Temnes and Mendes in the civil war. The Truth and Reconciliation Report in Sierra Leone indicates that membership in all warring factions was fluid and that there was no ethnic-dominated warring faction during the war. Contrary to the prevailing stereotype about ethnicity and conflict in Sierra Leone, ethnicity and inter-ethnic solidarity was a force for peace. The long history of ethnic solidarity defined and sustained by the range of sodalities, including the Poro, proved vital in the formation of a coalition of inter-ethnic militias and civil defence forces in defence of the state and the restoration of stability (I return to this subject later in the chapter).

While it may be difficult for one to articulate a discernible role of ethnicity in conflict instigation, escalation and sustenance in Sierra Leone, ethnicity was one of the initial sources of mobilisation in the Liberian civil war. In Samuel Doe's ethnic fiefdom, people were prosecuted based on their ethnic orientation. This created a history of

ethnic animosity, especially between the Krahn and their Mandingo¹⁷⁹ ally, on the one hand, and the rest of the ethnic communities in the country, on the other. There was evidence of horizontal violence between Krahn and Gios and Mano, Mandingos and Gio and Mano, Lorma and Mandingo, Kpelle and Mandingo, Kru and Sapo, etc. These horizontal micro-wars accounted for the pervasiveness of the civil war and the magnitude of its impact on all communities in the country. Notwithstanding the strong presence of ethnic sentiments at the inception of the range of warring factions, the flame of ethnic violence did not sustain in the Liberia civil war. Warlords soon turned to other motivators, which sometimes attracted soldiers from their so-called rival ethnic groups to join their ranks.

Granted that both countries have a history of ethnic tensions and that there were glaring manifestations of ethnic violence in the Liberia civil war, the flipside to this debate, which has been glossed over, deserves equal attention. Why was it difficult to make the ethnic case in Sierra Leone despite the long and bitter history of ethno-politics? Why did the range of ethnic-based civil militias and traditional hunters from the North and South of Sierra Leone remain cohesive in their revolt against the rebel factions, even where the nation's standing army disintegrated into opposing factions? Even in the case of Liberia, why were the ethnic sentiments not enough to drive the war? In the case of Sierra Leone, I argue two inter-related factors intervened to undermine the potency of ethnicity as conflict generator. Firstly, while he rode on ethnic sentiments to seize state power, Siaka Stevens manipulated the ethnic card without generating horizontal ethnic animosity and hostility. Stevens' targets for repression were mostly university students and opposition leaders, including

¹⁷⁹Leaders of the Mandingo ethnic group allied with Samuel Doe in a bid to protect their properties and shield themselves from the envy of many ethnic groups who resented their trading practices. The Mandingoes were accused by other ethnic groups of exploitation and price hiking.

dissenters in his own APC. Samuel Doe did the opposite. His politics was ethnic and extremely vindictive. Secondly, and arguably the most important factor, was a long history of ethnic solidarity especially amongst the sodality-governed regions of both countries.¹⁸⁰ In Sierra Leone, all ethnic communities evoked the solidarity cemented in the sodality groups to mobilise Zoes like the Kamajors, Tamaboros, Donzos, etc., to defend the ethnic communities and the state against the rebel forces. Even in Liberia, where there was evidence of ethnic violence, it is telling to note that no two ethnic groups belonging to the Poro communities fought each other. The violence was either between Poro and non-Poro ethnic groups, or between non-Poro ethnic groups. Attempts to fan religious flames were also thwarted by the organisation of the Interfaith Mediation Committee in Liberia and the Inter-religious Council of Sierra Leone. This striking feature of the wars has gone unnoticed and yet it is vital to restoring cohesive societies in both countries.

4.3.3 Culturalist Thesis

Sawyer (2005) notes that the wars in Liberia and Sierra Leone lacked an organised structure and they exploited cultural symbols to orchestrate anarchy. But Ellis (1999) and Clapham (1998) insist that culture was not just exploited, it defined the nature of and practices in the wars (1999). Generalising contemporary warfare in Africa, Clapham traces their logic to pre-colonial tribal warfare where, according to him, the motivation was not to occupy and administer territories conquered but to raid, pillage or seek revenge (Clapham, 1998: 11). Aside from the ‘primitive’ logic, Clapham further argues that the structure and behaviour of insurgent movements reflect the pre-colonial political structure and behaviour of the African society from which they

¹⁸⁰The role of sodality in inter-ethnic harmony and coalition was more evident in Sierra Leone, since nearly all ethnic groups in Sierra Leone are governed by sodality groups with the Poro being the dominant group.

emerge. There is no denying that nearly all warring factions drew from perverted versions of powers of indigenous sodalities, including the Poro. The RUF, for instance, established an alternative version to the Poro and reinitiated many of the fighters so as to benefit from their full loyalty (Richard et al. 2004). As will be discussed in the intervention section, deposed chiefs under the leadership of Hinga Norma mobilised the range of sodality groups into counter-insurgent movements against the RUF. While recognising that the nature and dynamics of insurgencies tend to be informed by the cultures of society where they emerge, I argue that in our media-intrusive global village, materials with which cultures are formed are not exclusively endogenous. To single out endogenous pre-colonial cultural materials is to suggest that culture is static. It also suggests that, as practiced in the civil wars, pre-colonial warfare in Africa used drugs and other narcotic substances to hypnotise their soldiers; that they deliberately tore down old institutions and cultures and created new and exclusive communities of violence and lawlessness; and that children from the communities publicly maimed, raped and humiliated their own parents, siblings and traditional and spiritual leaders (Kieh, 2004). Sawyer (2003), also dismissing the culturalist theory, reminds us that while leaders of the warring factions originated from the various African cultures, only few lived and grew up and therefore were socialised in their communal areas. Rather, many of them were a product of the sub culture, which Kandeh (1999) and Abdullah (1998) refer to as “lumpen” culture. Tendencies of the lumpen, and not African culture, the authors argue, account for the nature and intensity of the violence.¹⁸¹

¹⁸¹Having been socially uprooted and politically alienated by ‘big-men’, ‘lumpenised’ youth are determined to lay claims to and dispossess big-men of state wealth of which they were hitherto dispossessed and made destitute. Their gravitation to adventurism and the extreme to which they displayed the violence was an apparent attempt to exercise their newly found power (Kandeh, 1999). Alie agrees with Kandeh’s implicit entitlement logic while downplaying attribution of blame to only ‘lumpenised youth’. He prefers to blame “a group of rebellious Sierra Leoneans with vast international support” who were determined to seize state power through the mighty AK-47 (Alie, 2005: 51).

If culture had any place in both wars, I agree it was sub cultures created by those alienated socially, as well as by the perversion of indigenous institutions. However, laying the blame squarely on marginalised youth as creators of the subculture that underpinned the wars would be inaccurate and unfair. One can argue that political leaders who, to the disregard of the values and principles of their societies, connived with the Lebanese in the case of Sierra Leone to plunder state wealth; those who gravitated more towards Western taste for materialism and therefore subjected the state to criminalisation, can also be described as ‘lumpenised elites’, if lumpenisation basically means being socially uprooted and disconnected. The same can be applied to the colonially constructed chieftaincy systems, where chiefs gravitated to the clientelistic relationship they established with the central government to exercise despotic or personal amorphous rule over their respective communities.

4.3.4 Spillover Effects and Regionalisation

A fourth and arguable leading external causal factor associated with Liberia and Sierra Leone is spillover effects and regionalisation of civil wars. Clapham’s (1998) claim that contemporary so-called internal wars depend on the porosity of transnational borders and the support or permission of governments in neighbouring countries. In essence, insurgent movements thrive on ‘bad neighbourliness’ and popular discontent. For instance, leaders of Cote d’Ivoire and Burkina Faso seized the opportunity of the military campaign in Liberia to settle scores with President Samuel Doe for brutally killing the Tolberts.¹⁸² Sierra Leone’s involvement in the regional

¹⁸²The stepdaughter of President Felix Houphouet-Boigny of Cote d’Ivoire, Daisy Delafosse-Tolbert—who reportedly later married President Blaise Campaore of Burkina Faso—was the wife of Abraham Benedict Tolbert (affectionately known as AB), son of President William R. Tolbert. It is said that Houphouet-Boigny himself pleaded with Doe to spare the life of AB during the so-called post-coup military clean-up exercise. Instead Doe brutally killed the young AB. For many years, Houphouet-Boigny and Delafosse-Tolbert sought opportunities to avenge the death of the Tolberts.

peace enforcement operation in neighbouring Liberia against the NPFL and President Momoh's earlier alleged double-dealing against Charles Taylor underpinned the NPFL's support to the RUF, while the Guinean President maintained sustained support for the LURD in retaliation of Taylor's attempt to destabilise Guinea in 2000.¹⁸³ Aside from the dependence on porous borders, mass movement of refugees in countries such as Sierra Leone already reeling under conditions of fragility has destabilising effects in the form of political instability, environmental disruptions and the movements of arms and fighting groups. The large number of discontented youth and disgruntled armed forces across the sub region make it easy to recruit mercenaries from neighbouring countries to assist a rebellion, especially one which is based on loot and plunder. Another enabling factor for regionalising civil wars is the absence of most West African states in the rural areas, particularly in frontier communities. Most importantly, ethnic-based violence against ethnic groups with transnational affinity like the Gios, Manos and Mandingoes in the case of Liberia can attract solidarity and support from across borders. All these factors converged to regionalise the civil wars right from the start; thus challenging the tendency to dismiss contemporary insurgent wars as internal (Clapham, 1998).

There are many other causal factors that are mentioned when explaining the Liberia and Sierra Leone civil wars, including the role of the military, pressures from the international financial institutions (which I discussed in Chapter 2), etc. As Paul Wehr indicated, recently substantiated by Humphreys and Weinstein (2008), aspects

¹⁸³ Charles Taylor, through BBC, claimed he was justified to support the revolt of the RUF because the Sierra Leone Government had allowed the bases of ECOMOG, the regional peacekeeping force to be erected in Sierra Leone. ECOMOG, which was set up as a peacekeeping force and dispatched to Liberia based on an ECOWAS-brokered Banjul Peace Plan, was embroiled in a fierce battle with the intransigent NPFL. The latter had vowed to prevent the sub-regional force from entering Liberian soil. While there may be some truth to the NPFL justification, as the researcher discusses later in the chapter, both NPFL and RUF were part of a grand plan agreed in Libya to destabilise some countries in West Africa and replace them with pro-Gaddafi regimes.

of all conflict causal theories hold true in contemporary conflicts, including those waged in Liberia and Sierra Leone. Cramer also notes that "...there remains much to understand and that there is much to retain from earlier insights into violence, war and social change..." (2006: 84). Rather than engage in unnecessary rivalry between theories, Brown has indicated that all factors including leadership (agency), problematic group relations, and economic problems are always present in nearly all conflicts (1996: 597). In this view, I contend that emphasis should be more on analysing the interactions of the causal factors and the magnitude of their composite effects. At what point does a confluence of factors drag a society to breaking point? Which of the factors shape the conditions, which generate the dynamics, which make the factors combustible and which triggers the flame of war? And finally, what sustains the flames? Collier and Hoeffler make attempts to articulate the weight of confluence by indicating that greed-driven civil war are more likely in societies which have large numbers of unemployed youth, lootable goods and ethnic dominance. Francis, Chabal and Daloz, Kandeh and others argue that embedding all the factors are predatory institutional cultures that were prevalent in Liberia and Sierra Leone. Paul Wehr indicates the triggering factors are *opportunities* and *will*. Musah locates opportunistic factors in transnational criminal networks and the primacy of profit in liberal culture, which tends to reward greed. *Will*, Azar insists and Collier seems to concede, is mobilised through grievances nurtured by perceived or real relative deprivation. It is also agreed that elites, not peasants or lumpens, drive civil wars. In sum, the structure-agency debate returns as we seek to understand civil wars. While structural factors including institutional arrangement, power relations, social relations, etc. nurture conditions that make a society vulnerable to civil wars and state collapse, it takes agency like aggrieved youth, war entrepreneurs and adventurous elites to

ignite the flame. The point and time when the interactions produce outbursts remains a subject for further inquiry.

4.3.5 The Positives of Conflict and Violence

Aside from the negative notion of conflict from which the causal theories are derived, there is growing debate to re-conceptualise conflict and civil wars in ways that help us appreciate their positive causes as well. In other words, it is increasingly acknowledged that conflict is not only destructive or an aberration, it is constructive and integral to societal transformation (Mitchell, 2005). If this is the case, then what causes conflict is not only negative or debilitating as postulated by conflict scholars. I contend that the violent collapse of Liberia and Sierra Leone was not only an attempt to further greed, grievance or otherwise, nor was it simply an aberration. Rather the collapse was also a manifestation of the societies' ripeness for transformation. All commentators on Liberia and Sierra Leone are unanimous on the historical fact that at the threshold of collapse, all regulatory regimes as well as the societies' capacities to self-generate had almost disappeared. It can therefore be surmised that collapse is part of the deep change that was in motion in the societies. Doornbos argues that violent collapse of the state should not only be "...viewed as an aberration but possibly, a part of the political evolution..." and Pouligny (2003), agreeing with this argument, contends that the nature of the collapse of Liberia and Sierra Leone is a profound manifestation of a society undergoing deep changes. The rush to intervention and the approaches of intervention pay no attention to this natural process of change. Grounded in the thesis, which defines conflict as an aberration, the intervention strategies as will be discussed in subsequent section focus on restoring the status quo and not on catalysing and facilitating the change process.

This in my view remains the peculiar factor in contemporary conflict resolution. While not arguing in favour of Edward Lukas's call for 'war to the finish', disregarding the natural change dynamics in conflict analysis tends to distort the natural societal and institutional reconfiguration processes.

4.4 CRITICAL REVIEW OF INTERVENTIONS

In Chapter 1 I discussed the debates on intervention from the legal and operational points of view. Chapter 6 will focus on post-conflict interventions and the implications for sustainable peace. In this section I assess the individual and combined impact of internal and external interventions on the processes and outcomes of peacemaking.

4.4.1 Internal Interventions

Civic response to the civil wars can be divided into two categories. The first category attempted third-party impartial intervention through persuasion, while the second was coercive, focusing on mobilisation of civilian counter-insurgency against the rebel forces. I assess the impact of the civic responses on long-term peace and the deep change, which I argue, the crises portended.

4.4.1.1 Civic Persuasive Interventions

For the purpose of this work and drawing from Barnes' (2006) categorisation of civic persuasive actions in internal conflict, I identify five persuasive strategies civic groups adopted in the bid to get the parties to pursue negotiated settlements. These

include: a) activism and advocacy, b) mediation and facilitating dialogue c) participation in peace negotiations, d) education and social transformation, and e) humanitarian and recovery interventions. Although all roles were visible at all stages of the conflicts, emphasis on one or a combination was largely determined by the conflict dynamics. Initial civic response against the war was *activism* through public protests and mass demonstrations organised by the leading coalitions of civic organisations¹⁸⁴ in Liberia. The protests culminated in a large national protest in June 1990 calling for Samuel Doe's resignation and the intervention of the United States.¹⁸⁵ In 2002 the Women Mass Action for Peace, branded by CNN as the 'white-t-shirt' peace activists, mounted a sustained campaign in the second phase of the civil war.¹⁸⁶ Under the leadership of the Women in Peacebuilding Network (WIPNET)¹⁸⁷, the women maintained a sit-in for nearly two consecutive years (2002-2003) until the Taylor regime resigned. Similarly, in Sierra Leone, the coalition of civic groups¹⁸⁸ embarked on a range of intervention strategies, including the courageous boycott of the Armed Forces Revolutionary Council (AFRC), which overthrew the elected government in May 1997.¹⁸⁹ When Foday Sankoh's Revolutionary United Front (RUF) rekindled the Sierra Leone conflict by kidnapping 500 UN troops in 2001, it

¹⁸⁴The dominant groups in the civic coalition against the war were the University of Liberia Students Union (ULSU), the Ecumenical Women Organization (EWO), the Women Development Association of Liberia (WODAL), the Liberia Council of Churches (LCC), and the National Muslim Congress (NMC).

¹⁸⁵Civic groups were prompted to intervene because of rumors of mass atrocities being committed by both the government forces and those of the rebel NPFL. This type of third party intervention is what John Paul Lederach (1997) refers to as "insider-partial" as civic groups were not distant, unaffected third parties. Their personal safety and well-being was being jeopardised by the ongoing conflict.

¹⁸⁶The women came to the fore out of frustration with the series of failed ECOWAS peace negotiations and the realisation that ECOWAS intervention was embroiled in regional intrigues and undermined by limited material and financial resources. Most importantly, increased human rights violations and criminality by the ECOMOG troops raised questions in the minds of the public whether the regional force had truly come to liberate the country or to join in the looting spree, which the warlords had instituted. In Sierra Leone, as successive governments proved incapable of resolving the RUF question and as the insurgent groups seized major towns and cities—embarking on child recruitments and horrendous human rights violations Sierra Leone—civic groups realised that they needed to defend themselves and agitate for peace.

¹⁸⁷The Women in Peacebuilding Network was a programme established by the West African Network for Peacebuilding, the largest civil society network in West Africa which was established and led by the researcher from 1997 to 2003.

¹⁸⁸This includes religious and inter-religious bodies like the Council of Churches and the Sierra Leone Muslim Congress, the Sierra Leone Labour Congress, the Sierra Leone Teachers' Union and the Women's Movement for Peace.

¹⁸⁹Civic groups maintained their nationwide protest for nine consecutive months until the AFRC conceded power.

was armless civilians under the leadership of the civil society movement that arrested the warlord and delivered him to justice.¹⁹⁰ Hundreds of human rights monitoring and reporting organisations and networks including the media diligently assumed the *advocacy* role.¹⁹¹ Foremost, the media diverted focus away from ethnicity. They also helped in exposing the horror of the war to the outside world.¹⁹²

Religious leaders in both countries played formidable role in conciliation and mediation. For instance, the National Muslim Congress (NMC) and the Liberia Council of Churches (LCC) constituted themselves into the Inter-Faith Mediation Committee (IFMC) and offered to mediate between the NPFL and the Government of Liberia.¹⁹³ The religious leaders drafted a peace plan, which, though not implemented, became the basis for the regional intervention of ECOWAS.¹⁹⁴ Similarly the Inter-

¹⁹⁰The RUF forces killed at least 22 unarmed civilians during the mass demonstration before Sankoh's Freetown residence, but this did not deter the crowd. Foday Sankoh later fled from his house through the windows. He was later apprehended by the angry mob and delivered to the UN peacekeeping force. This action proved determinant to the end of the Sierra Leone conflict.

¹⁹¹They documented human rights violations including massacres, monitored and reported violations of terms of peace agreements and sanction regimes imposed on especially the NPFL and RUF.

¹⁹²All national media outlets consistently de-emphasised ethnicity (unlike their Western counterparts) and focused more on the gangsterism that was inherent to the warring factions. Attempts to whip up anti-Liberia emotions in Sierra Leone for the role of the NPFL in the country were thwarted. At the community level, the Talking Drum Studio of Search for Common Ground in all countries of the Mano River basin, Star Radio, Radio Veritas, FM 98 and many other FM stations and local newspapers in both countries played critical roles in intra/ inter ethnic dialogue and reconciliation. Perhaps the most outstanding contribution of the media in bringing the wars as well as the controversial role of ECOMOG to the attention of the international community was the famous "Cry Freetown" documentary produced by a local Sierra Leonean journalist and aired on CNN. The horrid images dramatically changed the perception of the international community and prompted concerted international resolve to end the carnage. Prominent members of the international community referred to the influence of "Cry Freetown" on their decision to unanimously vote for a robust UN peace enforcement mission to replace the sub regional force.

¹⁹³Throughout the political history of both Liberia and Sierra Leone (more so Liberia), political actors have always taken positions of religious leaders seriously. The Declaration of Independence of Liberia was signed at the Providence Baptist Church and many of its leaders were also leaders of the Church. The political visibility of Muslims increased during the Doe regime due to the close alliance between the Government and the Muslim-dominated Mandingo ethnic group. As a consequence, both the government of Samuel Doe and the NPFL availed themselves of the offer of the newly constituted Inter-faith Mediation Committee (IFMC). During the critical stage of the civil war, Doe proposed many concessions to the Muslim population, including recognition of Muslim holidays as national holidays. This was widely protested by the Christian community. The point being made here is the fact that both religions at the time enjoyed a degree of respect and recognition from all political actors. This made it possible for the IFMC to be judged as impartial and therefore accepted as a mediator by the protagonists.

¹⁹⁴The IFMC peace plan called for: a) immediate ceasefire; b) a mutually agreed international peace monitoring force, c) a national round-table conference; d) access for humanitarian relief in all areas of the country; and e) respect for human rights. They also presided over the first proposed All Liberia National Conference in August 1990, which endorsed the interim government of national unity (IGNU). The IFMC (later renamed Inter-religious Council) maintained its consultative role throughout the conflict, providing small-scale mediation and facilitating

religious Council in Sierra Leone (IRC-SL), inspired by their Liberian counterpart, stepped up to the challenge. Their most outstanding success was to pave the way for the Lome Peace Agreement (LPA).¹⁹⁵ The Mano River Inter-religious Council, a coalition of religious councils in Guinea, Liberia and Sierra Leone, was instrumental in forestalling trans-ethnic and religious rivalries. They, along with women's groups, mounted pressure on the heads of state of the three Mano River countries to undertake dialogue and promote good neighbourliness.¹⁹⁶

4.4.1.2 Civilian Resistance and Counter-insurgency

While civil society organisations maintained persuasive and transformative intervention strategies, deposed chiefs with support from prominent Mende personalities, mobilised the Poro-governed communities in rural Sierra Leone to organise civil defence forces. The primary aim was to defend their respective communities from the RUF and criminal forces of the Sierra Leone Army. Other ethnic communities joined in the Mende-led resistance to form their own community defence forces. By the time the mobilisation campaign was over, about 40,000 warrior Zoes from the range of local sodalities including the Tamaboros of the Kuranko ethnic group, the Gbethis and Kapras from the Temne ethnic group, the Donzos from the Kono ethnic group, and the Kamajoisia or Kamajors from the

dialogue between warring factions. It also helped initiate the establishment of the Mano River Inter-religious Council.

¹⁹⁵The UN mission in Sierra Leone and the deposed Kabbah Government, Rashid (2000) indicates, relied exclusively on the IRC-SL to mediate between the government and the RUF/AFRC alliance. They succeeded in bringing the rebels to negotiation and served as a go-between throughout the peace process in Togo.

¹⁹⁶Women's groups also played a critical role in mediating and facilitating dialogue. Prominent examples were the Mano River Women Peace Network (MARWOPNET), which was also organised by various women's groups in the Mano River countries to champion the cause of women and to promote dialogue between warring factions and governments of the sub region. MARWOPNET was instrumental in the Rabat Summit held between the heads of state of Guinea, Liberia and Sierra Leone. They were also invited as parties and observers to a number of peace negotiations and were instrumental in selecting a female as chairperson of the second 5-person State Council to head the interim government in Liberia. Women's groups also set up alternative processes near mediation sites and engaged in lobbying and other forms of pressure to ensure a settlement was reached.

Mende ethnic community and several other youth brigades, were organised under a broad rubric known as the Civil Defence Forces (CDF). They selected Sam Hinga Norman, Regent Chief of the Jiama-Nongor Chiefdom, to lead the wide social network of civilian counter-insurgency. Similarly in Liberia, as the Mandingo led United Liberation Movement turned its weapons onto the Poro-governed Lorma ethnic group in Lofa County, Zoes of the Poro organised the Lofa Defence Force with warrior hunters and youth brigades. In the South-east of Liberia, in order to defend themselves against the Krahn-led Liberia Peace Council (LPC) the Krus and Grebos organised the Sinoe (SDF) and Maryland Defence Forces (MDF), respectively. However unlike Sierra Leone where the various defence forces organised themselves under one rubric, in Liberia the civilian defence forces remain splintered. The CDF of Sierra Leone and the range of civilian resistance in Liberia were successful in keeping the RUF, ULIMO and LPC away from their respective communities.

Depriving the RUF of its control over most of the interior indirectly contributed to the success of the NPRC government in containing the RUF to the frontier communities (Alie 2005). Also, the success of LDF, SDF and MDF indirectly gave the NPFL the advantage in the war. When the SLPP-led government came to power in 1996, they gravitated to the CDF rather than strengthen the SLA, leaving the already factionalised SLA to its own fate.¹⁹⁷ The government appointed Sam Hinga Norman,

¹⁹⁷It is important to note here that before the SLPP assumed power, the SLA had already gained notoriety for being disloyal to the state and participating in loot and plunder in the interior. Its disloyalty and criminality had earned it the name *sobel*. Memory of the army's overthrow of a constituted government might have also played a part in the SLPP government's decision to dissociate from the SLA and find alternative forces for its own protection and in prosecuting the war. The CDF became the best alternative for a number of reasons. Firstly, it was dominated and led by the Mende ethnic community. Secondly and most importantly, the SLPP had relied on sodality-based forces to defend itself from the political thuggery of the Siaka Stevens government. Throughout the long reign of the APC under Siaka Stevens, many SLPP political leaders were protected by forces organised through the Poro sodality; hence the relationship between the Poro and SLPP political class was already cemented.

leader of the CDF, as Deputy Minister of Defence.¹⁹⁸ Also in Liberia, the NPFL took advantage of the LDF, SDF and MDF's success against its rival to co-opt the forces into the NPFL. Taylor, after winning the 1997 elections, appointed LDF leader Francis Massaquo Minister for Rural Development.¹⁹⁹ The CDF expanded its mandate beyond defending their rural communities to restoring the deposed SLPP government.²⁰⁰ CDF, joined by ECOMOG and a range of mercenary outfits, formed a coalition to overthrow the AFRC. In the same way, when the Mandingo-dominated ULIMO metamorphosed into LURD, the LDF joined forces with the Taylor-led government to fight against LURD.²⁰¹

4.4.1.3 Critical Analysis of Civic Interventions

Barnes (2006) observes that conventional approaches to conflict intervention often focus on a narrow but crucial task of political negotiations and military intervention. Civic groups are neither expected nor invited into both domains. The argument is that

¹⁹⁸In addition, the government increased support to the CDF by paying regular remunerations to the forces. It also supported the training of the CDF in the use of conventional weapons and engagement in conventional warfare.

