

CIVIL WAR IN SIERRA LEONE (WEST AFRICA) AND THE ROLE OF INTERNATIONAL COMMUNITY AND INDIA IN PEACE BUILDING

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Abstract

The decade long civil war in Sierra Leone since 1991 has destroyed the whole nation and the lives of lakhs of people. Other several lakhs of people had to leave the country and become refugees. It is an example how a peaceful ordered country can plunge in to war and ruin itself. Even cannibalism and sexual atrocities were used as weapons in war. Some outside actors also played heinous role in this war. The international community led by the United Nations responded immediately to stop the war and save the lives of millions of people. In the UN peacekeeping operation India was the largest contributor of force with nearly $\frac{1}{4}$ peacekeeping soldiers from its military and air force. The efforts of international community led by the UN, are on to rebuild this country and India is extending all possible help and cooperation.

Key Words: Cannibalism, Diamonds, Demobilisation, Decentralisation, Humanitarian, Lome, Reconstruction.

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Introduction

In Africa civil war has erupted in many countries after long years of one party rule, dictatorship or military government. The eleven years civil war in Sierra Leone (1991-2002) destroyed the lives of 70,000 people as per UN report. While the local reports estimate the killing of 2,00,000 people and the displacement of 5 million people.¹ The war caused heavy toll on socio-economic and political dislocations and destructions. Even cannibalism was commonly practiced by the Revolutionary United Front (RUF) rebels during the war, as they were eating the body parts of soldiers and human beings they killed. In this civil war authority of Central Government remained confined mostly near the capital Freetown. The whole state machinery was destroyed including army, police, judiciary, educational institutions, hospitals and other service sectors including the government offices and buildings. During the war, the international community under the supervision of United Nations played significant role in the peace building in Sierra Leone. India played a major role in establishing peace as part of UN Peace Keeping Force. For establishing peace, even today the work of reconstruction of Sierra Leone is going on but the task is enormous and challenges are numerous in this devastated country. Sierra Leone conflict is also a lesson for other countries and societies where conflicts are going on. Because it shows how a country can be devastated by the internal conflicts and up to what extent the conflict can become barbarous.

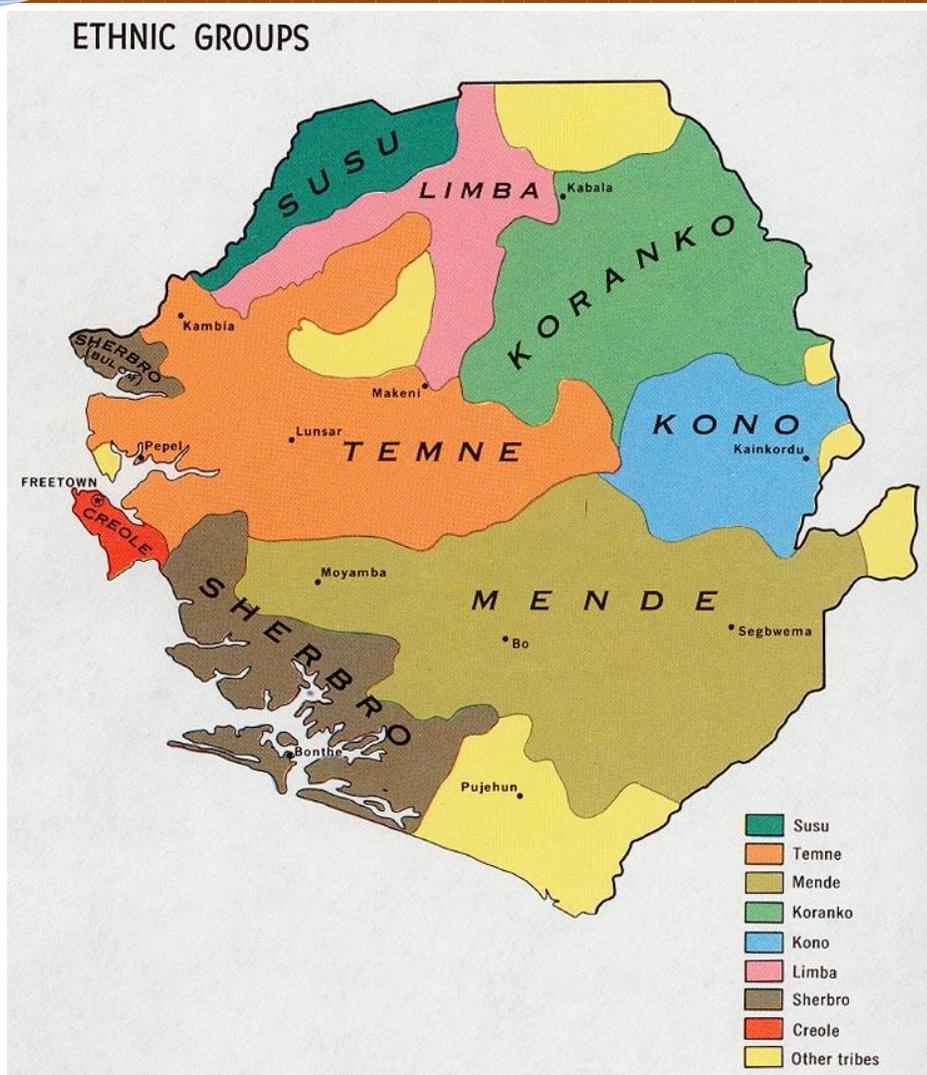
Political-Historical Context of Civil War and Conflict