¹⁹⁹Among the Poro-governed Mendes, the Kamajors are a class of male Zoes believed to be selected by the ancestors and endowed with supernatural powers to protect the communities from threats of wild animals, invaders, marauders and supernatural forces. Mobilisation of the Kamajors in defence of Mende communities in the face of the RUF onslaught against ordinary villagers was not only justified, it was a natural reaction to external threats for which the Kamajors were destined. It is worth noting the organisation of the CDF and LDF follows the security strategy and architecture of the Poro sodality. All recruits first underwent an initiation rite in which they pledged their absolute loyalty to the cause of the community. An important criterion for recruitment was that all members in the CDF, according to Alie (2005), must be members of the district and representative of the various families. The character of the recruit was important and the community had to vet each recruit. Deep Poro values of loyalty and the Kamajor slogan of *baa woteh*, which is aptly translated as 'do not turn' or retreat, was critical in keeping the CDF cohesive and focused on its mission of protecting the villages. Hoffman also notes that the deeper understanding of this slogan has to do with not betraying the community. This strong value of loyalty, Hoffman observes, contrasts with the Sierra Leone Armed Forces, which disintegrated into disloyal forces in the face of the rebellion, earning themselves the name *sobel*s. However, unlike the CDF, the LDF in Liberia disintegrated once the leader was killed, abandoning the communities they were placed under oath to defend.

²⁰⁰In reaction to the Sierra Leone Government's preference of the CDF over the SLA, a group of SLA officers, the self-styled Armed Forces Revolutionary Council (AFRC), deposed the elected SLPP government in 1997. They invited the RUF to join them against the government they were constituted to defend.

²⁰¹Unlike the CDF in Sierra Leone, which stayed the course and continue to support recovery work in their respective communities (to be discussed in Chapter Five), Liberia's sodality- and non-sodality-led civilian counter-insurgency forces disintegrated before the job was complete. They melted into a range of fortune-seeking rebel groups and even turned against their own communities.²⁰¹ Most importantly, while counter-insurgency actions in Sierra Leone helped to forestall RUF terror and reinforce inter-ethnic solidarity, civilian-led counter-insurgencies in Liberia exacerbated horizontal violence and severely undermine inter-group cohesion and solidarity.

while peacemaking required the primary stakeholders,²⁰² participating in peace enforcement and peacekeeping only requires military interventions, something that is not usually associated with civilian actors.²⁰³ Following this line of thinking, none of the mediators in the stream of peace processes in both countries recognised the prominent roles of the civilian resistance forces in all the peace negotiations. Civil society organisations were not invited, although they consistently forced their way, into negotiation conferences. The unorthodox nature of contemporary civil wars, particularly those waged in Liberia and Sierra Leone, calls for a rethink of conventional intervention theories and strategies. While most of the civic actions discussed here may have been away from the limelight of political negotiations and peace enforcement, civilian military counter-insurgencies in Liberia and Sierra Leone challenges conventional thinking. It also raises numerous questions, which peacemaking and peacebuilding operations tend to overlook. Some of the critical but unanswered questions include the following: What is the implication for social and political stability in a state in which sodality-based civil defence forces had to come to the rescue of the state against its own standing army? In the case of Sierra Leone, what accounts for the cohesiveness and staying power of the CDF? Why did their Poro-based counterparts, the LDF in Liberia, disintegrate before completing the task? And most importantly, what impact does the large-scale militarisation of the Poro and other indigenous sodalities have on social order in the interior and the authority of post-conflict states? As will be discussed in Chapter 6, the international state reconstruction architects tend to overlook these critical questions in international peacemaking processes.

²⁰²These are often defined as the warring factions, or any group with the ability to derail the peace process.

²⁰³I was part of a delegation that approached the United Nations Special Representative of the Secretary-General (SRSG) in Liberia in 2004 to request the participation of civil society organisations in the disarmament process. The SRSG rejected the CSO requested on the ground that the disarmament and demobilisation processes in particular were militarily technical and could be jeopardised by the participation of naïve and often-emotive civic actors.

4.4.2 External Interventions

4.4.2.1 Mercenaries and Private Military Companies

The Government of Sierra Leone, throughout the civil war, relied heavily on private military companies to ward off the RUF insurgency. The notorious groups in Sierra Leone included Gurkha Security Group, Executive Outcomes (EO), and Sandline International. The RUF also brought in its own mercenaries, including Ukrainians, Belarusians, Burkinabes, Liberians and a range of other traditional mercenaries drawn from the sub region. Unlike Sierra Leone, Liberia's warring factions stayed clear of organised private military companies while enlisting more traditional individual mercenaries, drawn especially from the sub region. Blain (2007) rightly indicates that inviting private military companies to help prosecute the civil wars and counter-insurgencies was one of the factors in the prolongation of the war in Sierra Leone. He observes that once invited, private military companies position themselves as entrepreneurs and the civil war as a perfect market (ibid). Both the Strasser and Kabbah governments negotiated the participation of private military companies in cash and mining rights to Sierra Leone's rich diamond fields.²⁰⁴ Between 1995 and 1996, Blain indicates EO received monthly remunerations of US \$2 million from the Sierra Leone government. Negotiations with the Kabbah government alone netted EO about US \$35 million in two years.

4.4.2.2 Bilateral Interventions

Although Sierra Leone and Britain have a security pact, the latter only assumed a significant intervention role in 2000, 10 years into the conflict. Under an operation

²⁰⁴For instance in 1996 Branch Energy was among the many mining entities fronting for the private military companies who were granted mining concessions to mine the Kono diamond fields.

codenamed “Operation Basilica”, Britain dispatched a team comprising a one-star officer, a team of military advisors and trainers and an infantry battalion with the aim of supporting the implementation of the Lome Peace Agreement and security sector reform (Woods and Reese, 2008). Britain took on a military role when RUF reneged on the peace agreement and kidnapped some of the UN Peacekeeping troops and 11 British soldiers. The successful rescue operation of the British soldiers and the UN troops emboldened the British Command.²⁰⁵ Britain continued the show of force until the RUF bowed to a negotiated peace. The weight of the British forces, including the reinforcement of the UN Peace Mission in the country, ultimately helped in irreversibly weakening the RUF war-making capabilities. Similarly, at the signing of the CPA in Ghana, the United States dispatched a force of about 250 soldiers to help stabilise situations in Monrovia. However, unlike the British, the Americans left in barely a month on claims that their soldiers were threatened with malaria. America’s military involvement after that has been through two private military companies—DynCorp and PAE.

4.4.2.3 Multilateral Intervention: ECOWAS and the UN

ECOWAS, a sub regional economic cooperation inter-governmental institution, as a consequence of the apparent abandonment of Liberia and Sierra Leone by their respective Cold War allies, was thrust into peace enforcement, peacemaking and peacekeeping roles. Throughout ECOWAS’s peacemaking, the core of all peace agreements included a) time-bound interim power sharing arrangements; b) disarmament, demobilisation and reintegration of all combatants; c) reconstitution of

²⁰⁵Britain extended their mandate to include establishing sustainable peace and security, stable democratic government, poverty reduction, respect for human rights, security sector reform, and supporting the UN in its reputation rebuilding.

the security sector; and d) presidential and general elections. Only heads of warring factions, as practiced in traditional third party mediation, were invited as primary stakeholders to all peace talks. They were also the primary beneficiaries of power sharing arrangements. Aside from persuasion through third party mediation ECOWAS, backed by the United Nations and the African Union, also applied a range of coercive measures, including sanctions and peace enforcement military operations.²⁰⁶ As for the United Nations, its role in the conflicts progressed from being observers to donors to the ECOWAS operations, and to technical and financial supporters of the 1996 and 1997 elections. It also backed and sometimes expanded the scope of the range of ECOWAS sanctions. The UN also sent peace observer missions to support ECOWAS in monitoring the implementation of peace agreements. The UN's incremental engagements ultimately culminated in the world body assuming full responsibility for peace support operations in 2000 (in Sierra Leone) and 2004 (in Liberia).²⁰⁷

The long and treacherous peace enforcement, peacemaking and peacekeeping journeys in Liberia and Sierra Leone raise a number of issues that deserve reviewing. Given that ECOWAS was the lead body in brokering peace, I focus my analysis of the multi-lateral peacemaking engagement in both countries on the role of ECOWAS. Five years after the decade-and-a-half of ECOWAS' peacemaking work in Liberia and Sierra Leone, the question that still begs explanation is: Why did ECOWAS's

²⁰⁶For instance the ECOMOG Force Commander in Sierra Leone, having led a military campaign against the so-called People's Army of the RUF and AFRC, was appointed Chief of Defense Staff for the Sierra Leone Army. In Liberia, at one time or the other, ECOMOG undertook counter-insurgency operations with the Independent National Patriotic Forces, the Liberia Peace Council and the United Liberation Movement. ECOMOG also fought against the very factions with whom it mounted joint operations. These messy strategies severely compromised the role of ECOWAS/ ECOMOG throughout the peacemaking phase of the civil wars.

²⁰⁷The UN through Security Council Resolutions deployed more robust peace support operations of 17,000 and 15,000 troops, respectively. The UN continues to support both countries in their rebuilding (a subject I address in Chapter 6).

carrot-and-stick strategies fail to achieve the desired results? Here I make four propositions in addressing this critical question. Firstly, the assumptions which underpinned ECOWAS's initial response—that the conflict was a result of elite grievances which could be resolved through power sharing—failed to take into consideration the psychodynamics of the key actors in the conflict. Neither Doe nor Charles Taylor was willing to explore the options of power sharing. As for Foday Sankoh, there were greater incentives remaining with the diamond fields than going to Freetown to be outmanoeuvred by the Oxford and Cambridge-trained witty politicians. As for Charles Taylor, considering his rapid advance into the city, he was overwhelmingly convinced that full power was in sight and that it made no sense to share power with a beleaguered government. The intervention of ECOWAS was therefore perceived as rescuing the Samuel Doe regime in Liberia and SLPP in Sierra Leone. In this view it can be argued that the timing worked to undermine the integrity of the intervention.²⁰⁸ A second weakness of the carrot was its focus on power sharing. Barely six months into the conflict, Charles Taylor set up an elaborate war economy in areas under his control. Emphasis on power sharing as a conflict resolution strategy was perceived as sharing his war economies with other factions. It can also be argued that the power sharing strategy helped to increase the number of factions, since the only criteria for participating in the power sharing arrangement was ones' ability to operate a warring faction. A third assumption, which argues in favour of power sharing arrangements, is the thesis that greed-driven conflicts are resolved only through buying peace (Humphrey and Weinstein, 2008). It therefore assumed that legitimising warlords' control over resources for a defined period in interim

²⁰⁸Some however argued that had ECOMOG allowed the NPFL to enter Monrovia, the death toll would have been colossal, although after ECOWAS intervention more combat took place in Monrovia leaving every inch of the city desolate and Charles Taylor—the man ECOWAS was determined to stop from assuming power—eventually emerged president.

arrangements would facilitate peace. This assumption failed in the case of Liberia and Sierra Leone primarily because the war economies, which warlords operated outside of international scrutiny, were more lucrative than looting through interim arrangement. Charles Taylor was once quoted as saying that “life was easier in the bush than in town,” insinuating that in the bush he did not have to deal with issues of accountability and public as well as international scrutiny.

In the same way that the carrot failed to induce compliance, the stick seemed too feeble to force compliance. Arguably three reasons underlie the failure of the ECOWAS stick. Firstly, the stick was too weak to be taken seriously. Coercive intervention, as Miall et al (1999) indicate, relies on the weight of the threat and the ability of the third party to translate the threat into reality. Sesay (1999) indicates that ECOWAS entered Liberia with no explicit vision and operational strategy for peacekeeping or peace support operations in general. It had no clue how much the operations would cost, nor was there a map to understand the terrain of the mostly urban guerrilla warfare. The seven countries that sent troops to Liberia had not had any experience in joint military operation, nor was there coherence in their colonial-inherited military doctrines, operations and structures.²⁰⁹ Aside from military counter-insurgency, ECOWAS also relied on the imposition of sanctions, but the lack of cohesion amongst its members and a large and uncontrolled global war economy made implementation of the range of sanctions impossible. Secondly, inconsistencies in the operation once it hit the ground compromised the legitimacy and international support that was critical in galvanising a credible force. For instance, in less than

²⁰⁹Troops came from various backgrounds, and while some troop-contributing countries had reasonably trained and equipped soldiers in the Liberia mission, some contingents were far less prepared. Some West African states, for political or economic reasons, lacked coherent militaries; and what they had amounted to little more than ‘militias’ or gendarmes. That the leaders who sent troops to Liberia and Sierra Leone were themselves products of the military clearly reflected in the lack of political and civil representation in ECOMOG.

three weeks of its arrival in Liberia, a warring faction with whom ECOMOG had co-deployed against the NPFL captured the besieged President Samuel Doe in the office of the Commanding General of ECOMOG. Throughout its 14 years in Liberia, ECOMOG failed to redeem its image. A third factor was the practice of co-deploying with one faction against a perceived intransigent faction. In Sierra Leone, ECOWAS fought alongside mercenaries and civil militias and traditional Poro hunters to prevent the RUF advance, while in Liberia ECOMOG fought with a range of factions against others and then fought those factions along with the factions it had previously attacked.

These messy operations not only compromised the integrity of ECOMOG, they also contributed to the prolongation and severity of the wars. To lay bear the realities, it is noteworthy to point out that when ECOWAS rushed into Liberia in August 1990, the Liberian civil war had gone on only eight months and NPFL and INPFL had overrun Samuel Doe's government, confining him to the Executive Palace. The estimated death toll was put at between 20,000 to 30,000; hundreds of thousand Liberians had crossed into neighbouring countries; all public buildings, banks, public utility facilities, railroads, etc. were intact; only three warring factions existed; and the war was confined to Liberia despite its regional character. Under the stewardship of ECOWAS/ ECOMOG, the wars dragged on for 14 years (in Liberia) and 10 years when it extended to Sierra Leone; the death toll in Liberia rose from 30,000 to 300,000 and 50,000 in Sierra Leone.²¹⁰ The warring factions proliferated to more than a dozen in Liberia and over a dozen civil militias, mercenaries and a fragmented

²¹⁰Even though Taylor had warned that it was planning to punish Sierra Leone for allowing the sub regional force to be based in Sierra Leone, ECOWAS only intervened in the Sierra Leone crisis three years later. While the slow response could be explained given the limited resources within which ECOWAS had engaged the Liberian civil war, much could have been done to secure Sierra Leone's borders to prevent the regional spread of the war.

army in Sierra Leone. Worst still, the wars engulfed all the Mano River countries, including Cote d'Ivoire and Guinea. In the end, Charles Taylor and his NPFL assumed state power, while the ECOWAS peace agreement endorsed RUF's control of diamond mines. Also notable is the fact that none of the wars ended under the stewardship of ECOWAS.²¹¹

4.5 CONCLUSION

In this chapter I argued that contemporary conflicts have challenged traditional theories of conflict analysis and intervention approaches. Yet, contemporary conflict interventions have failed to adapt to changes in the causes, dynamics and motivation of civil wars. For instance, while civil wars such as Liberia and Sierra Leone were sustained by greed, peace negotiations continued to be between warring factions whose only legitimacy was in their ability to terrorise local communities and not necessarily represent local communal grievances. Civilian resistance forces such as the sodality-based CDFs, which actually represented the security interests of local communities, were kept out of peace negotiations. It was assumed that the Government of Sierra Leone represented the CDF. However, when the CDF was charged for crimes against humanity, the Government disassociated itself from it.

Secondly I argued that the assumptions that buying peace through power sharing is the best way of resolving conflicts driven by greed are fundamentally flawed. Such assumptions fail to take into consideration the large exogenous global war economies, which in fact provide the incentives for continuing greedy wars. As the greed

²¹¹These stark realities are yet to prompt deep soul searching in the regional body. Rather it continues to ride on the glory of being the first sub regional economic cooperation to engage in peace support operations and that the end of civil wars in Liberia and Sierra Leone should be credited to ECOWAS. It continues to argue that the wars would have been much worse had it not been for the intervention of ECOWAS/ ECOMOG.

theorists argue, greedy wars are sustained by the continued existence of opportunities to feed greed. The size of war economies in countries like Liberia and Sierra Leone makes it impossible for one to attract warlords to time-bound power sharing arrangements. I argued in the chapter that greed driven wars are best ended through robust, concerted coercive responses.

Thirdly, despite the fact that sodality institutions like the Poro had the largest number of resistant forces in Sierra Leone, there was no role for sodality institutions in the ECOWAS and UN-led peace processes. Fanthorpe and Doornbos' observation that the liberal peace project disregards indigenous mechanisms and resources because its sole aim is to replace cultures and indigenous institutions in war-ravaged societies with liberal values and institutions, seems the only logical explanation for such obvious neglect. The fact that social order in the interiors of Liberia and Sierra Leone depend on the authority of indigenous institutions, and considering that these played key roles in defending the communities when the states and its constituted army abandoned them to their fate, is not acknowledged. Notwithstanding, in post-war Liberia and Sierra Leone, indigenous mechanisms have gained renewed importance. I argued therefore that long-term peace depends on understanding and fostering stability within indigenous systems.

Finally, I have argued that the proliferation and professionalisation of civil society organisations provide opportunities to build more democratic and responsive post-conflict states. Links between civil society organisations and the international community has also reinforced civil society's capacities to participate in the affairs of the state. Harnessing the organic structures and capacities emerging from the wars

guarantees long-term peace. The theory and strategies for harnessing indigenous and organic resources in post-war collapsed states is the subject of Chapter 6. Chapter 5 discusses the role of the Poro in state reconstruction efforts in Liberia and Sierra Leone.

CHAPTER 5

POST-CONFLICT STATE RECOVERY AND RECONSTRUCTION: THE ROLE OF THE PORO

“The outcomes of these profound changes [resulting from civil wars in Africa] may well be the defeat of the state in Africa as we have known it in recent years. But it might equally well be a deepening of the state’s indigenisation...[If the latter is the case] under what circumstances will it be possible to produce what type of political order on the ruins of the old...” (Mbembe, 2001:68 and 79)

5.1 INTRODUCTION

In previous chapters I argued that the failure of the Liberian and Sierra Leonean states to fuse or constructively engage indigenous authorities in both countries led to the convenient creation of dual polities and jurisprudences, with the rural provinces (for Sierra Leone) and counties (for Liberia) being governed partly by a range of sodality-based authorities and partly by arbitrary rule of local despots (or chiefs). On the other hand, written constitutions, laws and all the other trappings of the Westphalian states governed the settler states. Also, as discussed in Chapter 1 and 3, local chiefs and Zoes took advantage of the exploitative relationship between the interior and the settler states to transform themselves into repressive personal amorphous authorities. Similarly, the settler states gradually transformed into institutions of predation and kleptocracy. As a consequence, both the state and the interior sodality-based authority structures were set on the path of degeneration and eventual collapse.

The questions which preoccupy scholars and commentators on Liberia and Sierra Leone, and which partly inspired this thesis, are: a) should the rebuilding process return to the status quo *ante*? And, b) if the latter is the aim, is it achievable or will we see another era of resistance and mutually exploitative relationships between the state and the sodality-governed interiors? These questions are the basis for this work.

Specifically, the chapter investigates interactions between sodality-based rural Liberia and Sierra Leone and internationally driven ongoing state reconstruction exercises in both countries. Particular research questions the thesis seeks to address include:

- Were the Poro (and Sande) sodalities recognised and engaged during the post-conflict recovery—particularly in the disarmament, demobilisation and reintegration (DDR) as well as return, resettlement and reintegration (RRR) processes?
- If the Poro and Sande were not officially recognised and engaged, did they play any role in the recovery processes?
- If the Poro and Sande played or are playing any role, how did their natural self-renewing actions impact on the overall internationally led recovery process? More specifically, how did these impact the DDR and security sector reform/transformation and RRR and local governance transformation (LGT)?

Section two of the chapter discusses the role of the Poro and Sande in DDR/SSR while section three focuses on the Poro and Sande in RRR/LGT. I conclude the chapter with analysis of the implications of interactions between the liberal peace project and the Poro self-renewing processes on long-term peace and the quality of the emerging states.

5.2 The ROLE OF THE PORO IN DDR/SSR

The DDR processes in Liberia and Sierra Leone followed the range of peace agreements as indicated in Chapter 3. Full DDR for Sierra Leone began in 1998 and

ended in 2002 after a number of interruptions, while for Liberia the 1997 DDR was followed by full-scale war from 1999 until 2003, when another peace agreement was signed. Since Sierra Leone had an internationally recognised democratically elected government, the government-appointed commission—the National Commission for DDR—largely managed its DDR process. Although Liberia’s power-sharing interim government constituted a similar commission, the DDR process there was entirely driven by the Joint Implementation Unit (JIU) dominated by the international community. Over the period of September 1998 to January 2002, in Sierra Leone, the DDRP disarmed and demobilised 72,490 combatants.²¹² In Liberia, at the end of the DD process 103,019 combatants were disarmed and demobilised.²¹³ Both programmes followed their respective DD processes with targeted socio-economic reintegration programmes. About 99,000 of the 103,019 demobilised in Liberia and 55,000 of the 72,490 demobilised ex-combatants in Sierra Leone registered for the reintegration programmes, while 4,019 (4%) and 17,490 (24%) did not register for reintegration in Liberia and Sierra Leone, respectively.²¹⁴ Much has been written to assess the design, process and results of the DDR processes using internationally accepted standards. What is missing in all the works reviewed is the role of indigenous mechanisms in DDR and how these interacted with the conventional processes; hence this review.

²¹²Of this number 4,651 (6.5%) were women and 6,845 (9.5%) were children. The weapons collected totalled 42,300 and 1.2 million rounds of ammunition (Kai Kai, 2000). Although the total number disarmed and demobilised was about 61% more than the original number of combatants targeted in the design, women and children disarmed and demobilised were far less than the estimated number.

²¹³Also this was about 171% more than the targeted number. The number of women disarmed were 22,456 women, or 22% of adults, and 2,511 girls or 24% of children, (NCDDRR, 2005). Both countries followed their elaborate DD processes with what they call the community arms for development programme. In this programme in Sierra Leone, non-conventional weapons such as hunting guns were collected in exchange for community driven projects, although those presenting the traditional weapons did not benefit from the targeted DDR process (Miller et al, 2006; UNDP, 2004).

²¹⁴38,000 (about 40%) and 12,800 (about 23%) of those qualified for reintegration applied for formal education in Liberia and Sierra Leone, respectively. Only 4% registered for agriculture in Liberia while 17% did in Sierra Leone (UNDP/JIU, 2006).

5.2.1 Conventional vs Poro and Sande Indigenous Approach to DDR

While there may be consensus on the claim that our understanding of a social problem shapes our response strategies, it seems intervention strategies of the international system are driven by liberal imperatives rather than contextual realities and knowledge of the problem. This obliviousness to the context is evident in the DDR²¹⁵ interventions in Liberia and Sierra Leone. Citing Francis (2005), Hoffman (2007) notes that current DDR interventions tend to be fixed on the “universal definition of a militia as ‘a kind of private army whose members are enrolled along military lines, are subjected to the same discipline as soldiers, like them wearing uniforms and badges, ready like them to meet the enemy with weapons in physical combat’” (p 5). Insurgent and counter-insurgent groups in Liberia and Sierra Leone sharply contrasted with this notion. Conscription, recruitment, training and production of soldiers by all warlords and militias in both civil wars drew mostly from perverted practices of indigenous sodality institutions and less from conventional military practices (See Ellis 1999; Sawyer 1992; Alie, 2005). For instance, Alie (2005) describes the initiation of an individual into the Civil Defence Forces (CDF) as one, which, just like the Poro *rite de passage*, was shrouded in secrecy. Rather than a recruitment officer being the first line of contact in the various militia groups, traditional High Priests and witch doctors were the first line of contact. These were responsible for applying a range of concoctions. They also, through psychological and spiritual manipulation, extracted a pledge of absolute loyalty from the initiates. It was only after this exercise that most initiates were declared fit for combat training (ibid). Alie goes further to

²¹⁵The recently codified Inter-agency Disarmament, Demobilisation and Reintegration Standards (IDDRS) defines disarmament as “the collection, documentation, control and disposal of small arms...” while demobilization is “...the formal and controlled discharged of active combatants from armed forces and other armed groups...”. Demobilisation according to the IDDRS ends when reinsertion packages are handed to ex-combatants to ease their entry back into communities.

indicate that each initiate of the CDF was vetted by the community, and was assigned a patron to whom he remained loyal and who kept watch over his behaviour (2005). Similarly, insurgent groups like the RUF, NPFL, ULIMO, etc tied their foot soldiers in webs of sodality-bonded networks (See Sawyer, 1992; Ellis, 1999; Richards et al, 2004 and 2005). Richard et al (2004: 26) note that the RUF "...after a short period as a modern guerrilla movement with aspirations to capture and reform the state, reverted to a more basic type—a forest sodality".²¹⁶

Drawing from what we know about insurgent and counter-insurgent groups in Liberia and Sierra Leone, we can argue that the DDR processes failed to appreciate the fact that disarming ex-combatants in Liberia and Sierra Leone should not have been limited to collection of conventional weapons and handing them material packages. Certain critical questions remain unanswered, such as what happens to the oaths taken, the charms entrusted in their care and the sodality-based network to which they were bonded. In a focus group discussion in Lofa County, a participant noted, "...just as they were initiated and bonded in a cult-like militarised fraternity, it is important for some form of rituals to be applied in their demobilisation..." Another noted, "Without this process, ex-combatants still feel tied to the militarised network and obligated to laws that guided their so-called charm". The implementers of the DDR programmes did not heed these concerns. The DDR processes in Liberia and Sierra Leone remained faithful to the conventional, while disregarding the unconventional indigenous elements that defined the problems they seek to address. A closer review of the processes in light of indigenous exigencies is necessary.

²¹⁶ Although the CDF predominantly emerged from the Kamajors, the Poro warrior class, Richard et al notes that in order to prevent infiltration by the RUF, which has some Poro initiates as its fighters, the CDF modified the Poro codes and introduced new secrets to bond the CDF.

5.2.1.1 Disarmament, Demobilisation and the Poro (and Sande)

Despite the fact that a majority of the combatants in both wars did not fight with conventional weapons, while others had shared weapons, the criteria for disarmament and demobilisation, particularly in Sierra Leone, was insistent on each person handing in a conventional weapon to be eligible for the programme. In Sierra Leone, 60% of all combatants were members of the CDF, in which core warriors including the Kamajors, Donzos, Tamaboros, Kapras, etc. used single barrel guns and other indigenous weapons. For instance, Richard et al (2004) note that of the 16,491 CDF fighters in Kenema District of Sierra Leone, only 14% possessed acceptable weapons and therefore entered the DDR programme. Aside from not having the right weapons to be eligible, a Key Informant told me that given the Poro notion of Kamajors, many of the hardcore warriors were reluctant to disarm. In the Poro and other indigenous sodalities, the communities look to the Kamajors, Donzos, Tamaboros, etc.—the tightly knit groups of men who are endowed with powers to defend their communities in time of spiritual and physical threats. This has been their role since the inception of the sodality according to an FGI participant in Bo. Hoffman corroborates this claim when he said that,

The Kamajors' very identity is predicated on the protection of villages. Throughout the war the name carried with it the same connotations of community defence, entitlement to carry firearms, and the possession of secret 'medicines' (hale) that was embodied in the pre-war use of the term (Hoffman, 2007: 7).

In his testimonial before the Special Court in Sierra Leone, Chief of the Civil Defence Forces, the late Chief Hinga Norman, informed the Court about the enduring role of the Kamajors in the Poro-governed Guinea Coast thus:

My Lord, in this country Kamajors are age old people. They had existed before my own great grandfather. There is no issue of selecting who to become a Kamajor or who not to become a Kamajor. They're here permanently. They were, they are, they will continue to be (cited in Hoffman, 2007: 21).

Secondly, a critical assumption in conventional DD strategies is that long-term peace depends on breaking command structures of insurgent and counter insurgent groups. Therefore, DD strategies aimed at providing money and materials that would help individual ex-combatants live independent of their militarised networks. It is assumed that the command structures in the Liberia and Sierra Leone civil wars resembled those of conventional military structures, which are separate from social networks in communities in which ex-combatants reintegrate, and therefore can be dismantled. Richard (2004 and 2005) and Hoffman (2007) have argued that while efforts to break command structures and transform combatants into individuals may hold true to international DDR practice, and are desirable to guarantee long-term peace, breaking them in the case of Liberia and Sierra Leone is not only difficult, it poses a dilemma. In West Africa, particularly its sodality-governed Upper Guinea Coast, social collectivism determines individual identity. As Hoffman observes, "Patronage networks which dominate everyday existence in rural [Liberia and Sierra Leone] were never replaced in wartime, they were simply militarized" (p. 22). Therefore, rather than focus on breaking the networks to emancipate individuals, emphasis should be on transforming the networks into productive, peace generating and sustaining forces in post-war societies. Richards et al (2004) note that the CDF

are “...back in the villages for which they struggled, more interested in agricultural...and the diamond fields instead of violence ...”²¹⁷

While these networks seem resistant to being dismantled because of their rootedness in the notion of social collectivism, their lack of transformation poses serious security challenges in both countries. Arms-related violence is rife in Liberia, while violence using local weapons, including serious disruptions of political processes, continues in Sierra Leone. The evidence thus far suggests that state reconstruction practitioners and post-war governments are yet to harness this resource, whether during the reintegration or in ongoing security sector reform efforts. I return to this aspect later. One point worth making for now is that disarmament and demobilisation as defined by the UN Integrated Disarmament, Demobilisation and Reintegration Standards (IDDRS) and practiced in post-conflict contexts such as Liberia and Sierra Leone, overlooked important unconventional dimensions which contributed to the difficulty the project encountered in Liberia and Sierra Leone.

5.2.1.2 Conventional vs Indigenous Poro and Sande Reintegration Strategies

The IDDRS defines reintegration as “the process by which ex-combatants acquire civilian status and gain sustainable employment and income...”²¹⁸ The definition and approaches adopted by international actors tend to be implicitly guided by three inter-related assumptions: a) ex-combatants with employable skills increase their value in society; b) ex-combatants with employable skills are more likely to obtain

²¹⁷ Aside from being the largest labour force in most of rural Sierra Leone, the CDF maintains their community defence networks and continues to keep watch over their communities.

²¹⁸ It also emphasises the importance of situating reintegration within communities, although many of its strategies tend to be targeted at individual ex-combatants.

employment; and c) employed ex-combatants having gained a meaningful life within the community are unlikely to return to violence. What underpins these assumptions is that ex-combatants went to war because of economic deprivation and, once they are employed and are earning adequate income, the problem of violence will be resolved. Based on these assumptions, like all DDR programmes, reintegrating ex-combatants in Sierra Leone and Liberia focused on vocational training, agriculture, formal education and quick employment schemes. While improving ex-combatants' employability may facilitate reintegration, it has been misunderstood as reintegration itself. As a result, the other critical task of strengthening the absorptive capacity of the communities, which would enable them to absorb and employ the skills of ex-combatants, receives little or no attention. Besides, the assumption that individual ex-combatants represent their individual economic grievances seems to be couched in the liberal individualist thesis. Such an assumption downplays Azar's claim that the grievances, which mobilise a group to war, are never 'individual'. They are 'communal' or 'fraternal'. In Sierra Leone and Liberia, where patronage in social and political systems holds sway, many of the ex-combatants were either forcibly enlisted in combat, or voluntarily in either the name of their patrons, or based on the interpretation of their grievances by their patrons. This factor is not considered in reintegration planning.

The conventional reintegration approach also contrasts with the sequencing of Poro and Sande mechanisms for reintegrating ex-combatants. The first reintegration task

in Poro-governed regions of Liberian and Sierra Leone is to facilitate acceptance of ex-combatants in the community.²¹⁹ A key informant in Bo pointed out that,

Until communities recognise and accept the *being*, which I will define as acceptable character and behaviour of the ex-combatant, it is difficult (if not impossible) for such a person to be accepted and for the communities to employ whatever productive skills he/she might have acquired (Key Informant Bo, 2005).

Studies conducted by Amnesty International and the Centre for the Study of Violence and Torture reveal that all female combatants interviewed in both countries identify ‘being accepted again in their communities and having the opportunity to get married’ as the most important factor in their reintegration (AI, 2003; CVT, 2004). Being accepted or rejected in Poro-governed societies is guided by norms, and not necessarily by the economic transformation of ex-combatants, as assumed in the IDDRS. For instance, ex-combatants who have killed in combat must undergo cleansing rites before taking their place back in the community. Women who fought and were exposed to the dead (whether they killed them or not) as well as those who were sexually violated, must be cleansed to be accepted and also be eligible for marriage.²²⁰ Participants in a focus group meeting emphasised that unless these cleansing rituals are undertaken, ex-combatants and rape victims are considered unclean or possessed of evil spirits. “Even when the ex-combatants or rape victims are forced to return to the community, community members tend to exclude them

²¹⁹International practice also makes allusions to the importance of an ex-combatant being accepted in his/her community. The difference is that it makes working to foster acceptance secondary to developing ex-combatants as economically independent and viable members of the society.

²²⁰The cleansing rituals for women ex-combatants and rape victims are conducted in the Sande sacred places, while those of men are administered in Poro sacred places.

from all social functions, skilled or unskilled” (Key Informant Interview, Bo, 2005).²²¹

5.2.1.3 Poro Interventions for Self-renewal in DDR

Poro and non-Poro communities in both countries have assumed their natural roles in rehabilitating and reintegrating ex-combatants. In Liberia, particularly in some villages of the Poro-governed Lofa County, remnants of the Lofa Defence Force are undergoing ritual cleansing supervised by Poro Zoes as a condition for their return to the communities. While this is not widespread, participants in Lofa strongly emphasised the need to undertake nationwide indigenous processes which will not only allow for the rehabilitation of ex-combatants, but will restore the sacred health of the communities (I will address this in section 6.2.2). Furthermore, as indicated in Box 5.1, the Kwa-speaking people, particularly in south-eastern Liberia, are also engaged in indigenous reintegration activities which are outside the limelight of the international process.

Box 5.1: Indigenous Reintegration Process amongst the Kwes

In one of the remote villages of Liberia the researcher and other members of the team of evaluators for Liberia’s Disarmament, Demobilisation, Rehabilitation and Reintegration Strategy and Implementation Framework (DDRR-SIF) met with a group of chiefs and elders and asked them about the state of their communities and the relationship with ex-combatants who returned. One elder explained that in their communities they are embarking on reintegration and reconciliation activities to ease the return of ex-combatants and the recovery of communities. According to the elder, ex-combatants and their families are demonstrating repentance to the entire community while the communities are administering cleansing ceremonies and publicly accepting the ex-combatants. The process according to the elder involves the perpetrator and his family providing to the community a goat or in some situations a chicken. The community would use the chicken to cook meals that the entire community would eat together after a cleansing ceremony. During the cleansing ritual the perpetrator would be seated in an open square of the town with his immediate family members around him. Each head of household would publicly place his/her hands on the head of the perpetrator surrounded by his family in an open

²²¹The isolation of the unclean and unworthy in rural Liberia and Sierra Leone continues to have devastating social and economic effects on ex-combatants and former bush wives. A key manifestation of this problem is the increase in the number of urban slums in both countries. Richard et al emphasised that while international actors may not be keen to engage in ritual processes, it is important to acknowledge their impact on perceptions of demobilisation, reintegration and reconciliation.

space usually under a scourging sun and “say his mind”. This means graphically describing all the pains the perpetrator’s action may have caused him/her, their family, and the entire community. After what seems like a catharsis the victim would grant forgiveness and welcome the perpetrator back in the community. The rest of the community cheered the gesture. After each household offended by the perpetrator’s action had spoken the elder in the community would conclude and in some cases offer the perpetrator a parcel of land to work his own farm. He would then be monitored over a period to ascertain whether his repentance is genuine and is shown in a change of behaviour. The forgiver is also expected to be genuine. It is believed that if the forgiver is not genuine eating the meal of reconciliation can be fatal.

After the elder’s explanation the head of the UN DDRR-SIF Programme evaluation team in his excitement asked whether the UN could offer the communities a number of livestock to expand the process since it was difficult for some family to raise the money for the livestock and rice needed for the ceremonies. The elders spontaneously rejected the offer. The team was surprised and the team leader asked why they were refusing the UN offer. One of the elders noted that it is the pain the family goes through to raise the money for the ceremony that is an indication of the genuine contrition and willingness to change. Besides, another elder noted that the process, which the family goes through to gather the resources needed, facilitates their own healing and reconciliation. He noted that in most cases some members being angry with the perpetrator would refuse to contribute. The rest of the family would have to convince the angry person of the value of redeeming the victim and thereby restoring the pride of the family in the community. Providing livestock would undermine the process, the elder emphasised.

Another important dimension in indigenous Poro mechanisms for DDR is its gender-focused approach. The Sande, being responsible for moulding girls into womanhood, is by default responsible for reintegrating female combatants, while the Poro is responsible for male combatants. Carol MacCormack, cited earlier, describes the critical role of the Sande in Poro-governed society thus:

“Since social grace, good health, fertility, successful childbirth and nurturance are not matters to be left to nature but are conditions and events caused by Sande wisdom, rites and practical experience, it is an institution that continues to assist women throughout their adult life. It is secret in the sense that it owns knowledge so valuable that it must be guarded against debasement and transmitted only in ritual situations to initiates properly prepared to receive it.” (MacCormack, 1973: 183)

At the focus group interview in Bo, a participant corroborated MacCormack’s description of the Sande by emphasising that,

“Organising young women to guide their lives is an integral part of the Sande... Graduates from Sande bush schools are often placed in age- or livelihood-based

groups. These groups are assigned a guardian, usually an experienced elderly woman selected from the *soweisia* [Sande council of elders] with whom they share their challenges in transitioning to adult life, like managing their married home, undergoing periods of pregnancy and caring for their first babies...” (FGI, Bo, 2006)

Soweisia across rural Liberia and Sierra Leone, a key informant noted, are engaged in a range of activities to foster rehabilitation and reintegration of women and children. The common activities include adopting ex-combatants and the formation of age- and/or livelihood-based associations for girls.²²² There are also women-led orphanages in urban communities, which are helping former bush wives with childcare while the latter attend vocational training or formal schools.²²³ The motivation of the women initiatives, it is believed, comes from their Sande obligation. As one participant indicated, “If we do not help these girls to get back to normal life it will affect the kind of society we create after the war.” (Key Informant, Freetown, 2005)

I argue that DDR processes failed to achieve sustainable results because the international system did not engage with the Poro and other sodalities, who define and administer the social orders in most of the interiors in Liberia and Sierra Leone. Rape victims among female combatants as noted by Richard et al (2004 and 2005), were reluctant to present themselves for DDR for fear that they would expose themselves to possible rejection from their local Sande groups. Also, what better avenue could there be for local female ex-combatants to address issues of their personal health, fertility, chastity, etc. if not the Sande, which has been involved in such matters for nearly two thousand years? The DDR programmes were also keen to “emancipate” individuals

²²²Women in Bo, Kambia, Bong and Lofa have organised themselves in associations which encourage members to adopt former child combatants, especially girls. Some women reported having adopted at least two ex-child combatants into their families.

²²³While these are not necessarily linked to the Sande process in the interior, one woman insinuated that her motivation to establish a day care centre is because “in our tradition we are supposed to help young women become better people...”

from their so-called sodality-bonded societies. Fundamental to social collectivist societies is the primacy of the community over individuals. Charles Piot unequivocally contends that in West Africa, more so in its Poro sodality region, “Individuals do not have relations... they are relations” (Piot, 1999: 18 cited in Hoffman, 2007: 13). Hoffman goes on to argue that “... the social being of an individual is measured by the people with whom one has relations of dependence or for whom one acts as a patron...” (Hoffman, 2007: 10). Efforts to transform relational beings into atomised individuals in a short time span and in an *ad hoc* fashion exacerbated societal disruptions, instead of aiding recovery. A third most important argument for involving indigenous systems in DDR processes is the importance of restoring community balance. The scale and nature of the violence in both countries defied all human imagination, whether indigenous or conventional. In Liberia, all systems of meaning were fundamentally challenged; thus undermining all existing regulatory mechanisms in rural societies. A critical factor in restoring balance and security in indigenous communities is to reconstruct the myth and narratives in light of the new challenges. While the liberal project has overlooked the importance of a new narrative to replace the war narrative in which children with guns became the chiefs and the powers of Zoes were defamed, the Poro, as will be discussed in depth in section 5.3, sees the replacement of war narratives as existential. For now, I turn to current security sector reform initiatives in both countries and the extent of engagement or non-engagement of Poro and Sande in the processes.

5.2.2 Poro and Security Sector Reform

The Security Sector Reform projects of Liberia and Sierra Leone are in their conclusion phases. The questions that remain are: a) to what extent are the processes and outcomes locally owned? b) What is the quality of the security architectures being built? More specifically, were the very elaborate Poro security architectures, which gained renewed salience in both wars, engaged in the conceptualisation, design and production of the post-war security architectures? Based on my review of the processes I come to the conclusion that both processes leave much to be desired. First, both processes are not only driven from outside, they are entirely financed and managed externally. In Liberia and Sierra Leone, security sector reforms have become the pet projects of their respective former colonial allies. The British International Military Advisory and Assistance Team (IMATT) has full responsibility to restructure the security sector of Sierra Leone, while the contracted private military companies—DynCorp and PAE—are overseeing the restructure of the armed forces of Liberia. In Sierra Leone, all institutions within the security sector are being rebuilt by IMATT, while in Liberia the project is divided between the US Government and the United Nations Mission in Liberia (UNMIL).

Secondly, both processes were not established on any post-war security strategy. The national security strategies of Sierra Leone and Liberia were developed long after the SSR processes began. The Governance Reforms Commission outside the mainstream of security sector reform developed what is called the national security strategy in Liberia. Details of how the security sector, particularly the armed and police forces are being built are not mentioned in the SSR strategy. Similarly in Sierra Leone, the

security strategy came after IMATT had advanced the police and army reforms. Notwithstanding, unlike in Liberia, Sierra Leone's security architecture to some extent drew from the National Security Strategy.

Third, the national security strategies, the police and army reform programmes are less known across both countries, given the limited (in Sierra Leone) and no (in Liberia) information awareness strategy and campaign on the SSR projects. In Liberia, the only information on SSR is about how to join the police or armed forces. What these institutions mean and what role the society in general will play in their structuring and performance is not factored in the programming. A well-respected civil society leader in Liberia expressed doubts whether the process would produce the quality and size of army that Liberia desperately needs, given its recent past. He notes at a focus group discussion, "How can they train a new army for a supposedly new country without a security strategy and doctrine... What is the threat and where is it coming from?" (FGI, Monrovia, 2005). Another FGI participant had this to say: "It is so disheartening that no consideration was given to Liberia's recent past where the security was politicised and used as instrument for repression... People have never had a say in who becomes a security personnel and how security personnel should conduct themselves in this country... People again, having suffered the mess resulting from a politicised and insulated security system, are witnessing a repeat of history..." Another participant asked, in a huff, "Can you imagine an NGO is training a post-war national army of a state struggling to reclaim its sovereignty?" But another interjected, also in a huff, "Have you all forgotten that this country was established by an NGO, the so-called American Colonisation Society... History always repeats itself when people fail to learn from it," he retorted.

Aside from the flaws in the process, engagement with indigenous mechanisms and processes were also weak. As indicated earlier, in Sierra Leone over 60% of all fighting forces were from the sodality-created Civil Defence Forces (CDF). During the design of the security architecture in Sierra Leone, the country was divided on the question of the extent to which the CDF should be factored into the national security architecture. Some argued that given that the CDF remains providers of security in most rural communities, they should be transformed into national militias with responsibility for community security. The contrary view was that involving such a large and dispersed group in the security architecture would be difficult to manage. Others question the level of discipline in the CDF and argued that recognising the CDF as part of the national security architecture could serve as license for human rights abuses, especially in the countryside. Those who were concerned about the efficient management of the security sector warned that the CDF would expect to be paid, as was the case in the war, and giving the country's appalling economic conditions, this would be a strain on the government. At the end of the lively debate, the National Security Architecture only carries a paragraph recognising the role of the CDF during the war, but called on them to refrain from involvement in security activities.

While I am not arguing for the legitimisation of the CDF or Poro-governed security systems in Liberia and Sierra Leone, the argument of this thesis is the extent of engagement with indigenous notions and structures of security. For instance, while some healthy debate took place in Sierra Leone on the CDF, the extent of engagement remained at that level. There is no evidence to suggest that in-depth study was conducted to understand the historical and sociological dimensions of the Poro-

governed CDF and the implication for long-term security in post-war Sierra Leone. In the case of Liberia, it is important to note that this post-war SSR process will go down in history as the first time when the settler state and the Poro-governed hinterland severed relations on the issue of security. As indicated in Chapter 3, the Liberia Frontier Force (LFF) was organised with Poro youth vetted by Poro elders serving as the foot soldiers. Sawyer (1992) notes that such arrangements continued in the Armed Forces of Liberia until 1979, when in addition to enlisting Poro-vetted cadres, William Tolbert opened the armed forces to the Kwa-speaking non-Poro communities in the Southeast of Liberia.²²⁴ A key informant noted that “Liberia is poised to have its first non-sodality based national army... this looks like a good thing but we have to wait and see.”²²⁵ The point being made here is that in both Liberia and Sierra Leone there are three security and/ or insecurity systems. These include the new and emerging national security architectures, the web of militarised networks and the Poro-governed security architecture, particularly the CDF in Sierra Leone. These are bound to interact for a long time come. The implication for such interactions on the conditions of security need to be anticipated and appropriate safeguards put in place. The lack of clear strategy for the transformation of the non-state security systems could undermine the institutionalisation and stabilisation of the externally constructed security architectures in both countries.

²²⁴It is telling to note here that it was some of the initial southeastern recruits in the army who turned against Tolbert and overthrew his regime in a bloody coup in 1980.

²²⁵The LFF and the Armed Forces of Liberia, with their repressive hierarchy and impervious structure were not any better. The point is being made to allude to the fact that the Poro was once a player in the design of Liberia's security architecture. It has been by-passed in the post-war security arrangement.

5.3 THE ROLE OF THE PORO IN RETURN, RESETTLEMENT AND REINTEGRATION

The civil wars in both countries will go down in history as events which resulted in the total dislocation and displacement of the dominant Poro-governed region in Africa. For the first time in almost 1,000 years, the “earth-determined” and ‘locality’ grounded Poro-governed rainforest experienced massive displacement and dislocation. Entire districts were emptied of their population for nearly a decade.²²⁶ The population movement followed rural-to-urban demographic patterns established in both countries, with large numbers of displaced coming from areas where the wars lasted the longest.²²⁷ Aside from the dislocation, the gerontocratic orders, which are the crux of Poro authorities in Liberia and Sierra Leone, were gravely humiliated as warlords and their band of child soldiers drove the High Priests out of their shrines. Fanthorpe reports that:

“Many [rural dwellers] were - and remain – profoundly shocked by the vicious and apparently motiveless attacks upon civilians by the young Sierra Leoneans who fought under the banner of the RUF, and there is still much talk in rural areas about these fighters’ fearless transgression of secret society laws as they entered village sacred bushes in search of hoarded weapons and food” (Fanthorpe, 2007)

How does such mass dislocation and displacement of people, authorities and systems of belief impact the Poro world? What does this portend in determining the strategies for recovering and revitalising such communities? And to what extent were

²²⁶In August 2003, when the CPA was signed, an estimated 600,000 Liberians, nearly all those who had resettled after the 1997 elections, were again internally displaced (Global IDP, 2001; Scott, 1998). Another 300,000 had fled to neighbouring countries (UNHCR, 2003). Similarly, Sierra Leone’s IDP at the signing of the LPA stood at 2 million and around 250,000 of this number were in camps, while the bulk of the IDPs lived with host families across the country (NCRRR, 2001).

²²⁷For instance, in the Poro-dominated Lofa County where the Liberia civil war lasted the longest, and considering its proximity to Sierra Leone and Guinea, more than 95% of its inhabitants were displaced (UNHCR, 2005). UNHCR February 2005 briefing note cited in IRIN noted that more than a third of Liberia’s 350,000 refugees in neighbouring countries and more than half of the million others internally displaced fled from Lofa County.

practitioners of state reconstruction in both countries responsive to the unique challenges of recovering sodality-governed post-war communities? The first factor any strategy seeking to address return, resettlement and community revitalisation of sodality-governed communities must consider is the natural attachment to the notion of homeland. Kris Hardin notes that in Poro-governed societies “Where someone is born, where they join Sande or Poro, where their ancestors are buried, and where they themselves will be buried...” determine their identity (1993: 27). While noting that such earth-determined reproduction of identity tends to be limiting, Hardin concedes that it remains the basis for identity formation and the creation of communities. He indicates that the identity production process in Poro communities is undertaken through well-organised rites.²²⁸ Ruth Finnegan, based on her study of the Limbas in Sierra Leone, makes similar claims. She indicates that,

“One reason why a man comes back from the more moneyed life down country is that the graves of the dead are up there; one reason a chief does not wish to leave his town is that the famous chiefs of the past, his ancestors, are buried there...[the dead] represent for the Limba the social ties within the village, where those living together are thought of as being commonly descended from the ancestors commonly prayed to; the dead transmitted and uphold the social and political institutions and guarantee this order to their descendants” (Finnegan, 1965: 113, cited in Fanthorpe, 2001: 375)

Fanthorpe emphasises that in Poro-governed societies, locality is never taken for granted. From this view it is justifiable to suggest that dislocation has profound effects on the individual and collective identities of Poro-governed communities. It is in these contexts that the international community planned and implemented return, resettlement, reintegration and community revitalisation. What principles and strategies informed the return, resettlement and reintegration in Liberia and Sierra

²²⁸Kris Hardin, *The Aesthetics of Action: Community and change in a West African town* (Smithsonian Institution Press, Washington, DC, 1993) and Mariane Ferme, *The Underneath of Things: Violence, history and the everyday in Sierra Leone* (University of California Press, Berkeley, CA, 2001) also make similar points.

Leone? And how did these reinforce or undermine the ‘self-renewing’ agencies of Poro-governed communities?

The international state reconstruction architect’s strategy for return, resettlement and reintegration focused on the provision of basic material needs to ease return, but not necessarily to sustain return and resettlement. The return and resettlement packages more broadly included two-month food ration, household utensils, plastic sheeting and transportation to a drop-off point (Mama, 2003). In some areas, the transitional process was followed by a mid-term recovery intervention, including quick employment schemes, rehabilitation of basic community infrastructures, support to livelihood development and community-based reconciliation.²²⁹ The international practice paid little attention to the role of indigenous mechanisms, including the Poro and Sande in the return, resettlement and reintegration processes. The recovery strategies were individual-focused and market-oriented, ostensibly to remain true to the conventional humanitarian and development logic of achieving immediate, quantifiable and tangible results. The effects of re-entry and the necessary rites for reclaiming ‘locality’ and social reproduction of local subjects in Poro and Sande societies did not feature in the return and reintegration processes. Notwithstanding, indigenous Poro and Sande communities have been active in their own self-renewal. A review of the Poro’s RRR self-renewal process is necessary.

²²⁹ At the end of the return and resettlement processes in Sierra Leone, a total of 221,745 registered IDPs and 245,750 refugees were resettled in five phases, while about twice this number spontaneously resettled in Sierra Leone before the Government of Sierra Leone officially declared that all the country’s IDPs were returned and resettled in October 2002 (UN OCHA, 2002). Similarly, when the elected government and the international community (IC) formerly closed IDP camps in March 2006, a total of 321,634 IDPs and 95,548 refugees were officially resettled in Liberia. About 350,000 IDPs and refugees reportedly spontaneously returned and integrated without any assistance (Wright et al, 2007).

5.3.1 Poro's Self-renewing Interventions

For the Poro, returning to the land requires something more than buckets, food rations and basic farming implements. It is first and foremost about establishing new discursive, institutional and relational foundations. A key informant notes that the primary preoccupation of Poro and Sande communities on return has been the restoration of the rituals for reproducing locality. She indicated that locality reproduction in Poro-governed communities include consecrating the land, reasserting or recreating narratives that bind the webs of relations who are attached to the land or locality, and regenerating the land and relationships. Fanthorpe makes a similar point while referencing the work of Ruth Finnegan. He notes that rebuilding communities or locality amongst the Limbas in Sierra Leone is termed “clearing” (*methi ma*), which literally means “a space authorised and made fit for the proper ‘foundation’ (*makwi ma*) of society” (Fanthorpe, 2001: 375). A key informant made a similar point in Monrovia when he indicated that Poro-governed communities in Liberia focus on three areas in recovery:

“First, we must restore the land. Because too much blood has been spilled on the land, we must re-honour the land. Second, we must appease the ancestors by seeking the forgiveness of all the leaders that were unjustly killed. It is after the land and the ancestors are appeased that we turn to individuals and their families for reconciliation, reintegration and economic revitalisation” (KII, Monrovia, 2005)

Deducing from comments of participants in the range of interviews and works done by a number of anthropologists, I argue that return, resettlement and community revitalisation in Poro-governed societies primarily has spiritual, socio-economic and political dimensions.

Spiritual Dimension: The first focus of Poro-governed societies on return is the spiritual dimension. This includes undertaking a range of rituals to ‘clear’ the land and restore structures of relationship. Richard et al. (2004) observes that the first project of most returned communities has been the construction of mosques, churches or Poro shrines. Citing Durkheim, the authors argue that the sacred is the rallying point for collective actions in most indigenous societies. They note that “respect for cult objects and ‘medicines’ at the heart of the closed association is in effect respect for the group and its values which is the basis for trust, social coordination and collective action” (ibid: 28). The restoration of the spiritual edifice is followed by the *rites de passage*, especially for girls. All returnees in Poro-governed communities rate restoring Sande initiation rites as one of the first tasks in community recovery. Families would go to the extreme of borrowing the needed resources to ensure that their daughters undergo the initiation process (Fanthorpe, 2007). Communities whose Sande shrines were destroyed in the wars have had to share shrines of neighbouring communities to resume the Sande rites of passage (ibid).²³⁰ Why is this important to recovery in rural Liberia and Sierra Leone?

In my view, the Sande initiation ceremonies have three primary effects on community recovery. Since the Sande is the life-giving institution and the purifier of womanhood, it is regarded as the intersection of the sacred and the social. Communities therefore emphasise Sande activities as a basis for the re-normalisation of communities. Secondly, Sande *rites de passage* reasserts the authority of the collective and of the ‘locality’. War imposes new narratives, which mostly challenge the narratives that hitherto defined the communities and conditioned their views of the world. In post-war indigenous communities, more so in Poro and Sande-governed communities, it is vital to impose a

²³⁰The Sande has centuries of experience on issues such as fertility, chastity and good health. It plays a central role in the social life of all rural women who constitute the largest number of IDPs and wartime bush wives.

new or modified narrative to reassert the social order of communities.²³¹ And as tradition dictates, the primary source of civic education is the mother in the home. By ensuring that post-war women recreate and imbibe the new post-war narrative guarantees the expansion of the civic education process to the rest of society. And most importantly, the *rites de passage* of the Sande restores the lost dignity of women and the control over their own affairs—something that was eroded during the civil war.

All this is not without limitations. The practice of FGM in the Sande rites of passage seriously risks the health of rural Liberia and Sierra Leone. It also raises the question about human rights and a woman's personal control over her sexuality and freedoms. As a way of addressing such risks, international actors have been supporting women's groups to advocate against the Sande *rites de passage*. While I acknowledge the risks, none of the campaigns have offered alternatives that would address rural society's concerns for restoring the chastity, fertility, health of women and by extension the health and balance of post-war communities. The reinvention of societal institutions in these post-collapsed contexts requires honest dialogue and sustained education and awareness campaigns about the weaknesses of the mechanisms and institutions for the restoration of social order in Poro and Sande communities. As Richard et al (2004) rightly observes dialogue, not condemnation and violent erasure of indigenous systems, would go a long way to transform indigenous societies. Study conducted by Care International also shows that FGM practice in especially Sierra Leone has greater commercial value compared to its traditional value. The fact that FGM did not originate from the Sande sodality nor is it practised by practising Poro and Sande communities alone suggests that its

²³¹The tension has been whether to reassert the old narrative or to reinterpret the narratives in light of emerging realities.

transformation or elimination from the Sande should be possible if careful and comprehensive transformation exercise is undertaken.

Socio-Economic and Governance Dimension: The socio-economic dimension resides in the governance function of the Poro. As discussed in Chapter 1, Brown (1967) emphasised the ability of the Poro to inculcate deference for public assets, to mobilise all communities in solidarity and social support systems and to restore the necessary balance between the sacred and the secular in the interiors of both countries. Real or civic governance, as Brown terms it, is expressed in Poro and Sande communities within the notion of *Kuu* (in Liberia) or *Kombi* (among the Mendes in Sierra Leone), or *Ka-botho* (among the Temne). The *Kuu* or *Kombi* is the institution, which through the Poro tenets of solidarity ensure that all members of the community enjoy and participate in the provision of basic services while collectively preserving shared resources. Participants at a focus group interview in Gbarnga, Liberia noted that, “Everybody works together in the *Kuu* system to ensure that no one in the village is lacking...” (FGI, Gbarnga, 2005). In the post-war reconstruction efforts Zoes, chiefs, and elders are evoking the *kuu* to oblige all members of the communities to support the economic revitalisation and social reintegration of individual members and families. For instance, through rotating work schemes community members are collaborating to rebuild one another’s houses and work one another’s farms in Poro regions of Liberia and Sierra Leone.²³² The widespread campaign of *methi ma* (restoring locality) and economic recovery across the Poro-governed interiors caught the attention of many researchers and NGOs in the area. Mama (2003) notes that Care

²³²Richard et al (2004) identify three kinds of rotational labour arrangements guided by the principles of *Kombi*, which are active in local recovery efforts in Sierra Leone. First, there is the informal agreement among neighbours to work together on various cultivation tasks by turn. No financial payment is expected in this arrangement. A second cooperative work scheme in which each member is obligated to provide fixed man-hours to work on one another’s fields is the *Bembe*. The *Kombi* is the largest cooperative scheme with permanent membership. It is also a savings club.

International in rural Sierra Leone redesigned their community infrastructural development programme to respond to the community *Kombi*. Care International provided metal roofing sheets to associations of women's groups who were engaged in rotating schemes to rebuild one another's houses. Roads leading to villages and towns are also being cleared under the norms of the *Kuu* or *Kombi* in both countries.

While recognizing the civic functions of the Poro and Sande, some architects of the post-conflict state reconstruction projects are cautious about supporting indigenous solidarity groups especially those shrouded in secrecy such as the Poro and Sande. They argue that any support to such groups would mean sanctioning their exclusive and repressive practices (Richards, 2004). They are therefore keen to accelerate the establishment of political governance and civil administration in the interior regions. Primary objectives put forward for restoring local governance and political systems include: a) ensuring effective service delivery, b) reasserting the dominance of the state in the interiors, and c) consolidating peace and security. The British Department for International Development (DfID) and the GoSL made initial attempts in post-war Sierra Leone to restore rural governance through re-establishing the paramount chieftaincy system (DfID, 2004). Although consultations leading to the restoration exercise overwhelmingly blamed the chieftaincy system for the underdevelopment and revolt in the interior DfID and the GoSL went ahead to reconstitute the system without addressing its serious weaknesses (DfID, 2001).²³³ Reminiscent of the

²³³According to Fanthorpe, during the consultations participants blamed the chieftaincy system for persistent discrimination of women, youth and other underprivileged families; the undemocratic approach to the selection of chiefs, and chiefs' mismanagement of resources for their respective chiefdoms. Most importantly, youths singled out the corruption in the local justice system, in which the male gerontocratic order consistently denied youth and women their rights. Fanthorpe also notes rampant corruption amongst the post-war newly elected chiefs. One positive, he notes however, is that many of the chiefs are educated and well travelled. Because they are not steeped in Poro tradition, they could become useful partners for development. Jackson, however, drawing from history, sounds a corollary that because these new chiefs are well travelled, their taste for expensive western goods as observed among pre-war educated chiefs could heighten corruption.

colonial hinterland pacification policy, the GoSL and DfID focused on reclaiming the interior from remnants of RUF and restoring security and order as the core objectives for re-establishing the chieftaincy system (Fanthorpe et al, 2002). Fanthorpe note that DfID ostensibly was motivated to re-establish the system for “Fear of the consequences of a post-war power governance vacuum in rural areas” while the GoSL was keen to re-establish political control over the countryside” (ibid: 59). These motivations superseded the need for careful reform of the chieftaincy governance system and to address nearly 4-decade accumulated grievances it generated amongst rural dwellers. DfID and GoSL justified their decision by advancing three inter-related arguments. Firstly, that the chieftaincy system despite its excesses remains the most legitimate and appropriate political authority which can guarantee social order in the interior.²³⁴ Secondly, because the chieftaincy system is close to the people and therefore understands local needs it is the best vehicle for delivering demand-driven aid and basic services.²³⁵ And thirdly, because the chieftaincy system is embedded in the sodality-based communities it could be effective in addressing issues of reconciliation and peacebuilding (ibid).

Notwithstanding these strong justifications, the restoration of the chieftaincy system has sparked fierce criticisms among scholars, policymakers, and practitioners. While not discrediting the values of indigenous systems to regenerate their own governance system and support recovery, Halone (2005), Richards (2005), Jay and Koroma (2004) and Humphrey and Weinstein (2005) argue that the rush to restore the

²³⁴Some argue that the chieftaincy system resonates with the sodality based indigenous governance and political systems in the interior because, as practiced in the Poro sodality, paramount chiefs are selected from Poro ruling families and they rule for life. This apparent fusion between Poro and the colonially constructed chieftaincy system, proponents argue, accounted for social stability and order in rural Sierra Leone. They therefore argue it is the best vehicle for reclaiming and imposing order in the interior.

²³⁵Widespread initiatives through collaboration between the Poro and Sande governance system and paramount chieftaincy, according to Richards et al (2004), seem to reaffirm the pivotal role of chiefs in post-war reconstruction efforts.

discredited colonially constructed feudal system which was at the heart of the rural revolts could have several negative impact on the transformation occasioned by the war. Humphrey and Weinstein (2005) remind proponents of the chieftaincy system that all analyses on the root causes of the civil war in Sierra Leone identify the chieftaincy system as one of the salient causes of the civil war. The authors indicate that the main motivation of youth in the rebellion was to express their dissatisfaction of the feudal system in the interior and the nepotism and corruption, which was prevalent in public administration across the country (ibid). Aside from the conflict root causes Halone (2005) notes that those who have re-established the chieftaincy system failed to consider the war-recreated context in the interior. Youth, women, and former combatants who successfully displaced chiefs and their authorities during the war no longer revere the system. It is observed that the hitherto marginalized groups in Sierra Leone have the tendency to openly challenge authorities of chiefs and disregard their orders (ibid). Richards (2004) takes the argument beyond conflict to advance the case for human rights and freedoms. He insists that the colonially constructed chieftaincy system in Sierra Leone symbolises the historical model of forced labour and slavery which is counterproductive to the liberal values of freedom, human rights and the political expression of all people irrespective of their social status and family lineages. Besides, to use the same colonial argument of order, pacification, and control of the interior as justification for restoring the chieftaincy system is to disregard the cries of youth, migrants, and women for inclusion, transparency, accountability, and justice. Such disregard for the calls for change risks undoing the gains made by women and youth for recognition, political rights, and freedom through their participation in the civil war. It could also pave the way for possible relapse to war (Pozzoni and Kumar, 2005). Others argue that at the time that

Sierra Leone so desperately need accelerated development, reasserting a system that encourages the arbitrary control of land and other resources in the rural areas runs the risk of slowing down recovery and development efforts (Fanthorpe, 2006). A key informant in Freetown indicated that,

Sierra Leone does not need pacified and acquiesced interior but one that will actively engage in the political transformation of this country and contribute to its accelerated development effort. And the colonially crafted chieftaincy system was not designed for this purpose (KII, Freetown, December 2005).

While being critical to the chieftaincy system none of the critics have called for its termination. In an evaluation exercise conducted among rural dwellers to review the impact of the DfID funded chieftaincy restoration project, Fanthorpe et al (2002) indicate that although people complained about the vices of the chieftaincy system, when asked should the system be terminated, all respondents said no. At the scholarly level, rather than call for the termination of the system, all critics agree on two broad recommendations: a) to radically transform the discourse, institutions, and cultures of the system; and b) to introduce more egalitarian and democratic local governance system that will complement the chieftaincy system. To this end other international actors including the United Nations Development Programme supported the GoSL to establish the Local Government Act of 2004 (GoSL, 2004). The Act reintroduced the local government council system, broadened the category of people who are qualified to vote and participate in the Council including women, migrants, and youth—the categories of people who are excluded from decision-making in the chieftaincy system (ibid). The Local Government Act mandates the councils to: initiate and lead all development projects and determine taxes. The second structure

in the Act is the district administrators (DAs) who represent the central government in the interior (GoSL, 2004).

Although architects of the Local Government Act envisioned it as a complement to indigenous and chieftaincy governance system, there are ambiguities in the roles and functions of the various institutions:

- Paramount chiefs retain the powers to approve assembly of people for any purpose within the chiefdom although Local Councils are supposed to conduct all development activities through broad based assemblies;
- Councils are to plan all developments but paramount chiefs control all chiefdom lands;
- The new Local Government Act promises to protect the marginalized in the chieftaincy system but chiefs retain powers to exercise customary justice; and
- The DAs being representatives of the central government insists that it is their role to staff and manage offices of paramount chiefs.

These ambiguities are blamed for the continuing governance flux in rural Sierra Leone and its negative impact on development efforts. Jackson (2005) observes that there exists a “pattern [and growing trend] of political rivalry between the three main groups: the new councillors, the chiefs, and the district administrators.” The introduction of multiple layers of governance structure in rural Sierra Leone may have

been intended for transparency, accountability, and inclusivity but in some districts the opposite is emerging. Local government councils are becoming exclusive and corrupt fraternities. They are abusing their powers for personal enrichment. Most importantly Fanthorpe et al (2002) observe that rivalry over roles and authorities has led to governance vacuum in some chiefdoms.

Unlike Sierra Leone where the debate on rural governance is on a national scale, restoring rural governance in Liberia has received limited attention and resources. One reason could be the historically limited role of the chieftaincy system in local governance in Liberia and therefore its near absence in the conflict dynamics of the country (KII, Monrovia, 2005).²³⁶ This notwithstanding, some post-conflict state reconstruction architects have made efforts to establish additional layers of local governance structure in rural Liberia. The United Nations Mission in Liberia introduced the County and District Support system (CSS & DSS). The CSS and DSS serve as coordination mechanisms for the international community's recovery and development support in rural Liberia. They went further to establish the District Development Committees (DDCs) as their own district level interlocutors for recovery and development. The structure of the DDCs includes fourteen members broadly elected by members of the district. It operates quota membership system including District Superintendents serving as ex-officio. There are representatives of the chiefs, women's groups, and youth groups on the DDCs. The DDCs unlike the local government councils in Sierra Leone does not have any constitutional authority nor is it enacted into law. Rather, UNDP—the international architect that led the

²³⁶Throughout Liberia's history superintendents directly appointed by the President preside over issues of governance with support from their county cabinet and councils. Although the President and the superintendents demand that paramount chiefs report on activities in their respective chiefdoms they are under no obligation to give feedback to chiefs and their people.

establishment of the structure—defines it as local level development and coordination mechanisms that serve as entry point for local level economic development (cited in Mitullah, 2005). Although it is five years since the establishment of the DDC the structure operates in only 10 of the 32 statutory districts. GoL does not channel chieftdom development funds through the DDC. Only UNDP and some members of the international community channel development funds through the DDCs. This however does not suggest that the DDC does not have the potential to support accelerated development and strengthen the voices of those at the margins of rural politics in Liberia. The point is that, like Sierra Leone, architects of the additional layers are yet to define and facilitate structural interaction and congruence. The consequence of this is more confusion regarding who is in charge of the countryside. There is therefore the conspicuously slow progress in recovery, development, and stability in the rural region.

Overwhelming historical evidence suggests that constructing viable, responsive, and capable state in post-collapsed Liberia and Sierra Leone depends largely on: a) how both countries dismantle the dual political and governance systems which separated the settler states from the interiors; and b) in its place establishing integrated and coherent local governance system that is a fusion between indigenous and contemporary democratic governance system. Architects in both countries do not seem to heed this evidence. Without any deliberation on the history and need for transformation of rural governance Liberia has simply restored its centralized executive control of the interior through the centralized executive controlled superintendent system. No honest national reflection has taken place on the role of the dual polities, which undermined the building of more cohesive and capable state

system over the past 160 years. Sierra Leone on the other hand has had lively debates on how and who should govern the interior but this is yet to result in stable local governance. The missing dimension in the lively debate in Sierra Leone and quiet layer-adding process in Liberia is the role and function of the Poro and Sande political and governance structures and their potential impact (negative or positive) on development and the consolidation of peace and security. A key informant in Freetown noted that the silence over the Poro and Sande systems is deliberate and necessary. He contended that these systems are impervious and repressive. It is better therefore to keep them away from the new discourse and structure of rural governance in Sierra Leone. The interesting thing is that the decision to sideline indigenous systems is against the fact that all international researchers in rural Liberia and Sierra Leone recognized the pivotal roles the Sande and Poro are playing in recovery and renewal. The deliberate silence on the Poro and Sande in the reconstruction of structure of governance in the interior regions may be convenient for international actors but its potential to undermine any new layer of governance in the countryside is unavoidably real. I return to this in subsequent section.

Political Dimension: Given the deliberate attacks on indigenous institutions during the war, Poro elders have adopted 19th century resistance strategies to reinforce loyalty to the sodality. Reports from Poro-governed regions in Liberia and Sierra Leone indicate that Poro High Priests are indiscriminately kidnapping and forcibly initiating all young men who have returned to their communities. They blame western practices for corrupting young people who have shown gross disrespect for indigenous sacred institutions (KII, Monrovia, 2006). Unlike the Sande process, which broadly fosters community healing and unity, the Poro reclaiming of political

authority has sparked conflicts between Poro elders on the one hand and youth and non-Poro communities like the Muslim communities and Christians on the other in Sierra Leone (*Concord Times*, March 2005; Fanthorpe, 2007).²³⁷ The Poro authorities are also attacking the schools, apparently to ensure that they control what their children learn both in the Poro and western schools. Reports of the abduction and forced initiation of teachers assigned to the rural Provinces in Sierra Leone are steadily increasing (*ibid*). Another avenue through which Poro authorities are asserting themselves is in land redistribution and/ or reclaim. Young people, including ex-combatants who were not initiated before the wars and have become adults, are required to undergo initiation rites as a condition for accessing their family lands (Richards et al, 2004). Similarly in Lofa County, the Poro masked High Priest who rarely comes to town and cannot be seen by women and non-Poro initiates, now frequently comes to town during busy hours. As a result, non-Poro initiates would abandon their daily chores, including leaving their goods in market places.²³⁸ During my visit to Lofa County for this work, rumours of “devil coming to town” had people fleeing public places and hiding in their houses. Although this was just a rumour, people I interacted with in the county indicated that ‘devil coming to town’ which refers to the Poro masked high priest had become a recurrent theme. A key informant, a Christian convert and critic of the Poro, noted that current negative practices of the Poro authorities appear to be the extension of the war of loot, “...which dogged this country for 14 years.” He alleged that as the Poro masked

²³⁷Some attributed the spread of the Poro practice to the Western Province, which is home to the Creole (the free slaves who inhabited Freetown and its environs) to the mass displacement to and around the capital city.

²³⁸It was reported that these actions were designed to punish the Mandingo community whose forces, through LURD destroyed Poro shrines and killed hundreds of Poro priests in Liberia. Fanthorpe reports similar pan-Poro anti-Mandingo campaigns throughout Sierra Leone. Richard et al have noted that unlike Liberia where the anti-Muslim sentiments are a consequence of the actions of LURD, in Sierra Leone it is an attempt to control the economic powers, which the Mandingoes and Fullahs—the so-called strangers—enjoy. In March 2005, it was reported that Muslims in Bo Township had protested *en masse* to local government officials following the forced initiation of a local Imam (Fanthorpe, 2007).

priests come to town, people flee the market places and the followers steal goods from market places.” “This must be stopped,” the key informant emphasised (KII, Lofa, 2006).

There are strong criticisms against the politics and practices of the Poro, and hence justification for its exclusion in the internationally led post-conflict recovery projects. Richards et al (2004 and 2005), in their social assessment reports on post-conflict recovery in Sierra Leone and Liberia, make contentious generalisations that deserve discussing. Firstly, the authors dismissed the politics of Poro-dominated rural Liberia and Sierra Leone as “old-established patrimonial, gerontocratic political culture” in which youth, women, and strangers were marginalised (Richards et al, 2004: 28). They claim that both civil wars have direct causal links to the privation to which youth were subjected in the gerontocratic order of the interior. The growing struggle of the Poro to reassert itself and the approach of forced kidnapping of ‘strangers’ is a clear indication of efforts to restore the repressive authority that the Poro exercised over the interior. Secondly, the authors allege that Poro communities are inherently fragmented between ruling lineages, dependent lineages and migrants and are therefore not capable of evolving the cohesive society necessary for post-conflict recovery and development (ibid). The authors seem to imply that the collapse of indigenous institutions and the rise to power of youth and women during the civil wars present opportunities to dismantle rural systems, and at the same time complete state penetration, which has been impossible since independence due to the imperviousness of sodality-governed rural Liberia and Sierra Leone. State penetration, they surmise, will end the complex dual politics in Liberia and Sierra Leone (Richard et al, 2004 and 2004).

Richard et al's claim that the civil wars of Liberia and Sierra Leone were caused by youth revolt against rural politics is not only inaccurate, it seems an attempt to exonerate the Westphalian state from the catastrophes which have befallen both countries since the introduction of the settler states. There is no gainsaying that the reluctance of the freed slaves and colonial powers to forge political fusion with the interior is at the heart of state degeneration and collapse in both countries. While the authors' claim that youth attacks against rural 'big-men', including chiefs and Poro priests, was a protest against repressive and corrupt authorities is accurate, it was not necessarily an anti-Poro revolt (Fanthorpe, 2007). Besides, warlords also orchestrated the attacks as a strategy to usurp local authorities and thereby exercise control over the interior. A second point worth discussing is the claim that Poro-governed societies are inherently non-cohesive, given their stratification. The authors seem to be suggesting an inverse relationship between cohesiveness and stratified societies. Poro-governed societies have survived several centuries of deliberate institutionalised national and international campaigns to dismantle them. The glue that held and continues to hold rural Liberia and Sierra Leone together remains the Poro and other related sodalities. Most importantly, calls for the total erasure of indigenous Poro structures is an 18th century colonial myth, which failed disastrously then and is unlikely to succeed now.

All this notwithstanding, neither Poro nor their initiates expect the interior and their control of it to be the same after the civil wars. Rural dwellers, many of whom were displaced internally and externally, have been exposed to new worldviews, norms and practices. Youth who are now part of militarised social networks are unlikely to completely subsume themselves under Poro and Sande as well as chieftaincy

hierarchies. New experiences from their areas of displacement will have to be negotiated during the ‘locality-rebuilding’ process. A female civil society leader told me in Freetown that,

“One thing the war in Sierra Leone has done for women is that it has empowered us to step out of the home and march into the public domain... We have populated the public domain [chuckle]... There is no turning back. Men will simply have to adjust to our presence and voices...” (KII, Freetown, 2006).

This thesis is therefore not asking for a return of the status quo, whether in the interior or within the settler states, or for practitioners to indulge in “superstitious practices”. The point I make in this work is to remind international state reconstruction practitioners that collapse only happens where state and societal institutions and mechanisms fail. Emphasis on reforming the state, as we see in the international practice, does not automatically translate into reproduction of societal structures and stability. There is the need to pay attention to societal institutions and mechanisms. The response to societal institutions such as the Poro and Sande needs to aim for transformation instead of dismantlement. Emphasis should be placed on establishing foundations and platforms for the new state to engage in constructive dialogue with societal institutions such as the Poro and Sande, in order to deepen mutual understanding and cultivate greater integration and coherence.²³⁹

²³⁹For instance the number of youth who are critical and vocal about their rights and place in rural society has increased. There is also realisation amongst Poro high priests and rural patrons that more respectful relationships would be required between them and the youth to guarantee peace and social order in the interior. At this critical juncture, dialogue is the best means to evolve a reconciled new social order. Engaging with indigenous mechanisms would help us address questions that arise when recreating the ‘local’. It may also improve the chances of creating both vertical and horizontal links between the local and the national.

5.4 CONCLUSION

In this chapter I have demonstrated the contrasts between the liberal peace project's strategies on recovery and those of the Poro and Sande in Liberia and Sierra Leone from a number of angles. Firstly, the primary goal of indigenous recovery is the *restoration of the community*. It then looks to the community to rehabilitate and reintegrate its individual members. Secondly, while the internationally led recovery process focuses on material recovery, indigenous systems emphasise material-secular and non-material spiritual recovery. Thirdly, I argued that while it is generally agreed that the collapse of Liberia and Sierra Leone are traced to the foundations of the states and the extent of their interactions with indigenous systems, the internationally led recovery projects failed to address foundational issues or engage constructively with indigenous mechanisms. Fourthly, in the bid to accelerate recovery and erase indigenous systems, international practitioners made attempts to establish parallel structures in communities where there are effective and resilient indigenous structures. These parallel structures have added to the already complex institutional environment of both countries and are yet to achieve coherence with indigenous and other structures in context. Aside from the lack of engagement of indigenous systems in the recovery and institution building processes, the international practices of state reconstruction in both countries have been piecemeal and disjointed. For instance, the DDR strategies in Liberia and Sierra Leone did not link to the overall recovery and development as well as the security sector reform strategies. Drawing from the experiences of state reconstruction as discussed in this Chapter I propose *indigenisation*, in Chapter 6, as a complement to the liberal peace approach to statebuilding.

CHAPTER 6

TOWARDS A CONCEPTUAL FRAMEWORK FOR INDIGENISING STATE RECONSTRUCTION

“All societies have at their disposal social modes of regulation and resources able to serve as a basis for reconstruction... [It is only by identifying and building on these will we be able to achieve sustainable reconstruction of the state]” (Pouligny, 2002: 203).

6.1 INTRODUCTION

The international approach to state reconstruction and peacebuilding, as Paris (2004) observes, is grounded in the liberal peace thesis (2004). The liberal peace thesis posits that democracy and market economies anchored in the promotion of human rights, elections, constitutionalism and rule of law, property rights and good governance are the most effective guarantees of long-term peace and state viability (ibid). Gray (1986) notes that liberal peace is established on four fundamental principles. These include: a) the primacy of the individual over and above social collectivity; b) egalitarianism which promotes equality of all humans; c) universalism of liberal values; and d) ameliorism, emphasising progress while shunning backwardness, historical exigencies and relativism (cited in Liden, 2006). These principles are anchored on the foundations of individual civic rights and freedom, representative government, rights to private property and free market (ibid). Since liberalists believe that the ‘absolute’ liberal values can only grow in the liberal world, they claim that their God-given duty is to transplant and nurture the growth of liberalism in the non-liberal world.²⁴⁰

²⁴⁰It is this proposition, which, as indicated in Chapter Four, accounts for the liberal view that contemporary wars are opportunities to reconstruct non-liberal societies on liberal foundations.

The liberal peace thesis, though it remains the dominant approach in international peacebuilding and post-conflict state reconstruction, has come under considerable scrutiny in recent years. While arguing for the liberal peace project, Roland Paris (2004) notes that a critical missing link in contemporary liberal peacebuilding projects is the centrality of institution. He reminds liberal peace practitioners, that the replacement of Hobbes “Leviathan” with small but effective government based on the rule of law is central to classical liberalism (Paris, 2006). In his proposed ‘institutionalisation before liberalisation’ thesis, Paris argues that before liberal practices are introduced, the international system should focus on erecting and administering, over a period of time, liberal institutions that will regulate the turbulence that is inherent to liberalism. But while Paris may have adequately defined some of the flaws in the liberal project, his proposal for benign international authoritarians to build and grow liberal institutions in non-liberal societies, Liden (2006) observes correctly, has “...further complicated matters.” Also, while I recognise the value of the liberal peace project and the return of the centrality of governmental institutions to the contemporary liberal peace discourse, there are three areas where Paris’s thesis is problematic. Firstly, Paris seems to equate institutionalisation with the establishment of institutions, or what Ottaway would prefer to call organisations; secondly, there is the implicit assumption that external actors are better placed to establish institutions than those for whom they are established²⁴¹; and finally, that by maintaining an enduring presence, the externally established institutions will take root. Institutionalisation is both an aided and natural process of achieving congruence in the institutional environment. It is more about

²⁴¹The three extremes on this subject range from no international leadership (de Waal, 2006) to Brahimi’s “light footprint” concept, where he accepts international leadership but light enough to facilitate quick domestic leadership (2007: 13) to Roland Paris’ ‘Institutionalisation before Liberalisation’ which calls for full international stewardship until liberal institutions are erected and strong enough to keep liberalism in tact (2004).

nurturing structures to growth, rather than just setting up structures and keeping watch over them. Perrow (1986) indicates that organisations are institutionalised when they transcend their incentive functions to become sources of *identity*²⁴², while Scott (1995) notes the infusion of values in organisations as the basis for institutionalisation. The value-laden and incentive-transcendent requirements of institutionalisation beg a number of questions, which Paris fails to address. For instance, a) who establishes state institutions? b) what values are being institutionalised and what are their origin? and c) what systematic strategy is in place for institutionalisation? A second point, which Paris also overlooks, is the institutional environment. How will the new institutions be negotiated to establish institutional congruence amongst the myriad of conflict-recreated institutions in the context?²⁴³ Besides, it is yet to be established whether one can achieve an institutionalised stable state under the trusteeship of the cocktail of international actors who are the purveyors of the liberal peace project. The anarchical institutional framework and conflicting values they manifest compromise the goals of institutionalisation and the effective governmentality that is a hallmark of classical liberal peace thesis.²⁴⁴

Other equally compelling critiques of the liberal peace thesis come from the communitarians and critical theorists. Macmillan, basing his argument in the critical theory point of view, dismisses the liberal peace actors as “...the most conservative strand and crusading wing of the wider liberal tradition” who perpetuate the unjust global power imbalance (2004: 473). As for the communitarian, it is the claim to

²⁴²To identify with any institution, one must first and foremost feel a sense of ownership. This means that the institution represents not only incentive structures but also the expression of the core values of the people it is intended to serve.

²⁴³Perrow emphasises that adapting institutions to the values of the internal groups and those external in its society is a *sine qua non* in achieving the institutionalisation process.

²⁴⁴In post-conflict collapsed states, intervention draws on an abundance of players, many of whom are contracted by states or multilateral agencies to further their respective interests. Whether states can actually be reconstructed by such scrambles for power, visibility and influence, both sides agree, is highly suspect.

universality, which weakens the liberal project. They argue that by failing to take into consideration the experiences, cultures, identity and context where the liberal project is being undertaken "...resembles the mission civilisatrice" of colonial times in which Europeans believed that they were commissioned by God to civilise the rest of the world (Duffield, 2001: 83). Communitarians insist post-conflict peacebuilding and state reconstruction should emerge from the life experience of the host-country (ibid). Swazo (2002 cited in Liden 2006) contends that rebuilding state and society, which he refers to as 'organism', is "concerned with self-renewal". He notes, "...it is only by the process of self-renewal can an organism be healed" (2006). In this perspective, the communitarians argue that post-conflict peacebuilding and state reconstruction is only durable when "...it cultivates and fertilises seeds of peace, healing, and institution rebuilding...rather than replace them" (ibid). They insist the onus is therefore on the liberal peace project to reinvent itself as a "non-universalising political idea" (Dunne, 2001: 179).

At the backdrop of the conceptual underpinning of liberalism discussed above, this chapter begins with a review of how the liberal project is operationalised in post-war states in Section 2. This is followed by in-depth discussion on the conceptual framework for my proposed indigenisation thesis in Section 3. The final section offers a framework of inquiry of indigenisation of post-conflict state reconstruction.

6.2 CURRENT PRACTICE OF STATE RECONSTRUCTION

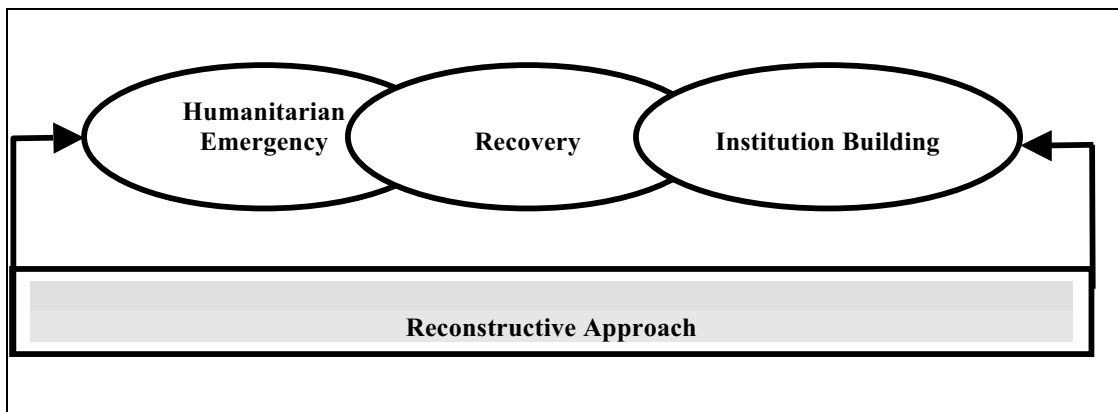
A flurry of definitions exists for post-conflict reconstruction. Anderlini and El-Bushra (2004) define the concept as any actions taking place immediately after the signing of a peace agreement or the official declaration of an end of civil war. This

definition falls short of determining when such actions cease to be called post-conflict reconstruction. The Centre for Strategic International Studies attempts to fill the gap created by Anderlini and El-Bushra's definition by adding that the actions fall between peace agreement or declaration of war's end, and normalisation. They go further to characterise normalisation as a time when large scale outside help is no longer needed; structures of governance and the country's economy have begun to function on a self-sustaining basis; and interpersonal and intergroup relations are guided by generally acceptable norms (CSIS and AUSA, 2002: 2). Call and Cousens (2007) indicate that the international community tends to approach post-conflict state reconstruction from a number of angles, including political, sociological, security or economic angles. The political approach focuses on restoring political authority, democratic culture and structures of governance; the security approach focuses on the restoration of rule of law, order and institutions such as army and police to repress violence. The sociological approach tends to focus on reconciling society, revisiting and renewing social compact and rebuilding social fabrics of society. And the economic approach focuses on resuscitating a country's economy and ensuring its return to the global market. This often entails "...revenue generation, the rule of law and the creation of an investment environment" (ibid).

Irrespective of what angle is taken the general international practice is to adopt a template approach in which "multiparty elections, constitutionalism, rule of law, human rights, gender equality, good governance, economic liberalisation and security sector reform" feature prominently (Paris, 2004: 58). The overwhelming list of tasks, as indicated in Figure 6.1, tends to be undertaken in three interlinked phases: a) humanitarian emergency, b) recovery, and c) institution building and state

consolidation. Although humanitarian emergency intervention is the door through which the international system enters post-conflict collapsed states, this work does not discuss this phase. I focus instead on the recovery and institution-building phases, since my emphasis is on statebuilding and not immediate life saving services provided in the humanitarian phase. This of course is not to suggest that outcomes of the humanitarian interventions do not affect recovery and long-term institution building.

Figure 6.1: Contemporary International State Reconstruction



6.2.1 From Emergency to Recovery Phase of State Reconstruction

The United Nations Cluster Working Group on Early Recovery (CWG-ER) divides the recovery process into early recovery and recovery, where early recovery is defined as “a multidimensional process that builds on humanitarian programmes while catalysing opportunities for sustaining nationally owned resilient processes for post crisis recovery” (CWG-ER, 2008: 9). On mid-term recovery, Rothchild (2001) notes, the process is one whereby international actors lay the foundation for long-term institution building and socio-economic development in post-conflict contexts. Deducing from the two definitions one can say that early recovery stabilises the post-humanitarian environment while recovery focuses on foundation building. Michailof et al (2003) describes the early recovery context where stabilisation is emphasised as

a context where: a) physical infrastructure lies in ruins; b) human capacities have either sought refuge, killed or psychologically impaired; c) fiscal resources and financial management systems are weakened; d) networks of civic engagement are either weakened or destroyed; e) service delivery capacities are reduced or nonexistent; and f) accountability structures both in society and the state are disarticulated (p. 16). Early recovery practitioners argue that such a context would require some healing and stabilisation before building firm foundations on which the post-war society is established; hence, the introduction of early recovery in its grand strategy. Macrae (2001) identifies the following as indicators that suggest that early recovery and recovery aims are met: a) restored national capacities, b) a secured environment, d) developed and functioning mechanisms for conflict management, and c) an established foundation for long-term institution building.

While in the humanitarian phase the international community tend to appropriate the space and drive the process,²⁴⁵ in the recovery phase the focus is on the gradual withdrawal of the massive international presence while supporting national ownership and leadership. The core tasks almost universally referred to, and for which the international community has developed prescriptive tools and ‘best practices’ include: a) the restoration of some authority (political and security); b) repatriation, resettlement and reintegration of refugees; c) dealing with the past through some transitional justice processes, restoring rule of law and improving human rights. Stedman et al (2002) observe that a major weakness in the liberal project is its ambition to address all post-war problems without strategically prioritizing areas that

²⁴⁵Because the international community has assumed that post-conflict local contexts are technically, materially and financially deficient, leadership in the recovery phase is arrogated to the international system—although the international stewardship approach, as indicated at the beginning of this chapter, is the most contentious in the critiques of the liberal project.

will have greater effect for stability and durable peace. He suggests that clearly defining the sub-goals with the greater impact is key to intervention. While not attempting to define the strategic sub goals for the purpose of this work I discuss three of the prominent sub goals in international post-conflict state reconstruction: disarmament, demobilisation and reintegration and security sector reform (the security domain) and local governance (the political and economic domains).²⁴⁶

6.2.1.1 Restoring Security

The first task that immediately follows the cessation of hostility in all post-conflict setting is the restoration of security (Brahimi, 2005). Aside from the deployment of a robust force to keep the peace, the primary responsibility of UN peacekeeping missions has been to support the disarmament, demobilisation and reintegration (DDR) of former combatants.²⁴⁷ The 2004 report of the UN High-level Panel on Threats, Challenges and Change singles out DDR as the determining factor for the stabilisation of any post-conflict society. Spear (2002) concurs and adds, “[DDR] is the only means by which instruments of war are removed and confidence in the security condition is restored” (p. 143). To achieve the goal of DDR the international community tends to emphasize persuasion more than coercion. As Brahimi (2007) emphasises, commitments of former warring factions is critical to the success of any DDR.²⁴⁸ He goes on to argue that the United Nations is only a moral guarantor and, where necessary, a provider of incentives that encourage warring factions to live up to

²⁴⁶In the case study that preceded this chapter I expanded these two areas to look include community revitalisation.

²⁴⁷International best practice also mandates peacekeeping operations to build confidence amongst former enemies and the frightened society, support the operation of a power sharing transitional authority, disarm, demobilise and reintegrate ex-combatants, support the restoration of civil order and the rule of law, help resuscitate the economy, and support repatriation, resettlement and reintegration of refugees and IDPs.

²⁴⁸These include disarmament—the “collection, documentation, control, and disposal of small arms, ammunition, and heavy weapons”; demobilisation—the formal discharge of combatants from ‘military’ structures to civilian life; and reintegration—the process whereby ex-combatants acquire civilian status and are sustainably employed (ibid).

commitments made through a peace process (p.12). While DDR processes have had partial success, including significantly reducing the circulation of dangerous weapons, symbolically bringing real and psychological closure to civil wars, and most importantly returning conscripted children to their families and communities, the current international practice is fundamentally flawed in two senses: a) it is built on flawed assumptions and b) it lacks proper sequencing.

Myths of internationally led DDR: Drawing from my research, I come to the conclusion that the international DDR process is based on the false assumption that all contemporary armed conflicts, though generally unanimously defined as unconventional, can be adequately addressed with conventional models. Even though telling evidence from situations in Rwanda, Liberia, Sierra Leone and the DR Congo, where majority of the killing were done with basic farming implements, has challenged this assumption, significant change is yet to take place in the best practice toolbox of the international system. Some of the dominant myths on which DDR toolbox is established are discussed here:

1. *Delineation of community and battlefield is possible:* While all agree that contemporary civil wars are fought everywhere, emphasis on encampment, demobilisation and reintegration is based on the conventional notion that separates battlefields from communities. That more than 60% of combatants in most civil wars in Africa barely leave their communities, and that almost all combat operations take place in both urban and rural communities, is not factored into the thinking and strategies of DDR.

2. *Targeted vs. Community Based:* Macmillian (1998) and Gray (1986) remind us that the core aim of the liberal project is the emancipation of the individual and the elimination of social collectivity. The conviction that the individual will survive without the burden of the collective underpins the way DDR programmes are designed. The success of the programme is measured in the number of combatants disarmed and reintegrated, with very little support to the communities in which they are to be absorbed. Evidence-based studies of DDR programmes consistently point out that sustainable rehabilitation and reintegration of ex-combatants depends on the leadership of empowered, economically self-generating and socially cohesive communities.

3. *Universalisation and “Technicisation” of DDR:* Swazo (2002) notes that the liberal notion that ex-combatants can be rehabilitated and reintegrated into their societies with ‘techne’ or prefabricated packages has proven to be a misunderstanding of what constitutes the rehabilitation of an organism. He contends that the ‘techne’ approach is oblivious to the notion of “self-renewal”, which is inherent to the recovery of an organism, including humans and their society. Organism’s self-renewal is first and foremost based on its inherent agencies and then on the context before the intervener. In this view I argue that self-renewal is impossible for ex-combatants without factoring in the social-cultural dimensions of warfare, healing and reintegration drawn from their respective contexts. All agree that contemporary warfare draws on the perverted versions of the respective culture (Ellis, 1999; Sawyer, 1992). Yet the liberal project with its principle of ‘ameliorism’ downplays cultures and indigenous systems. In international DDR programmes, indigenous

processes of healing, demobilisation, cleansing and restoration of ex-combatants are rarely considered in planning, programming and implementation of DDR. Even in Sierra Leone and Liberia, where the entire indigenous society including all sodality institutions were mobilised as active soldiers in defence of their communities, and (in the case of Sierra Leone) the state, the DDR processes and the security architecture that followed, as we discussed in Chapter 5, brushed aside civil militias and traditional sodality-based warriors and the indigenous processes which influenced them.²⁴⁹ Doyle (1998) reminds us that because the liberal project is based on the belief that non-liberal societies are incapable of producing liberal values, and since the aim is to usurp the irredeemable cultures of non-liberal societies, it makes no sense to pay attention to cultures in post-war contexts. Ayoob (1995) challenges the liberal approach of cultural erasure. He contends indigenous institutions and cultures have major stakes in DDR interventions because the “...proliferation of small arms undermines not only central authority, but also the traditional foundation for order...” (p. 43). In an apparent communitarian stance, Ayoob insists that the best strategy would be “...to strengthen existing tribal structures, norms and governmental laws as sources of restraint, [healing, and restoration] rather than attempting to impose norms from without” (ibid).

The Problem of Sequencing: Strategies of the liberal project, Paris (2004) also observes, tend to be ad hoc, piecemeal and fragmented. In the case of the DDR process, there is the tendency to place a greater emphasis on disarmament. I surmise

²⁴⁹A good example of the consistent silencing of indigenous voices in DDR is the lack of mention of their role in the recently published UN Inter-agency Integrated Guidance Note and Standards for DDR.

that this emphasis is because in the DD process, it is easy to programme targeted individual-based intervention with quantitative indicators of success. In fact, a number of donors judge the value of their money spent by the number of weapons collected, rather than the long-term goals of stabilisation, community restoration and reconciliation. As a consequence, although combatants have undergone years of brainwashing, during which warlords constructed and implanted in most children perverted social and political worldviews, demobilisation—a stage where psychosocial healing and the first orientation for renewed citizenship and civilian life takes place—lasts only a few weeks. In this period, aside from the challenges of organising camps, getting ready reinsertion packages and addressing behavioural issues, war-scarred combatants undergo 3-5 days of western style clinical counselling. Brahim (2007) admits that the international system needs “...new creative thinking to ensure that ex-combatants become stakeholders in society with well-defined social and economic relationships that will reconstitute the fabric of society and engender citizenship” (p. 12). This certainly cannot be achieved in makeshift camps and hurried rehabilitation processes.

By the time the process reaches the reintegration stage, in most cases the international community is at the end of the recovery phase and is preparing to hand over to an elected government. So-called vocational programmes are hurriedly established. Ex-combatants undergo these makeshift training exercises and then are awarded certificates as trained carpenters, tailors, etc. They are then handed over to their communities in big ceremonies as agents of the rebuilding process. At the end of the glamour of disarmament, demobilisation and reintegration, post-conflict societies are left with the burdens of the residual effects of a poorly planned and implemented

DDR process—organised crime, homicide, vigilantism, etc. It is post-conflict elected governments—already reeling under the burdens of high expectations, ruined institutions and almost non-existent capacities—that often take the blame for the insecurity that is the direct outcome of DDR programmes, while the international community relocates with their toolboxes to yet another failed or collapsing state.

6.2.1.2 Restoring Political Authority

In a post-conflict setting, where state and societal institutions have collapsed and political as well as military vacuums are fiercely contested for by warlords, the liberal peace project has made restoration of some sort of political authority the second priority after security. The common practice is to establish or legitimize, through peace agreements, extra-constitutional environment and time-bound, power-sharing transitional authority. It is important to investigate the rationale for and impact of creating or legitimizing extra-constitutional environment and establishing power sharing transitional authorities on reconstructing viable states.

Extra-Constitutional and Quasi-governance Context: The notion of starting on a clean slate, which embeds the liberal peace project, also finds expression in how authorities are restored in post-war contexts, especially where the state has collapsed and the peace is negotiated. The inter-related arguments on which establishing or legitimising extra-constitutional environment seems justified include: a) pre-war constitutions are often obstacles to negotiated settlement; b) that the very nature of the peace, which is often negotiated between state and non-state actors, necessitates the creation of an extra-constitutional context, and c) that the state has collapsed calls for a critical review of the constitutional foundations on which it was established. Extra

constitutional environment is an incentive to encourage post-war societies to craft new post-conflict constitutions (Rainford and Satkunanathan, 2009).

While I recognise the case for extra constitutional recovery context the case of Liberia and Sierra Leone raises some questions about its efficacy. Rather than the extra-constitutional governance encouraging dialogue for renewed social compact as envisaged by international state reconstruction practitioners, post-settlement governments in Liberia and Sierra Leone have simply restored their pre-war constitutions. No one asked whether the infrastructures and mentalities created during the wars and in the recovery phases would impact the re-instituted pre-war constitutional order. The underlying political, economic and social corrosives, many of which are rooted in the executive-dominated and elite-driven constitutions of Liberia and Sierra Leone, respectively, are apparently embraced as foundations for post-war polities. As Ihonvbere (2005) argues, it is “...impossible to construct a new platform for democratic politics and good governance... without re-compacting the constitution and establishing new rules of politics” after civil wars (p. 103). Most importantly in their creation of the extra-constitutional environment, the peacemaking practitioners gave no consideration to the dual constitutional orders —the colonial state jurisprudence and indigenous Poro jurisprudence in the interior—that operate in both countries. There is not a single mention in the LPA and CPA of the effects of the wars on indigenous constitutional environment and what is required for their recovery or non-recovery. The lack of recognition of the indigenous constitutional order and structures of governance in the post-conflict state reconstruction projects in Liberia and Sierra Leone, as discussed in Chapter Five, has contributed to increased social disorder in the interior regions.

Power sharing Transitional Authorities: The second practise of political transition in the recovery phase is to establish power sharing transitional government. Humphreys and Weinstein (2008) have argued that greed-driven wars are best resolved by buying peace. And awarding warlords time-bound free rein through transitional power sharing arrangements has become the common strategy for buying peace in the international state reconstruction toolbox. Aside from its peace-buying aim, it is argued that power sharing transitional governments serve two other important aims including: addressing the twin questions of domestic and external legitimacy (Doyle, 2002); and helping to “...build institutional frameworks that bind especially former belligerents in self-restraint and mutual cooperation...” (Lyons, 2002: 224). Liberia and Sierra Leone’s post-conflict recovery experience raises doubts about the prospects for buying peace, ensuring restraints and promoting cooperation amongst belligerents through power sharing arrangements. In both countries instead of achieving the stated aims the project contributed to the prolongation of the conflict and the proliferation of warlords. For instance, each time transitional governments were formed, new warlords joined in the fray. Legitimacy building also inadvertently became more of capitulating to the power of brute force. Orr (2005), drawing from these developments, warns liberal practitioners not to delude themselves that warlord power-sharing governments are legitimate or can foster legitimacy. These governments should be treated for what they are—a compromise and pacification for peace (ibid). Others argue that beneath the claims to buying peace, fostering legitimacy, and ensuring belligerent restraints is the unspoken aim of clearing post-conflict contexts of its foundations for statehood in order to allow the international community enough latitude to reconstruct the state as they see fit. Constitutional

governance, a key informant claimed, tends to stifle externally driven recovery efforts by complicating decision-making. “Extra-constitutional framework removes all such impediments” (KII, Monrovia, 2005). Another key informant in Monrovia sums the predicaments with the practice of quasi-legal governance in extra-constitutional post-conflict environment thus:

This country is a free for all...everybody is doing his own thing. The National Transitional Government of Liberia has already discredited itself and thereby provided the justification the international community needed to brush it aside and move on with recovery as they see it...[hmm, laugh] as for Liberian civil society organisations, especially the NGOs that I call fortune chasers, they are aligning with the international counterpart from whose table more crumbs are falling. With no constitution, no credible political authority, we simply have no sovereign basis to ask for what we want and how we want it... (KII, Monrovia, 2005)

6.3 INSTITUTION BUILDING AND STATE CONSOLIDATION

The final phase of the liberal peace project in post-conflict societies is institution building and state consolidation. Based on a range of studies and growing debates on the subject of statebuilding, Barnett (2004) has come up with indicators for the state reconstruction outcomes which seem applicable to the international post-conflict state reconstruction more broadly. He indicates that successful state reconstruction is one in which: a) a new vision and social compact that is broadly understood and accepted is generated; b) horizontal and vertical social networks are made stronger, compared to their pre-war conditions; c) indigenous and conventional productive networks are linked; d) governmental institutions at local and national levels are well capacitated in terms of technical and human resource capability; e) local and national authorities are more cohesive and mutually reinforcing; and f) local agencies for food self-

sufficiency are harnessed more compared to their pre-war conditions.²⁵⁰ As for Paris (2004) institution building and state consolidation enjoin international state reconstruction practitioners to commit to the institutionalization of post-conflict state structures instead of just establishing them. Ghani et al (2006) and Michialof et al (2003) focus on the peace-sustaining and development-generating values of rebuilding institutions in post-conflict contexts.

In order to appreciate the critique of the liberal peace approach to institution building, it is prudent to digress and review the concept of institution and institutionalisation. O'Rordan and Jordan (1996) describe institution as “structure of *power* and *relationships* manifested in its members, clients, knowledge, culture and worldviews” (p. 65). While O'Rordan and Jordan offer a sociological understanding of institution, Michailof et al (2003) focus on its managerial and/bureaucratic interpretation. In this view they define institution as a “...legal, administrative, and customary arrangements for repeated human interactions” (p. 25). The bureaucratic notion of institution is given full interpretation by Max Weber. Weber views institutions as instruments to which atomised interest-seeking individuals subject themselves only in exchange for some benefits (cited Ostrom, 1999). In this view, an institution operates within the “logic of consequentiality” (Christensen and Rovik, 1999). O'Rordan and Jordan's sociological definition leans towards the normative institutionalists' interpretation of institutions which emphasises the culture building, social relations conditioning, and meaning making and sustaining functions of institutions. Rather than the logic of consequentiality, the normative school argues institution is based on the “logic of appropriateness” (ibid). While both schools agree that institution is a

²⁵⁰Barnet's benchmarks turn upside-down the common notion of 'end justifying means' towards 'means justifying end'. All the benchmarks suggested in his work point to the importance of the process of rebuilding collapsed states.

routinised, value-laden and penetrating organism, the normative institutionalists lay more emphasis on the appropriateness and value-transcendent nature of institution. Selznick (1949) cited in Christensen and Rovik (1999) avers institutions are created when an organisation is “infused with values greater than would be necessary simply to achieve their formal purposes” (p. 24). Another characteristic of institution worth noting is its interactive capability. Elgie and McMnamin (2005) note that institutions exist in a complex formal and informal institutional environment.²⁵¹ They contend that institutions reach full maturity only after they are integrated in the institutional environment. The rationalists on the other hand argue that integration is desirable, but not a requirement. They focus on the aggregate (or calculating the total impact) of institutions in the institutional environment, rather than focus on their coherence or congruence. Supporting the integrative argument, Migdal contends that the “...multiple layers of the body politic and the multiple connections between the political and non-political realms” need to be reconciled in order to achieve congruence in the institutional environment (p. 36).

As we move on to reflect on the internationally led institution building project it is worth keeping in mind McMnamin’s (2005) elegant summary that institution building is only concluded when organisations are characterised by “system-ness...[which] exercises ‘embedded decisional autonomy’ and exhibits ‘value infusion’” (p. 43). Most importantly, all institutions are institutionalised when they manifest their own distinct *public image* and *presence*” which must resonate with the general culture in context (ibid). With this description in mind, let us turn to the

²⁵¹Within western discourse all indigenous and traditional institutions are regarded as informal, while those established within the state system are considered formal. The fact that within indigenous societies formal or public as well as private or informal institutions exist, also in complex interactive dynamics, is not considered in dominant scholarly thinking. Whatever the categorisation, it is recognised that formal state institutions and informal indigenous institutions interact in context.

institution-building project of the international system. Again, as was the case in the recovery section, I focus on security (security sector reform) and political authority (building democratic institutions, and public sector or civil administration) as cases in point.

6.3.1 Building Post-conflict Security Authority

Rebuilding security institutions within the international discourse has come to be called “security sector reform”. The concept is based on the assumption that structures, institutions and personnel responsible for the management, provision and oversight of security in post-war countries have either weakened or totally collapsed (Hendrickson, 1999). Most importantly security institutions, particularly the armed forces and police, had bloated due to wartime recruitment and demand for inclusion of non-state forces in the security sector. It is in these conditions that security sector reform in post-conflict collapsed states is often introduced. Its primary tasks as defined by the international community include “re-establishing the armed and police forces, reasserting civilian control of the security sector, and ensuring control of the proliferation of small arms and light weapons” (ibid). Security sector reform, though not a new concept, has witnessed a different post-Cold War approach. Williams (2000) notes that unlike the Cold War approach to SSR, which primarily focused on state security with emphasis on physical security, the post-Cold War security sector is situated in the development and democracy discourses of the liberal peace thesis. It aims to “...promote human rights, good governance and the culture of accountability and transparency...” (p. 1). Based on a review of a number of security sector reform projects in post-conflict states, Williams’ (2000) categorises current

SSR practices as minimalist and maximalist approaches and concludes his work with a recommendation for what he calls the pragmatist approach. The author describes the minimalist approach as interventions, which focus on restoring the statutory forces, like the armed forces, police and paramilitary and militia organisations, where appropriate, while the maximalist approach focuses on both institutions for physical security and those of the criminal justice systems in general. In his “pragmatist” approach, Williams proposes the reform of both statutory and non-statutory bodies like guerrilla groups and traditional forces of the kind I mentioned in Chapter 4.

Although I subscribe to Williams’ categorisation, the exclusive focus on ‘who to include’ as a basis for deciding a maximalist or minimalist approach seems limiting to me. Besides, the inclusion of guerrilla groups as integral to SSR is particularly problematic. Rather than focus the notion of minimalist and maximalist on the actors who are engaged in SSR, as suggested by Williams, I propose to judge the process as maximalist or minimalist from a process point of view. Laurie Nathan’s description of South Africa’s security sector reform process, as indicated in Box 6.1 below, provides a good basis to argue the case for process orientation rather than actor orientation.

Box 6.1: South African Experience with SSR, by Laurie Nathan

Arguably the South African experience is the nearest example of internally and to some extent indigenous approach to security sector/system transformation. Laurie Nathan indicates that as part of the rebuilding of post-Apartheid South Africa the people and the ANC led government took a comprehensive and transformative approach to security. The first focus on the project was the revisiting of the constitution—to codify the norms around which the sector will be designed—noting the exact circumstances in which the armed forces could be deployed and how it is to fulfill its functions. They also agreed on clear constitutional provisions for parliamentary oversight of the security sector. Once the constitutional basis was agreed the South Africans turned to the development of Defence Act, Military Discipline Code, Code of Conduct, and civilian Defense Secretariat. They also established human resource policy, which deals with military trade unions, equal opportunity and affirmative action, non-discrimination on grounds of race, ethnicity, gender and sexual orientation, and the abolition of conscription. Civic Education Programme to promote awareness and respect amongst the military personnel for the core values of democratic South Africa were designed and launched.

Source: Herbert Wulf (2000) “Security Sector Reform brief No. 15, Bonn International Centre

Nathan outlines a number of key processes, which inform the South African SSR process. These include: First, the SSR was firmly established in the post-war constitution; second, the entire security architecture was defined in a comprehensive national security strategy which was produced through broad bottom-up consultative processes; third, the design of the security architecture reflected the current security threats, which were also carefully analysed in a number of independent studies; fourth, civilian oversight of the security sector was firmly established in the constitution. There was also a publicly generated Defence Act and military code. And finally the entire architecture was translated into civic education programmes.²⁵² This detailed process is what I would refer to as a maximalist approach. The maximalist approach is more often than not driven from within with substantial percentage of resources required for the project internally sourced. The minimalist approach, on the other hand, ranges from conducting crash courses for individuals randomly selected and enlisting them as members of the new army and police forces through an

²⁵²Nathan and others identify South Africa and Zimbabwe as the only two countries in Africa where the maximalist approach to SSR was applied (although nearly two decades after the comprehensive approach) but did not translate into meaningful human security, even if it has forestalled the meddling the military in politics.

externally managed process as seen in Liberia and Sierra Leone. The approach tends to by-pass tasks of establishing the constitutional basis and institutional arrangements, as well as public participation in the design of the post-conflict security architecture design. While the maximalist approach as I suggest may seem ambitious, the decay of the security sector and its primacy in the reconstruction of the collapsed states makes investment in the maximalist approach a necessity.

Judging from the above understanding of the construction of the security sector, I argue that current practices as seen in Liberia, Sierra Leone and other contexts where the project is entirely financed by external actors, there are a number of fundamental flaws. First, we have to recognise that security is the life-blood of the state. It has always been the most protected and secretive function of the state. The internationally driven minimalist SSR project seem to threaten tenets of the 'national security' doctrine, which still remains the guiding principle for security thinking at the level of the state. Aside from the challenge to the status quo, the donor-driven nature of SSR and the fact that SSR is explicitly tailored to third world countries by the industrialised and formal colonial centres, reinforces the suspicion that SSR is a neo-colonial and imperialist project. These realities justify suggestions made by skeptics that the SSR project is a subtle way for the 'security-paranoid' industrialised world to prod into security structures, strategies and secrets of third world or developing countries.

Second, in all states whether industrialised or third world, the security sector has come to be a sort of fraternity. It is opaque and impervious. There is a clear distinction between insiders and outsiders. Over the years, each security institution

even in the same state has developed its own discourse and language. In the case of Africa and specifically Liberia and Sierra Leone, champions of security sector reform as proposed in this concept are primarily academics and civil society organisations. Their language is sometimes not only different; it contradicts the discourse within particularly the core structures of the security sector. Aside from speaking and working across purposes, many of the civil society actors and academics who claim to be reforming security sectors are purely outsiders. They have no inside experience of this dense fraternity. Their apparent ignorance undermines the claims to professionalisation and effectiveness not to speak of their acceptability in the fraternity.

A third limitation of post-Cold War SSR to which Williams and others also allude, is the direct association between reducing the security sector and improvement in human development. Williams notes that post-Cold War SSR policies and practices are based on the assumption that efficient management of the security sector of developing countries frees up funds for development. This assumption is highly suspect. He observes that there is no evidence that the reduction in military and police personnel and armoury leads to a simultaneous increase in development spending (*ibid*). In fact the opposite is true for Africa, where downsizing the military in Cote d'Ivoire, Liberia and Sierra Leone sparked and/ or reignited bloody civil wars. Even the claim that post-Cold War SSR is oriented towards development of the receiving country can be challenged, given Western paranoia about terrorism and how this impacts decisions for SSR assistance (Speiser and Handy, 2005).

Notwithstanding, proponents of SSR have made some (albeit skewed) progress, especially in strengthening oversight bodies like parliaments and civil society organisations. Although it is important to stress that such progress has been extremely limited with the core security institutions and groups. Even this access to parliamentarians and civil society is most obvious in post-conflict contexts like Liberia and Sierra Leone, rather than with fragile states, which have not escalated into full-blown violent conflicts. This leaves me to wonder whether the responsiveness of post-conflict societies is not temporary. It will not be farfetched to assume that access and cooperation currently enjoyed from post-conflict states is a consequence of the lack of clarity and control the states currently exercise over the security sector, and that once that is achieved principles and dialogue and egalitarian oversight of state security architectures championed from the outside would be abandoned.

In sum, it is important to re-emphasise the particular challenges in African contexts, which the liberal peace practitioners who are implementing SSR projects tend to overlook, but on which the success of the project hinges. Historically the security sector, particularly the military in Africa, has always viewed itself to be older and better organised than the post-independence states, having served under the command of the colonial lords prior to independence. More importantly, barely a year after independence in Africa did the armed forces march to the political scene, exercising their monopoly over violence to displace post-independence regimes.²⁵³ The militarisation of politics also gave rise to the militarisation of society. The phenomenon not only corrupted the state, it has to a large extent perverted indigenous authority systems—creating micro authorities established and sustained through the

²⁵³It is important to also point out that most post-independence African countries invited the wrath of the military, having adopted violence as the sole means by which they ruled their respective states.

might of the AK-47. In this context, singling out reestablishment of the military and police forces without in-depth stocktaking of historical and sociological effects of security institutions and practices is a stop-gap and minimalist measure. Such stop-gap approaches, Nathan avers, is a consequence of the "... lack of vision, [internal] expertise and resources and the abiding tendency to view security as authoritarian and militaristic" (p. 26). Critical of all, he observes, is the manipulative posture and cynicism which core military leaders and politicians have adopted towards foreign donors who are champions of the concept. These realities have convinced some skeptics to suggest that SSR is another sensational theme that will soon be consigned to history.

6.3.2 Building Political Authorities

Citing Huntington, Roland Paris (2004) notes that "...political stability is a precondition for political liberty and that political stability requires the existence of effective authoritative political institutions..." (p. 187). Paris has alleged that the current approach to building such authoritative political institutions have been problematic because these have failed to "institutionalise" before "liberalising". I review what this portends in this section. I divide the authoritative political institutions, which liberal practitioners tend to rebuild in three interlinked 'architectures': a) democracy, b) public sector, and c) economic governance. In this work, as discussed in Chapter 5, I focus on the first two and therefore devote this section to their theoretical review.

6.3.2.1 Architecture for Democratisation

Building democracy in post-conflict society is broadly defined as re-establishing electoral institutions and laws, creating the space for multi-party politics, and capacity building support to parliament as well as civil society organisations (particularly women's organisations). While the international community has done well in the support of civil society organisations, capacity building for post-conflict parliaments and the establishment of independent electoral commissions and electoral processes, little has been done for political party development. Building democratic institutions while avoiding political parties is like building a house without a foundation. Reilly and Nordlund (2008) point out correctly when they say that political parties form the cornerstone of a democratic society. A similar point was made earlier by Huntington (1968), when he asserted that political parties are the prerequisite for political stability in modernising countries. Political parties are the engines for democracy building. They groom future leaders. They are also the primary channels for people-centred policymaking, as well as for ensuring accountability and transparency in a democracy (UNDP, 2008). Over the years, the international community has turned to the development of civil society organisations as a substitute, rather than a complement of the roles of political parties—to be the dissent voice. There is now a growing realisation that the roles of civil society organisations and political parties are different and complementary. While civil society is “equipped to stir up popular momentum around a transition process or ensure public accountability...political parties carry out tasks such as policymaking and the aggregation of public interests...” (UNDP Handbook, 2008). In this view, civil society is on the demand side while political parties are the supply side of all functioning democracies (ibid). Observers note a number of reasons why the international community shies away

from supporting the rebuilding of political parties. Some say investing in political parties is a risky venture which brings the international community too close to the political cleavages and acrimonies characteristic of transitioning states such as post-war Liberia and Sierra Leone (Reilly and Reynolds, 1999). Others argue that it is too premature to get involved with political parties in transitioning societies, given the immaturity with which party politics is carried out (ibid).

A third limitation, which I would consider a dilemma, is the value of egalitarianism, which the liberal project argues is the pillar of democracy. In nearly all post-war communities, international state reconstruction practitioners are turning blind eyes to hierarchies, especially in rural societies. DDCs are formed with youth, women, elders, etc. as equal members. Meetings are held publicly with each member valued based on his or her inputs and not their status. The elder councils are increasingly sidelined ostensibly to defeat gerontocracy. The number of women and boys who now speak frequently at development or town meetings measures the success of international statebuilders. Besides, as observed by Romeo (2002), the collapse of state more often than not leads to the sprouting of new micro authorities in rural communities as witnessed in Liberia and Sierra Leone. These developments have shaken to the core the status quo in rural Liberia and Sierra Leone whether it is the colonially constructed chieftaincy system of the Poro and Sande sodalities. One elder told me "...if district development committees mean disrespect for the voices of elders then I think we will have more problems in the future..." While this comment could easily be dismissed as disquiet from the beleaguered status quo, it raises question about the way post-conflict states are being rebuilt. Should post-war democracy building at local level displace indigenous micro authorities or should the

exercise aim for a comprehensive transformation?²⁵⁴ Transforming micro-authorities into vibrant local democratic structures is not the same as establishing alternative structures to overlay indigenous and war-induced local authorities as discussed in Chapter 5.

A final and most important question, also a dilemma, is the notion of individual suffrage. While I allude to the primacy of the individual in this work, how he/ she is defined varies from context to context and this informs the nature of democracy as well. In the Poro-governed world, as we discussed in Chapter 5, the individual melts in the collective. Over the years, despots have used this avenue to strengthen their bargaining power as they exercise patronage over social collectives. As patrons, they instruct their subjects to vote their choice. When the power of the patron is cemented through sodality as discussed in Chapter 3, the issues seem more complicated. For instance, does democracy in the Poro-governed world become an overlay and a recipe for strengthening the hand of Zoes and chiefs, who simply instruct their community on who to elect? In other words, very little has been done to understand the impact liberal individualistic electoral democracy has had on indigenous communities, where social collectivism is the primary mode of political organisation and participation. Not much has been done to understand how indigenous systems are remoulding liberal democracy by redefining individual suffrage as social collectivism.

²⁵⁴We are also reminded that rebuilding the state from the local allows for building and entrenching horizontal rather than vertical relations between state and society. This, as discussed earlier, enhances ownership, fosters national solidarity, and most importantly builds cohesive societies.

6.3.3 Public Sector Reform

While putting in place political authority resolves the violent contestation for power, civic stability only takes place when the post-collapsed state resumes service delivery in efficient and responsive ways (North, 1990). It is like resuscitating the heart or engine of the state. Efficient and responsive civil service delivery, it is argued, can accelerate the rebuilding of national cohesion, legitimacy and public trust (Michialof et al, 2003). The international community defines public sector or civil administration rebuilding as the process of a) re-establishing the statutory basis of civil administration, b) redesigning management arrangement, compensation schemes and disciplinary procedures, and c) building the capacity of civil servants through training exercises and provision of equipment (2003). Clearly, over the years international state reconstruction practitioners have focused public sector reform or transformation on restoring the technical capacity of the public sector. It assumes that a competent civil service equals an effective and responsive civil service. Key activities generally implemented to achieve competence in post-conflict civil administration include training workshops, provision of equipment and in some cases seconding international staff to government ministries. Technological capacity development has been amplified in international discourse to the extent that some leaders of the United Nations have suggested what is called “Government out of a Box” (GooB; Orr, 2004). The GooB concept proposes the development of predesigned templates like payroll, civil service codes, database systems and terms of reference for key posts in the civil services. Such predesigned tools could be handy in post-conflict societies where capacities to respond to international financial institutions in particular are in short supply. Orr also proposes the mobilisation of what he calls the “coalition of the capable”. These would be exiled professionals of the collapsed states who could be

readily deployed with support from the international community to help resuscitate civil administration in war-ravaged states (ibid).

Technological capacity development is certainly an urgent need in post-conflict contexts. This is more so given the complicated requirements of international financial and other lending institutions for post-conflict states to demonstrate competence as condition to access loans.²⁵⁵ Notwithstanding, the technical and restorative approach fails to address the political and sociological dimensions of institution building. The politics of institution, especially in patronage systems such as those that have collapsed, cannot be by-passed (North, 1990). One may obtain the best technological sophistication to run state institutions, but the lack of ‘political will’ to enable the sophisticated institutions to function often frustrates the process. It even forces already trained technocrats to immigrate reinforcing the phenomenon of brain drain.

A second consideration is the sociological dimension of institution building. Ghani et al (2004) have rightly pointed out that successful reconstruction of the public sector is “...rooted in human psychology... [it is about] tackling questions of attitudes and mindsets” and this, they maintain, is the most important aspect of post-conflict institution building. The collapse of the state is a telling indication of the collapse of public as well as social trust. It is also a manifestation of the presence of destructive attitudes within the public sector. Thirdly, even though it is claimed that the number of women participating in the public sector tends to increase in post-collapsed states, it does not necessarily translate into engendering the public sector. It is important not

²⁵⁵In this view many observers argue that the international accent on competence to the disregard of other critical factors required in evolving responsive and efficient civil administration is primarily aimed at meeting the needs of the international community and not people within the emerging state.

to forget the patriarchal origin of all institutions of the state, particularly the colonial states. The gender dimension of the structure, values and practices in the new institutional arrangement should be well articulated at the outset. A fourth limitation is the top-down over-centralised approach of the project. The technical capacity building project rarely trickles down to building capacity of local institutions, including indigenous institutions such as the Poro, which, though not recognised as part of the state structure, have played and continues to play critical role in societal stability.

Aside from the limited focus, Ottaway (2003) alleges that the international project not only lacks the expertise, capital and political will, it is ambitious. She maintains that given that institutions are products of discourses constitutive of their contexts, they can only be built by insiders and over a long period of time. Ottaway maintains outsiders can only contribute to organisation building, while institutionalisation of the organisations they erect in post-war societies will have to be undertaken by local leaders. This in my view is an important learning that is taken for granted in the international project. If post-war organisation building is undertaken with the knowledge that the organisations will need to be institutionalised by local actors, they will make deliberate efforts to ensure that the new organisations cohere with the meaning system, needs, values and aspirations of the society in which they are being erected. This argument in no way detracts from the role of the international community. State decay in Africa cannot be resolved by making state institutions more technical and sophisticated, nor will abandoning Western models, which to some extents have penetrated the fabrics of society and remained the basis for international engagement, solve it. Indigenisation therefore proposes reconciliation

and convergence between western institutions and indigenous institutions in context. Its only normative stance is that such engagement must be based on roots established in context, not transplanting roots from other contexts. The concept, principles, framework of inquiry and strategies for indigenisation of state reconstruction is the focus of the next section.

6.4 CONCEPTUAL FRAMEWORK FOR INDIGENISATION

I agree with Roland Paris that liberal peace practitioners are failing in institutionalising liberal values and institutions, which they transplant in non-liberal post-war societies. Where I differ is his support for transplanting prefabricated liberal institutions and values without due regard for indigenous resources. I also challenge his suggestion for international trusteeship, which in my view fails to learn from the history of colonialism. As an alternative, I propose ‘indigenisation’ as an approach to reconstructing the state. The conceptual and operational underpinnings of indigenisation are the subject of this section.

6.4.1 Defining the Concept

Indigenesness conjures a flurry of meaning and sentiments. In sociology and anthropology, indigeneity refers to a bounded, isolated community of people with primordial identity and primary attachments to land and culture (Sillitoe, 1998: 25). Sillitoe goes on to say that these cultures have survived “from time immemorial”, given their consistent resistance to modern influences (ibid). This description of indigeneity, in my view, assumes that indigenous systems are simply unchanging primordial resources. Murithi (2008) also rejects the notion of staticity and argues

that indigeneity is dynamic and responsive to temporal exigencies. Murithi (2008) distinguishes indigeneity and endogeneity by arguing that indigenous refers to that which is instinctive while endogenous is that which is produced from within. Notwithstanding, while Murithi argues for endogenising, I argue for indigenising. My focus on indigenisation instead of endogenisation is because my emphasis is not so much about “producing within” as it is about “producing with”. While endogeneity argues that the resources and actors who produce the state or end conflicts in Africa be indigenous to the context, my emphasis is on building the state with indigenous roots and resources without closing the doors to external support and partnership. I define indigenisation as a process of rebuilding post-conflict states on its own social, historical, geographical, demographical and temporal roots. I base my thesis on the argument of critical theorists, specifically critical realism and also draw on aspects of the debate of communitarians. Both schools are unanimous in the call for the liberal peace external intervention practitioners to “reinvent” the liberal peace project such that it is able to find the seeds of peace emerging from within the post-conflict context, cultivate and fertilise them, rather than replace them with prefabricated liberal structures and mechanisms.²⁵⁶

6.4.2 Conceptual Framework

Indigenisation departs from Weinstein (2005) ‘autonomous’ and ‘aided’ concept of post-conflict recovery and institution building. He defines *autonomous* recovery as a process through which post-conflict societies achieve recovery [and institution building] in the absence of international intervention, while *aided* recovery is a

²⁵⁶I must also emphasise that indigenising is not the same as localising. While localising is about contextualising or making a new institution to fit into or work within an alien local context, indigenising is about evolving institutions and mechanisms on roots inherent to the context.

process in which international intervention plays a significant (if not lead) role in post-conflict recovery and institution building (ibid: 10). Indigenisation is both an autonomous and aided process. It emphasises identifying emerging resources in the context, fostering internal leadership and ownership, and engaging in meaningful partnership with external actors. There are five broad assumptions on which I base the conceptual framework of indigenisation. These include a) *celebration of heterogeneity*, b) *interactivity*, c) *normativity*, d) *context centrality*, and e) *regenerativity and emergence*.

Celebration of Heterogeneity: Post-colonial statebuilders have over the decades made futile attempts to melt all ethnicities and polities in their territories into one national identity and polity. Key strategies of the homogenisation project include assimilation, demographic re-engineering and a one party system. This approach continues to influence the liberal peace project, which seeks to homogenise all societies by imbuing them with liberal values, institutions and cultures. Dunne (2001) notes that the liberal project will be best served if it rethinks its Universalist stance to uphold cultural diversity without compromising human solidarity, which is its core aim (2001).²⁵⁷

Interactivity: All institutions exist in what is called ‘institutional environment’ and are defined by their interaction with other formal and informal institutions within the

²⁵⁷Resonance to the liberal project will vary from context to context. For instance, while the Kwa-speaking people of Liberia and Sierra Leone would best fit into the liberal peace’s value of individual autonomy, it would be difficult for such values to resonate in the Poro-governed region where social collectivism is the mode of political participation. An important lesson could be learned from the Poro’s solidarity building strategy, in which it fosters intra-ethnic social collectivism while promoting inter-ethnic egalitarian politics. As argued by critical theorists, celebrating homogeneity and cultural relativism is no excuse for repressive and violent cultural elements which leaders of indigenous systems such as the Poro exploit to justify their repressive regimes and practices. My argument is emancipation should not be equated to cultural erasure, nor should it be seen as individual atomisation. Human solidarity can find expression in all societies and that violent configuration is an indication that the society already has seeds of change which must be cultivated.

institutional environment. Indigenisation, like the normative institutionalists, identifies the facilitation of coherence between formal and informal institutions as part of the institutionalisation process. In this view, organisations are institutionalised when they achieve congruence in context (Scott, 1998). Indication of institutional congruence includes institutional stability, public respect for, belief in and loyalty to the integrity and function of the institution, as well as its impact on the general health of the society (ibid).

Normativity: While Weber's rational legal institution is based on the pursuit of interest and the logic of consequentiality, indigenisation follows the thesis of normative institutionalism, which argues that institutions, authority and communities are value-laden. Also institutions, authority and communities are not just secular entities that can be constructed as machines (Duffield, 2001). They are organisms imbued with soul. In this view, these entities go beyond being incentive structures to being the embodiment of public values, beliefs and worldviews. Public belief engenders deference for public institutions, for authority and for the sanctity of the community. This is often the case in indigenous societies including Poro-governed societies where the 'commons', authority and community are held in deference.²⁵⁸

Context Centrality: The nature and function of all institutions be it indigenous or conventional, are contingent on context and therefore no two institutions are the same (Sawyer, 1992). In other words, does the liberal peace project consider ecological and demographic determinants? Will states 'liberally' built in sparsely inhabited and

²⁵⁸Value-based societies have their own disadvantages, especially in their tendency to be inflexible. But at the same time institutions, authorities and communities with no defined and agreed values are prone to disintegration. This is not to suggest that the liberal peace project is not guided by values. The challenge is how to reconcile liberal values with those in context.

sodality-governed dense rainforest such as Liberia and Sierra Leone be the same as states built in densely populated and accessible countries? Shouldn't these non-socially produced or reproduced factors be considered in the design of states, or are they irrelevant to the project? In this thesis, I contend non-socially produced intransitive objects are critical in constructing the state and therefore efforts must be made in understanding them in the design of post-conflict intervention.

Regenerativity: As Swazo argues, institution, authority and community, as organisms, are inherently self-renewable. I argue that disruptions to the social and institutional fabrics of society do not just empty a society of its structures and systems. In most cases it recreates them. It is critical to identify resources and seeds of peace, societal stability, etc. which emerge from conflict contexts. These are the basis for self-renewal which the international community now refers to as resilience'.²⁵⁹ Having outlined the assumptions and principles on which indigenisation is based I now turn to its framework of inquiry.

6.4.3 Framework of Inquiry for Indigenisation

Indigenising post-conflict statebuilding is a *comprehensive* and *integrated* process of *transformation*. The roots on which the change is established emerge from the context—particularly out of the violent configurations in the civil wars and peacemaking processes. By *comprehensive* and *integrated* I mean state reconstruction should include the *technological, sociological* and *political* dimensions

²⁵⁹Both World Wars in Europe, for example, produced the enlightened period and the rise of women in the public realm. Similarly, as will be discussed in chapters six and seven, civil wars in West Africa have directly contributed to the active engagement of civil society organisations in public affairs. This is particularly true for women and women's organisations. It is therefore naïve to assume that post-conflict state reconstruction takes place in an empty space. Conflict does not just destroy; it provides an opportunity to redefine social contracts. Indigenisation therefore argues that state reconstruction is transformative rather than restorative.

of rebuilding authority, institutions and civic community. Figure 6.2 below illustrates my proposed indigenisation framework of inquiry.

Figure 6.2: Indigenisation Model of Inquiry

Comprehensiveness	Strategic Approach	Authority	Institution	Community
	Political	Power Legitimacy	Control/restraint Administration	Civic consciousness Solidarity Effective support and demand
	Social	Trust Believe	Values Trust Attitudes	Bonds Intergroup bridging Healing and reconciliation
	Technological	Competence	Effectiveness Efficiency	Effective communication networks Physical inter-group links (road, schools, etc)
Transformation				
Emerging institutional, social, economic fabrics				

As indicated in the above diagram, indigenisation is comprehensive and transformative. It is established on emerging roots in contexts and it seeks to coherently foster the transformation of the political, sociological and technological dimensions of post-war authorities, institutions and communities. The roots of authority, institution and community rebuilding emerge from the context, particularly from the violent configurations during the civil wars. The comprehensive and transformative dimensions in the framework deserve some elaboration since I discussed authority, institutions and community already in previous sections of this chapter.

6.4.1.1 Transformation

Transformation refers to qualitative change of the structures, ideologies and networks of relationships (Sztompka, 1993: 25). It also connotes ideological change, including change of the war discourse to one of reconciliation, national unity and shared vision. Lederach (1997) indicates that transformation is both descriptive and prescriptive. While emphasis on descriptive transformation in conflict contexts tend to be on the negative—the militarisation of society, erosion of trust, perversion of power structures, straining of social relations—Rappaport (1990) argues that conflicts also result in constructive change. For instance, as was discussed in Chapter 5, the civil wars in Liberia and Sierra Leone have led to increased civil society participation in the public-sphere; and rearrangement of power structures and relations that fosters democracy, empowers the disempowered including women, youth, rural dwellers, etc. Mbembe reinforces this view when he said that aside from “...the suffering inflicted on the human body by war... [We should also be ready for] embracing a whole cluster of re-orderings of society, culture, and identity, and [the new] ways power is exercised and rationalised” (2001: 66). Giving that conflict creates both destructive and constructive changes, prescriptive transformative interventions goes beyond ‘fixing’ the destructive changes to also harnessing the constructive changes. Mitchell (2005) argues that real ownership in post-conflict transformation is guaranteed if we locate and build on emerging seeds of constructive change. He argues that by beginning with emerging resources, international state reconstruction practitioners would be able to identify local actors who could serve as ‘co-creators’ in their own post-war transformation.

How do we know post-war desired change has been realised? Bush and Folger (1996: 20) focusing on the psychological and social dimensions of transformation identify “more empowered” and “empathetic” or compassionate society as indicators of post-conflict transformation. They argue that with empowerment comes increased political participation and effective governance, and compassion leads to intra-group and inter-group bridging and bonding which then accounts for reconciliation and the building of a cohesive society. While agreeing with Bush and Folger’s measurement of a transformed society, Mitchell (2005) notes that the desired change is not only limited to agency, i.e. people. Transformation is also about structures—policies, institutions, constitutions, etc. In addition, Rupesinghe (1995) adds that structural transformative outcomes include “...revived indigenous political, social and economic mechanisms’ which in addition to providing effective services are able to address future threats of social and political violence” (1995: 76).

Transformative response begins with a thorough context analysis. Key questions that are addressed in such analysis include among others the following: a) What and who have changed as a result of the conflict? b) What are the nature, intensity, and speed of the change process? c) What and who are resistant to change? c) What change is more responsive to rebuilding cohesive, responsive and resilient states? d) Who are the constructive and destructive change agents and what are their capacities and vulnerabilities? These questions point to the fact that all change processes are first and foremost indigenous. The role of external actors is to harness or enhance conditions in the environment to facilitate the change process. Such a role requires careful monitoring and strategic interventions. It also calls for flexibility to constantly adapt to the natural course of the change process.

6.4.1.2 *Comprehensiveness*

State reconstruction is not just technical, as seen in the international practice, nor is it limited to institution building. Weinstein has argued that “...institutions are much more than bureaucracy or a set of rules and [technical know-how]” (2005: 9). They are a “...result of a bargain—a social compact between rulers and constituents...” which is derived from lived experiences (ibid). Secondly, institutions and social systems, as organisms, are self-renewable. From this backdrop I argue that all statebuilding activities require simultaneous technological, political and sociological responses, which not only foster integration but also reinforce internal capacity and ownership. The sociological understanding includes, but is not limited to, the deliberate processes to build and/ or transform communities. Indigenous systems such as the Poro place a greater accent on the rebuilding of communities at the end of disasters. Robert Putnam (1993) has argued that the most important characteristic of a responsive and efficient state is not its technological sophistication or political savvy. It is the degree of “civic-ness” and the horizontal social and political bonds established within its community, which is determinant in sustainable state reconstruction (p. 87). He goes on to suggest that civic community “...upholds values of public spiritedness, equality of treatment, respect, tolerance and trust of others, and cooperation in associations” (ibid: 136). Putnam maintains that a responsive and cohesive state is one with strong horizontal bonds, even if the vertical bond is weak. He defines the horizontal bond as mutual solidarity, which constitutes the social capital, and the vertical bond as dependency on and exploitation of state institutions (ibid).²⁶⁰ This claim resonates with Zartman’s proposition that state collapse is only

²⁶⁰While the concept of “civic community” tends to shy away from nationalism and nationbuilding, the concept is similar, although it is argued that the depth of emotions invested in ‘nation’ may be far greater than those invested in the concept of ‘civic community’.

consummated when societal institutions collapse along with those of the states. It is therefore inadequate to invest resources only in restoring state institutions as practiced in the international system. Key questions in understanding the sociological dimension of rebuilding institutions, authorities and communities include but are not limited to: a) What are the core discourses of institution, authority and community in the post-conflict society and how are they affected by the conflict? b) How strong and cohesive are inter-group relations? c) What is the general attitude towards authority, institutions, and social relations and how have they changed in the war? and d) What are the organising capacities and networks of civic associations? These are not exhaustive, but they provide an initial window into deeply understanding post-war contexts and thereby fostering indigenisation of post-war state reconstruction.

6.5 CONCLUSION

In this chapter I reviewed current practices of state reconstruction as a point of departure for my proposed indigenisation approach to state reconstruction. Here it is important to re-echo the salient conclusions and observations. Firstly, from the start to the end of the recovery phase in the internationally-led state reconstruction project, decision-making remains in the hands of international actors, and claims to “light footprints” proposed by scholars often end up as heavy footprints which paralyse domestic capacity for regeneration and rebuilding. Secondly, scholars have observed that internationally led state reconstruction interventions achieve little because these are uninformed by the critical needs and ongoing transformation in context. They also assume that post-conflict contexts are clean slates completely devoid of capacities and capabilities. I made the case that all post-conflict contexts possess seedlings for the

emerging society. They are also distinct, following their own pace and logic of transformation. Unless intervention is based on locating and building on these unique emerging structures and agencies at their unique paces, state and society reconstruction would simply mean patching together old structures which are likely to experience collapse five to ten years down the line. The chapter also called for thorough stocktaking and context analysis as the basis for planning and implementing transformative state recovery and reconstruction. Finally, it deserves mentioning again that while the support of external actors in state reconstruction is crucial, external actors cannot change the destiny of a community. If post-conflict state reconstruction is to be sustainable, it must be led from within.

CHAPTER 7

CONCLUSION: POLICY IMPLICATIONS FOR POST-WAR INDIGENISATION OF STATE RECONSTRUCTION

“Against those theoretical approaches that would reduce the range of historical choices gestating in Africa to a stark alternative of either “transition” to democracy and the shift to a market economy, or descent into the shadows of war, we must stress against the role of contingency, and reassert the hypothesis that the organisations likely to emerge from current developments will be anything but the result of coherent premeditated plans” (Mbembe 2001: 77).

7.1 INTRODUCTION

I began this journey four years ago to investigate how post-war state reconstruction efforts in Liberia and Sierra Leone were interacting with indigenous institutions and mechanisms. I focused on interactions between the liberal project and the Poro and Sande in both countries. I paid attention to the extent to which the Poro and Sande were recognised, engaged and/ or given leading roles in the state recovery and rebuilding processes. My desire was to address the critical challenge, which remains an existential issue for post-colonial, post-Cold War Africa: *How can we construct states that are more relevant and therefore congruent with Africa’s realities? How can the appalling death, suffering and destruction of hundreds of thousands of lives in the name of civil wars of ‘liberation’ in Africa be recompensed with more enlightened, more cohesive, more vibrant states and societies?* Basing the work on critical realism, I argued that all social phenomena introduced in context intentionally and unintentionally interact with the social forces in context. And that the introduced phenomena recondition the context and are also reconditioned by the context. I surmise that a review of the extent of deliberate or non-deliberate engagement of indigenous institutions in the post-conflict state recovery and reconstruction projects in Liberia and Sierra Leone would provide clues for the quality of state emerging, and

help elaborate clear conceptual and policy proposals for deepening state indigenisation in Africa. Specifically I explored the following questions:

1. Did the international state reconstruction practitioners in Liberia and Sierra Leone recognise and/ or engage the Poro and Sande in recovery and rebuilding the collapsed states?
2. How does the international liberal peace state reconstruction practices affect the recovery of indigenous systems including sodality institutions?
3. How do sodality-governed societies in Africa impact on the liberal peace state reconstruction sub goals including:
 - Post-conflict disarmament, demobilisation and reintegration;
 - Security sector reform;
 - Return, resettlement and community revitalisation?
 - Re-establishing structures of local governance?
4. What quality of state systems is emerging from the ongoing post-conflict state reconstruction efforts and what can be learned for future processes?
5. What strategies are appropriate for harnessing indigenous resources in rebuilding collapsed states and how are these deployed in the liberal project?

This chapter brings together the key findings and new questions emanating from the work. Based on the findings, I proposed policy and operational strategies for indigenising post-war state reconstruction in the context of Africa.

7.2 KEY FINDINGS

At the end of my journey, I come to conclusions that seem to vindicate Mbembe's warning about contingency. On the first question as to the recognition and engagement of the Poro and Sande in recovery and state consolidation, the findings show that the international project made deliberate efforts not only to avoid the Poro and Sande but also to dismantle them and free the interior for state penetration and control. Specifically the following actions are among the most observable evidence for my claim:

1. *Post-war Security Sector Transformation*

- On the issue of security, both security architectures of Liberia and Sierra Leone the study revealed are externally driven and seem to have been constructed without paying serious attention to the security exigencies of the two countries. The very powers that created the ones that betrayed the countries and contributed to their collapse are driving the reconstruction of the security architectures in both countries. The people of both countries so far have not had the opportunity to imagine and co-create their new security architecture.
- The role of the Poro in rescuing the state from its own factionalised army, the case of Sierra Leone, has been rewarded with token recognition. In both countries the web of sodality-based militarised networks and their pervasiveness across the countries are not informing the reconstruction of the security architectures. Nearly five years since the various DDR processes, arms-related crimes apparently

orchestrated by demobilised and reintegrated combatants in especially Liberia have become a national concern. The study found that many of the youth living in conditions of squalor in urban communities are responsible for the crimes. The study also revealed that the youth are languishing in urban squalor because they are avoiding their communities for fear that they may not be accepted back in their closely-knit communities. The study concludes that had the DDR projects considered the importance of the norms of acceptance in rural communities, particularly Poro communities, they would have facilitated the return and reintegration of ex-combatants in their rural communities and thereby reduced the risks of urban squalor and crimes.

- Most importantly the rise of the Poro and its Civil Defence Force, I would argue, present glaring opportunities to conceptualise and operationalise the notion of community or citizen security in Liberia and Sierra Leone. In some communities in Sierra Leone it was revealed that CDF structure are adopted by communities and CDF members are formed in networks to protect their communities. It seems this opportunity is being overlooked because thorough sociological studies are not informing the ongoing reconstruction of the security architecture. The concept of community or citizen security emphasises prevention and focuses less on crime and more on violent behaviours and their impact on the health of the community. A strong value of community security is that it emerges from the security concerns of the community, which was the case in the establishment of some of the village based CDF structures in Sierra Leone. Community security is indigenous in that it grows out of the community's real life experience. Community security also fosters social cohesion because it brings to life Thomas

Hobbes' notion of 'sheltering together for safety and wellbeing'. I will also argue that people who shelter together under a single tent for their survival and wellbeing are more likely to be bonded. Aside from Thomas Hobbes' instinctive argument, the community-based planning and mutual accountability that is inherent to the concept of community security and which was evident in the operation of village based CDFs in Sierra Leone helps to strengthen the bonds and social networks.

- Given the challenges of access to the interiors of both countries, while avoiding the repeat of the 'frontier force' mentality of security, I argue that community security for all practical purposes is a better alternative to current state-centric security architecture being constructed in both countries. For example in Liberia, after nearly five years since the end of the war, more than 50% of the rural counties still lack adequate presence of law enforcement structures and personnel. What is more interesting is the fact that even though both security architectures are oblivious to the notion of community security, many rural communities continue to maintain the civil defence forces and other vigilante groups as their law enforcement officers. In sum the increased security consciousness, which is a legacy of the war, could have been harnessed to evolve a more effective and far-reaching security architecture in both countries. So far it seems the opportunity would slip away as the external actors invest millions of pounds and dollars in building state-centric security architectures in Monrovia and Freetown.

2. *Local Governance*

- The question of local governance in the interiors of Liberia and Sierra Leone remain in flux as various international actors suggest varying ways to establish structures of governance. The former colonial master in Sierra Leone initiated programmes to restore the chieftaincy structures while the rest of the international community including the United Nations pushed for egalitarian local government councils. The DfID funded chieftaincy project provoked anti-colonial sentiments and suffered fierce criticism. Although it was abandoned after investing over 2 million pounds, debate on the relevance or irrelevance of the chieftaincy system persists. Some argue there is still some place for the chiefs, while others insist the chieftaincy system should be discarded. Given that the issue is yet to be settled, it is not clear whose authority is legitimate in the interior. For now, the newly established councils of local governance, the colonially crafted chieftaincy system, and Poro and Sande authority structures are competing for the political and governance space in rural Sierra Leone. In Liberia no question was asked about rural governance. The executive controlled superintendent system is restored and the colonial divided between the interior and the settler state is alive and well.
- The study also finds that shifts from the rigid hierarchical structures of governance through the paramount chieftaincy system in rural Liberia and Sierra Leone to the egalitarian structures of local government councils and district development committees are not well thought out. The required sensitivity and mitigating mechanisms to respond to the conflicts and tensions from the shift are

not in place. While the study makes no excuse for the gerontocratic order that reigns in the interiors, my argument is that change requires management if the negative consequences are to be minimised. As ‘strangers’, ‘women’, ‘youth’, etc. enjoy their newfound powers it is not clear how the elders and the Poro High priests will react. The scornful conversation I had with an elder in Bo who spoke about the local governance council meeting he attended and his discomfort of ‘loud-mouth’ youth and women, is an indication that gerontocracy is displeased with the shift and their discontent is not being addressed. Post-conflict local governance building requires transformation and not usurpation. In the case of Liberia and Sierra Leone the latter remains the strategy.

- Aside from the political dimension of local governance, the study finds that the service provision dimension is being strongly managed by the Poro-created mechanisms, which have played this role for centuries. The rotating work schemes as well as local banking systems have begun. The Sande has restored its health provision system, including midwifery and traditional herbs, which remain the only option for many rural dwellers who are too far from the capitals where conventional medicines can be found. Rather than pay attention to the critical role of the Poro and Sande in addressing the above issues, international state reconstruction practitioners remained oblivious to contextual realities and dismissed the values of the Poro and Sande in community restoration, local governance transformation and security sector reform. They are yet to establish more viable and sustainable alternative to the civic functions of the sodalities.

On the impact of the liberal peace international state reconstruction projects on indigenous systems, particularly the Poro and Sande, the study finds that deliberate attacks on the Poro and Sande sodalities during and after the wars has forced the sodalities to dust off the shelf 19th century counter-hegemonic resistance against the states and whatever they stand for. In Sierra Leone, the indictment of Chief Hinga Norman, leader of the Civil Defence Forces by the Sierra Leone Special Court and his subsequent death in prison, is regarded in most Poro communities as betrayal at the highest level. An elder told me in a stern voice that “One does not betray a brother after taking oath together...but they will see,” he added. Poro authorities feel that the Sierra Leone Peoples Party (SLPP), which has been known since the beginning of party politics in Sierra Leone to be the closest to the Poro-governed interior, betrayed the Poro by acquiescing in the pressures from outsiders to indict leadership of the civil defence forces for war crimes. This reneging on agreements, Poro youth at the Fourah Bay College told me, is rare in Poro values and norms and the consequences can be grave. Many attributed the defeat of SLPP in the 2007 presidential and general elections to the Poro community’s way of punishing the SLPP leadership for the ‘betrayal’.

On the role of the Poro in achieving the sub goals of the liberal peace international state reconstruction projects throughout Liberia and Sierra Leone, the Poro and Sande are actively undertaking their own self-renewing initiatives to address issues of disarmament, demobilisation and reintegration, as well as restoration of the communities and larger societies. The approaches and aims sometimes contrast with and other times complement those of the liberal project. The study also found Poro practices that are counter-productive. For instance, efforts to restore the gerontocratic

order in the face of youth militarisation stand the risk of escalating violence in the interior. Most importantly, the restoration of the practice of FGM in the face of blood-borne diseases like HIV/AIDS is likely to exacerbate the HIV/AIDS epidemic and undermine women's rights and freedoms.

On the fourth question regarding the impact of the self-renewing efforts of the Poro and Sande on the outcomes of the liberal project, we arrive at Mbembe's powerful warning some eight years ago now. He contends that while it may be desirable to wipe out all the pre-war indigenous authority so that the liberal project can fully express itself, "Fragmentation, break-up, concentration of powers, reproduction of lineage or chieftaincy logics within the state, or accentuation of practices reflecting dual power are within the range of the possible" (Mbembe 2001: 77). Liberia and Sierra Leone are returning to the pre-war kleptocratic and patronage states, while the Poro and Sande claims over the interior regions are emboldened. Webs of patron-client relationships between the interior and settler states are being renewed. The hope of the liberal peace project to replace the collapsed state with a liberal state system is yet to be realised.

A more worrying situation throughout the study is that all agendas regarding the reconstruction of state have been set by the external state reconstruction practitioners who are spending their money and other resources to reconstruct the states in both countries. The space critical for citizens of both countries to learn from the civil wars, reconcile their differences and evolve a new theory of state that suits their realities has been quite limited, if not non-existent. Without the latitude to dialogue and collectively "co-create" the state that suits the sodality-dominated contexts of Liberia

and Sierra Leone, the study argues both countries will continue to survive on the tutelage of the external actors who are creating them. Already the United Nations missions in both countries continue to extend their stay due to the realisation that they remain the life support of both countries. What have not been realised and seriously worked towards are exit and sustainability strategies. The sustainability strategy that stands greater chance in both countries, I argue, is indigenisation. I therefore conclude this work with a proposal on how to foster indigenisation in Liberia and Sierra Leone and by extension in post-war state reconstruction more broadly.

7.3 STRATEGIES FOR INDIGENISING STATE RECONSTRUCTION

In order to institutionalise post-war gains, Mitchell proposes deep changes in the structures and agencies through what he calls “interactive education” to inculcate the change in the society (2005). Building on the works of Mitchell (2005), Ghani et al (2006), Michialof et al (2003) and O’Hallaran (1998), I propose two broad strategies for indigenisation of state reconstruction. These include: a) ideational transformation and b) institutional transformation.

7.3.1 Ideational Transformation

O’Hallaran (1998) alleges that the current state reconstruction practices assume that the state would be restored by modifying institutions and increasing material incentives. This, he argues, is only half the story. Statebuilding is also about society building. It therefore cannot be divorced from constructing the ideas on which a society must craft a state system to regulate their interactions both within and outside

with other states. Constructing post-conflict discourse and transforming public perceptions is what Closson (2006) refers to as ideational approach and I call ‘ideational transformation’. Why is it important to engage mindsets? First and foremost, wars are planned in the mind. Secondly, public attitudes and behaviors are conditioned by public perception. We must not forget that public perception of the state in Africa remains conflicting and negative, more so in post-collapsed states such as Liberia and Sierra Leone. For instance, the security sector was an instrument of terror during the long and degenerative period, which culminated in civil wars in both countries. Public perception about security and the state being responsible for security is severely undermined. In the case of Liberia and Sierra Leone, there is also the predatory attitude and total disregard for what constitutes the public, and for public property. The concept of authority and power also becomes schizophrenic. Already in Liberia and Sierra Leone, the international state reconstruction practitioners are beginning to realise that unless honest ideational transformation takes place in both societies, sophisticated state systems will remain subject to kleptocracy and predation. Ideational transformation at a societal level is best addressed through two broad mechanisms. These are a) social dialogue and b) civic education.

7.3.1.1 Social and Political Dialogue

Bellamy and Williams (2004: 202) contend that the most effective way to foster ideational transformation is the promotion of dialogue. Dialogue is a “process whereby people come together to build mutual understanding and trust across their differences and to create positive outcomes through conversation” (Pruit and Thomas, 2007: 19). Pruit and Thomas also stress that dialogue seeks to address five challenges

in especially post-conflict societies. These include dealing with complex challenges, coordinating meaning when meaning systems have collapsed, creating the space for innovation where survival is the order of the day, creating an environment for deliberation when trust and mutual humanisation has nearly eroded, and producing sustainable results. Dialogue requires “genuine interaction” where the participants open themselves to opportunities for change. Such an interaction creates dissonance as participants discover the human sides. It also provides the opportunities to fundamentally reinterpret their worldviews. This connection with theirs and the other’s humanity unleashes empathy and compassion, which Bush and Folger (1996) argue foster cohesion and intra and inter-group solidarity. Dialogue also affords the opportunity to create new democratic spaces where ordinary voices that hitherto were silent during dictatorships can be heard. Linklater (1998) goes further to call on international state reconstruction practitioners to adopt dialogue as the primary tool for post-conflict intervention. He contends that by engaging post-conflict societies through dialogue one is able to address the perennial question of legitimacy. In order for the dialogue to be more meaningful, to be a genuine space where all members of society feel they have a stake in the new rules, new institutional architecture and new relationships, Bellamy (2004) insists it must be based on dialogic ethics. She suggests the following as a start: a) the concept, process and content of the dialogue process must be agreed through open and equal participation at all levels of the society; b) the dialogue process itself should include all those that will directly or indirectly be affected by the new social compact; c) it should start on the premise “fallability”—that no belief and norms are immune to change or questioning.

While dialogue is considered an important mechanism for ideational transformation, the norms to which Bellamy and others refer will need to be re-conceptualised in context. For instance, how does one define equal participation and egalitarianism in sodality-governed rigidly hierarchical communities in rural Liberia and Sierra Leone? What would be the quality of dialogue in contexts where people are trained in *ifa mao* (or do not speak of it)? While these may be considered as dilemmas, I argue that dialogue need not be egalitarian and that dialogue also takes place in hierarchical societies. What is therefore required is to investigate the communicative structures and mechanisms in post-war societies so as to define the mode and structure of dialogue that would be most responsive to the context. Bellamy's theory of fallability provides room for such re-conceptualisation since it makes the case that no 'truth' or principle is unalterable.

7.3.1.2 Civic Education

Kruezer and Weiberg (2005) and Xiaomin and Chunfeng (2007), reinforcing the notion of ideational transformation, call for new "homegrown" learning that will foster "civic communities" based on the principle of solidarity. The focus of the transformational exercise Kruezer and Weiberg indicated should be on the "inner structure and content (including values, norms and behavioural guidelines)" of both the society and the institutions of the state (p. 3). This should draw on history, not only in learning from events but also from the subjective interpretations which have driven the structure of interactions in the society prior to, during and after the conflict and collapse (ibid). The Poro sodality as pointed out in Chapter 1 emphasises transformative intervention. Its '*rite de passage*' primarily aims to transform the individual into a citizen and to integrate him or her in the society in ways that achieve

more integrated, more congruent and more cohesive societies. It also proposes what Brown (1967) and Seyon (1977) refer to as holistic education, given its focus on the transformation of individual mindsets, attitudes and behaviour; patterns of relationships in society; and the institutional environment. Each member in Poro-governed communities in Liberia and Sierra Leone was required to undergo 4 years (for boys) and 3 years (for girls) of transformational training. From the school, individuals graduate from childhood into manhood, womanhood and most importantly into citizens with defined duties to their societies. In the Poro and Sande, boys and girls are placed under oath to show deference to the history of their 'localities' and all 'commons' or shared resources in it (Brown 1967). Another important lesson worth noting, given the widespread gross violations especially of women during and after the war, is that Poro teaches boys to revere women not only for their gender, but also for their role as the intersection between the spiritual and the secular, between life and non-life. While not arguing that international state reconstruction practitioners establish or support Poro shrines across the countries as avenues for reintegration of ex-combatants and returnees or for remoulding the minds of the citizens in both countries, much can be learned from the holistic systems of education that the Poro and Sande have managed for centuries.

7.3.2 Institutional Transformation

Mitchell (2005), Lederach (1995) and Rupesinghe (1995), among others, indicate that aside from personal transformation emphasis should also be placed on institutional transformation. The conflict theorists are supported by international relations scholars and diplomats such as Paris (2004), Michailof et al (2003), Ghani et al (2004),

Krasner (2004), Katorobo (2003), Fukuyama (2004) and Weinstein (2005), who contend that post-conflict statebuilding will only be sustained if it builds and ‘institutionalises’ institutions. Aside from Paris, they also emphasise that such institutional transformation should be built on seeds derived from within—a process I call indigenising the institution building process. To achieve the goal of indigenising institution building, I draw on the work of Michailof et al (2003) to propose five inter-linked stages for indigenising institution building. These include stocktaking, a new constitutional order, envisioning the post-collapsed institutional environment, new institutional arrangements, and monitoring and accountability mechanism.

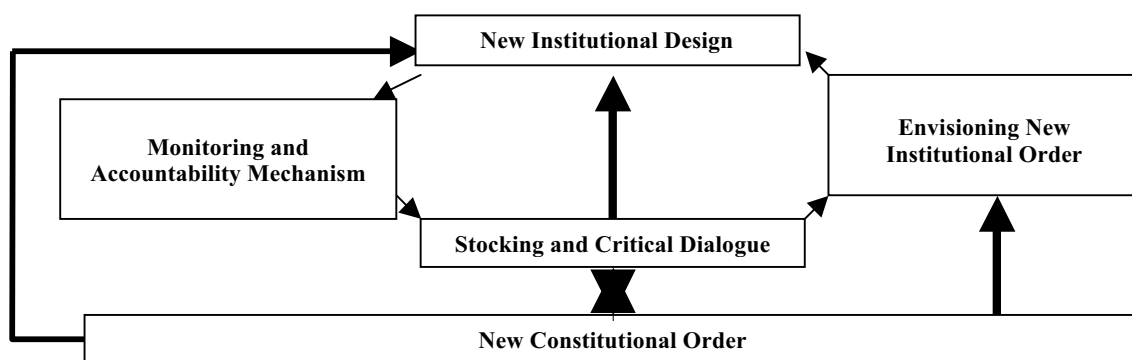


Figure 7.1: Comprehensive and Transformative Institution Building Process adopted from Michialof et al. (2003)

7.3.2.1 Stocktaking Exercise

As alleged by Ghani et al (2004), the liberal peace practitioners tend to by-pass the important step of thoroughly analysing the distinct institutional history, patterns and environment of post-conflict societies. They argue it is imperative for all post conflict institution-building practitioners, whether insider or outsider, to reflect on the nature and character of public institutions and services prior to, during and immediately after collapse. Boin and Hart (2000) concur and add that institutional crisis arises from the disjuncture between the values, history and prevailing behaviour of the context in

which it is established. These contextual realities and the degree to which they impact the collapsed institutional arrangement are critical to any new or emerging post-conflict institutional design. In addition to focus on the past, Clapham (2003) suggests stocktaking should also aim at identifying the natural emerging capacities and liabilities of both the state and society and establish the new institutional order on them. The process should include reviewing existing and emerging assets and liabilities including human, social, institutional, natural, financial, security, informational, physical and political capital (Michailof et al, 2003: 16).

7.3.2.2 Constitutional Basis for New Institutional Arrangement

Michailof et al. also note that the social contract, which preceded collapse, must be reviewed and a new social compact either developed or the old revised and commitments towards it renewed. Brahim (2007) and Sawyer (2005) contend that building a new constitutional order where new rules of the game, a new polity, new sets of relationship between the state and its citizens and new social contracts with regard to the organisation and function of the state and society are established, is a *sine qua non* for building responsive and efficient state institutions.

7.3.2.3 Vision for a New Institutional Order

How shall we be governed? What institutions should regulate our interactions, the equitable distribution of our resources, and serve as symbol for our political, social, economic, and security collective identity? These are critical questions that collapsed states cannot afford to bypass. Most institutions in post-colonial Africa were either created to serve colonial interests or the interests of the elites who inherited the

colonial state. Generating a shared vision for the nature, character and scope of public institutions will establish the foundation for evolving responsive institutions. It is important that the visioning exercise truly represents and is anchored in the aspiration of the people and the objectives of the new government. An important outcome of such a visioning process in the case of Liberia and Sierra Leone could be the fusion of the micro and macro publics.

7.3.2.4 Institutional Design

This is the process of determining what structure should be established to meet the vision and efficiently deliver on the expectations of the public. It includes design of institutional and organisational structures, monitoring systems, communication networks and codes of discipline. Whether it is security sector or system, governance and civil administrative institutions, the design should be efficient, responsive, resilient and integrative. Integrative design takes into consideration context exigencies and fosters synergies and comprehensiveness.²⁶¹

7.3.2.5 Monitoring Regimes

To ensure the routinisation of institution, monitoring mechanisms that are comprehensive need to be established at the outset. This structure could be constitutionally empowered to monitor institutional practices, values and efficacy. It is proposed that a four-tiered accountability mechanism be established: a civil society structure that will monitor both the international community's facilitative support, the

²⁶¹Such a process takes into consideration the views of the community in which the new structure will be erected, the soil on which it will be erected, the builders who will build the new structures, and the people who will occupy it. The opposite has been the case in the international practice. Different actors build elements of the architecture before even imagining what the whole structure looks like.

government's implementation of the new institutional structure, and their own internal organisational and professional capacities; a government monitoring regime to monitor support from the international community, civil society behaviours in the public sphere, and most importantly internal processes within the public sector. The third independent monitoring regime could be the parliament, while the international community could have their own monitoring mechanism.

7.3.3 Harnessing Emerging Resources

The civil wars in Liberia and Sierra Leone certainly destroyed physical, social and spiritual systems. They left human miseries in their wake. However tragedy is not the whole story. The wars also unleashed unimaginable human capacities. As was the case in the 1950s,²⁶² ordinary people stood up against forces of violence. For instance, there was a standoff against the Armed Forces Revolutionary Council for nine consecutive months in Sierra Leone. And with the backing of the international community, the force of violence bowed to the courage of armless people. It was the people's movement, which also arrested and handed the RUF leader Foday Sankoh over to justice. Similarly, for two consecutive years in Liberia, ordinary women maintained their sit-in despite the heartlessness of Taylor's tyranny. Religious leaders mobilised and introduced a new form of 'insider-partial' mediation and conciliation. At no time in the history of both countries did civil society become more professionalised, more aware and more engaged in the affairs of the state than during and after the civil wars. Also, as indicated in Chapter 3, the successful counter-insurgency of the Civil Defence Force in Sierra Leone has emboldened the Poro

²⁶²In 1955 and 1956, rural people in Sierra Leone revolted against the state. There was also the Hut Tax War and the war against the coup of Brigadier Lansana in 1967.

sodality, particularly in its role in maintaining community security. For the first time in its two thousand year existence, the Poro security architecture locally known as the Kamajors, Kapras, Donzos, etc. were brought from the hitherto ‘degraded’ and ‘barbaric’ ‘hinterlands’ to defend the modern settler states. The Poro also became regionalised when it co-deployed with ECOMOG, the West Africa sub regional force.

At the end of the wars, rather than harness the emerging capacities as foundations for democracy, security, development and inter-group cohesion, the seedlings are disappearing. The fate of Liberia’s and Sierra Leone’s emerging civic capacities can best be described in Hannah Arendt’s observation of the men and women who laid down their lives for the French revolution:

They had been visited for the first time in their lives by an apparition of freedom, not, to be sure, because they acted against tyranny and things worse than tyranny ... but because they had become “challengers,” had taken the initiative upon themselves and therefore, without knowing or even noticing it, had begun to create that public space between themselves where freedom could appear (Arendt, 1993: 4).

This new freedom, new public, new powers for self-preservation, could not be sustained. Once they won the resistance and gained their freedom, they, as Arendt succinctly put it, “...eventually lost the spirit they had gained when they were fighting something massive and real” (ibid). “Life did not feel so charged with importance,” once the struggle of restoring peace was achieved (ibid). The robust civic movements that stood in defence of justice in Sierra Leone and Liberia, and the Poro, which for the first time in the history of contemporary wars mounted counter-insurgency for their communities and the state, are receding into a state of parochialism. They all seem to be disappearing from the public-spheres and handing the stage back once

again to greed-stricken politicians to do with it as they did before the wars. These real and fearless liberators seem to be losing account of the history they crafted with their blood, tears and sweat as they “retreat into mere private life...” (ibid).

7.4 CONCLUSION

The strategies proposed in this chapter are not independent of the others, nor are they necessarily linear. I must also stress that the process Michialof et al. propose and which I adopt in this work is not a magic wand. It is a framework that, in addition to the strategies proposed earlier for ‘agency transformation’ could prove useful in ensuring the indigenisation of post-conflict states without imposing on them international trustees as proposed in Paris’s ‘Institutionalisation before Liberation’ thesis. The new constitutional order, which must form the basis of the new institutional order, must be informed by a thorough stocktaking. This does not suggest that stocktaking is a one-time event. It takes place throughout the cycle. Institutional design does not take place without a vision, but it does not mean that we stop envisioning once we have a sense of the institutional architecture. There are also links between stocktaking and monitoring and accountability, given the need to regularly monitor and keep in check institutional excesses and performance.

Finally, rather than find answers during the study many more questions emerged which require further research. Key among them include the following:

1. How can civic momentum gained during civil wars be harnessed as foundations for democracy in post-war societies?

2. How can the emerging Poro-governed security architecture inform the countries' new security architectures?
3. How to interface and promote fusion between the egalitarian liberal local governance structure and the hierarchical gerontocratic order of the Poro-governed world in Liberia and Sierra Leone?
4. Are there links between locality building and nation building?
5. What strategies are required to create horizontal and vertical links between the micro and macro publics in post-war societies?

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ANNEX 1: Interview Instruments

Annex 1a: Interview Scripts

Case Area-1	Unit of Analysis	Topics	Prompts	Duration: 2 hrs.
Indigenising Security Sector Reform	Poroland security sector reform	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Poroland's concept of security • Poroland practices that promote or undermine security • Poroland's agency, tools and instruments for security • Historical links between the Poroland and State security systems • Roles of the Poroland institution in re-establishing durable security in Liberia or Sierra Leone • Ongoing strategies by the Poroland institutions to re-establish security in Poroland dominated communities • Strategy for mobilising and integrating the Poroland tools and practices in ongoing security sector reform activities 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Symbols of security • Effects of the war on the perception and symbols of security in the Poroland sodality • Can these be revived or are they dead forever? • Voice of the Poroland in the security sector reform (present or absent); needed or not needed? • Are the agents and structures for security in the Poroland community still effective? How strong? • History of the Poroland institutional practices to guarantee security 	Small Group Work: Participants broken into smaller groups according to category to discuss the topic areas (45 mins); 45 mins to discuss in plenary and 15 minutes each for introduction and closing.
	Women movements and security sector reform	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Women's concepts of security • Practices of women's movements that promote or undermine security • Women's agency, tools and instruments for security • History of the role of women in the state security system • Potential roles of women's movements in re-establishing a durable security sector in post-conflict and post-collapsed Liberia or Sierra Leone • Strategy for involving women in the state security reform strategies 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • What do women associate with security? • Are there differences in the behaviours of women and men who are security personnel? • Impact of the war on women's perception of security? • State security policies and effects on women before, during the war, and now • Voices of women in the security sector reform process (present or absent); needed or not needed? 	
	International community and security sector reform	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • International concept of security in Liberia or Sierra Leone • International practices that promote or undermine security sector reforms in Liberia or Sierra Leone • International tools and instruments for security sector reforms • Historical links between international intervention and the security sector in Liberia or Sierra Leone • Relationship between the international practices, policies, and tools and those of women and the Poroland sodality • Strategy for indigenising international policies, tools, and strategies for security reform in Liberia or Sierra Leone 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Indicators of security from the international community's perspective • Implications of security in Liberia and Sierra Leone for the regional and the international community • Policies and tools currently used to re-establish the security sector in Liberia by the international community • Does the international community relate to the Poroland institutions and women's movement in the security reconstruction efforts? In what ways? 	

Annex 1b: Interview Scripts

Case Area	Unit of Analysis	Topics	Prompts	Duration
Indigenising Public Sector Reform	<p>Poro and public sector reform</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Poro's concepts of public institutions, service, and public goods • Practices of the Poro sodality and effects on public institutions, services, and goods • Tools, instruments and agents of the Poro sodality that could promote or undermine effective public institutions, services and goods • History of the role of the Poro institution the functioning of the state bureaucracy in Liberia or Sierra Leone • Potential roles of the Poro institution in re-establishing state bureaucracy in Liberia or Sierra Leone • Strategy for interfacing the Poro and state instrument, tools and strategies in public service reforms in Liberia or Sierra Leone 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • How do the Poro institutions work and how would you compare this with the way the state institutions work? • What do accountability, transparency, competency mean in the Poro sodality? How do these concepts compare with the state concept? • Are the agents (elders, youth, women, etc) managing the Poro institutions still effective? How strong? • Were the Poro institutions destroyed in the war? • Can the institutions be revived or are they dead forever? • Are voices of the Poro in the public sector reform process needed or not needed? • How would these voices be brought to the public sector reform efforts? 	<p>1 hour</p>
	<p>Women's movements and public sector reform</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Women's concepts of public institutions, service and public goods • Practices of within women's movements and their effects on public institutions, services and goods • Tools, instruments, and agents of women's movements that could promote or undermine effective public institutions, services and goods • History of the role of women's movements in the functioning of the state bureaucracy in Liberia or Sierra Leone • Potential roles of women's movements in re-establishing state bureaucracy in Liberia or Sierra Leone • Strategy for integrating instrument, tools, and strategies of women's movements in ongoing public sector reforms activities in Liberia or Sierra Leone 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • How do women's movements work and how would you compare this with the way the state institutions work? • What do accountability, transparency, competency mean in women's movements? How do these concepts compare with the state concept? • Are the agents (women leaders) managing women's movements strong enough to influence public sector reforms in Liberia or Sierra Leone? How? • What has been the impact of the civil war on women's movements? Has the war strengthened or destroyed women's movements? • Can women's institutions be revived or are they dead forever? • Are voices of women's movements in the public sector reform process needed or not needed? • How would these voices be brought to the public sector reform efforts? 	<p>1 hour</p>

	International community and public sector reform	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • International concept of public sector in Liberia or Sierra Leone • International community's expectation of the type and pace of reforms needed in the public sectors of Liberia and Sierra Leone? • Effects of current international strategies and activities in Liberia or Sierra Leone on public sector reforms and effectiveness? • International tools and instruments employed in Liberia or Sierra Leone for public sector reforms • Historical links between international intervention and public sector development in Liberia or Sierra Leone • Strategy for indigenising international policies, tools and strategies for public sector reforms in Liberia or Sierra Leone 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • How does the international community's concept of public sector management contradict or reinforce Liberia or Sierra Leone's concept of public sector management? • How does the international community's concept contradict or reinforce the Poro and women movement's concept of public sector management? • What do accountability, transparency, competency mean in at the international community level? How do these concepts compare with those of the Poro, women's movements and the national state authority in Liberia or Sierra Leone? • Are the bureaucrats managing international community's public sector reform agenda strong enough? How strong? How long will they stay on? • What has been the impact of the civil war on public institutions in Liberia or Sierra Leone? • Will these institutions be revived or are they dead forever? • Are voices of the international community in the public sector reform process needed or not needed? • How can the international community efforts interface with the strategies of the women's movements and Poro institutions to indigenize the public sector reform efforts? 	1 hour
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Annex 5c: Interview Scripts

Case Area	Unit of Analysis	Topics	Prompts	Duration
Indigenising National Healing and Nation Building	<p>Poroland national healing and nation building</p>	<p><i>General concepts</i></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Poroland's concepts of: war trauma, psychosocial healing, reconciliation, power, legitimacy, and collective identity <p><i>Psychosocial healing</i></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> How do Poroland institutions and culture deal with war trauma? What are the healing ceremonies and procedures and implications for national healing <p><i>Reconciliation</i></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Poroland's institutions, instruments, and practices for intra and inter-group reconciliation: rebuilding social bonds, civic norms (trust, solidarity, and reciprocity) How effective are the Poroland institutions and practices for healing, rebuilding collective identity, national reconciliation, and national identity <p><i>Legitimacy and National Identity</i></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> History of the role of the Poroland institution in national reconciliation and the building of national identity in Liberia or Sierra Leone In what way can the Poroland's approach to legitimacy inform authority and legitimacy building by the post-collapsed Liberian or Sierra Leonean state? Strategy for integrating tools, instruments, and practices of the Poroland in the work of the truth commissions, promoting inter and intra communal healing, and cross-community reconciliation, re-establishing the authority and legitimacy of the state, and rebuilding national identity? 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Practices of the Poroland sodality in promoting the rebuilding of social bonds and other civic norms both within and between social groups? Symbols of power, legitimacy, and identity Effects of the war on the perception and these symbols Can these be revived or are they dead forever? Of the tools, instruments, and agents of the Poroland sodality which would be most effective in the national healing, reconciliation, and re-building national identity project Are the voices of the Poroland authorities heard in the national healing and reconciliation activities ongoing? (or absent); needed or not relevant to post-conflict Liberia? 	1 hour
	<p>Women, national healing and building national identity</p>	<p><i>General concepts</i></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Women's concepts of: war trauma, psychosocial healing, reconciliation, power, legitimacy, and collective identity <p><i>Psychosocial healing</i></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> How do women movements and culture deal with war trauma? What are the healing ceremonies and procedures particular to women and what are their implications for national healing <p><i>Reconciliation</i></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Women's institutions, instruments, and practices for intra and inter-group reconciliation: rebuilding social bonds, civic norms (trust, solidarity, and reciprocity) How effective are the women movements' practices for healing, rebuilding collective identity, national reconciliation, and national identity <p><i>Legitimacy and National Identity</i></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> History of the role of women's movements in the building of national identity in Liberia or Sierra Leone In what way can women's movements promote the building of national identity legitimacy of the state 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> How are women's movements promoting the rebuilding of social bonds and other civic norms both within and between social groups? Symbols of power, legitimacy, and identity as described by women Effects of the war on women's perception of national healing, reconciliation, and building national identity Of the tools, instruments, and agents of women's movements which would be most effective in the national healing, reconciliation, and re-building national identity project Are the voices of the women authorities heard in the national healing and reconciliation activities ongoing? (or absent); needed or not relevant to post-conflict Liberia? 	1 hour

		<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Strategy for integrating tools, instruments, and practices of the women's movements in the work of the truth commissions; promoting inter and intra communal healing, and cross-community reconciliation, re-establishing the authority and legitimacy of the state, and rebuilding national identity? 		
<p>International Community, national healing and nation building</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • International concept of: legitimacy, national healing, reconciliation, and re-establishing national identity in Liberia or Sierra Leone • International practices that promote or undermine re-establishing state legitimacy, national healing, reconciliation, and re-establishing national identity in Liberia or Sierra Leone • Consequences of current international practices and policies on national healing and reconciliation processes, the rebuilding of state legitimacy and national identity • International tools and instruments for rebuilding state legitimacy, healing and reconciliation • Historical links between international intervention and the building of state legitimacy, national identity, reconciliation in Liberia or Sierra Leone • Strategy for indigenising international policies, tools, and strategies for re-establishing state legitimacy, national healing, and reconciliation in Liberia or Sierra Leone 		<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • How is international intervention promoting the rebuilding of social bonds and other civic norms both within and between social groups in Liberia or Sierra Leone? • Symbols of power, legitimacy, and identity as defined by the international intervention • Effects of the war on the international community's role in national healing, reconciliation, and building national identity • Of the tools, instruments, and agency deployed in both countries by the international community which would be most effective in the national healing, reconciliation, and re-building national identity project • Do the international interventions pay attention to the voices of women and the Poro institutions in the interventions in Liberia? Do they welcome these voices? How explicitly are these voices integrated in the international strategies? 	<p>1 hour</p>