Sierra Leone is a small West African country having population of around 6 million and area of 72,000 square kilometers. The country has 16 ethnic groups out of which two are the largest, Temne 35% live in the North and Mendes 31% live in the South.² Mendes are the descendents of Mene of Liberia. Other ethnic groups are Limba 8.5% at third position, Fula 8% at fourth position, Mandigo 7% at fifth position, Kono 5% at sixth position but Konos are inhabited mostly in diamond area, Koranko, Kissi, and Vai. Creole is the ethnic group of descendents of free slaves who were settled in the Freetown by British. These ethnic groups have mostly adopted Islam or Christianity as their religion. Religion wise Sierra Leone is predominantly a Muslim country with 70% population and the Christians are large minority with 21% population. 2% people are animist. Religiously Sierra Leone is ranked as a most tolerant nation. People often marry across

religious and ethnic boundaries. Religious violence is rare but people are having conflicts more on ethnic lines. 70% people are poor though the country has rich mineral resources and good agricultural land. The mineral resources are diamond, gold, rutile, bauxite and iron ore. Diamond is available in one-fourth area of the country Sierra Leone and it is the tenth largest producer of diamond. The irony is that the diamond is hardly contributing to alleviate poverty, rather it became one of the main reasons for local conflict and foreign power domination since colonial period. In the post independence period one party control, military rule and illegitimate political control led to the civil war. Let us examine how British colonial power controlled diamond resources and generated conflicts and set conditions for the post- independence developments and conflicts.

Colonial Rule

The coastal area of Sierra Leone was developed as a settlement of slaves freed by the British in 1787 by acquiring a piece of land which is at present Freetown. These free slaves included Africans and others from West Indies. The 'Sierra Leone', a British Trading Company was given the task of administering the area and then it was acquired by the British Government in 1896. The British Government introduced dual system of government, one for Crown Colony of Freetown area where free slaves were rehabilitated and other for the native hinterland of the tribal population where the British extended rule. For hinterland indirect rule was adopted where the rule was through the tribal chiefs under the supervision of British district officials or District Commissioners. During British occupation as well as during the British colonial rule there were local uprisings against outside domination. The most severe revolt by natives was the Hut Tax War of 1898 in which hundreds of British troops and hundreds of native African died. The revolt was crushed by the British Government with heavy casualties. The small resistance continued through out colonial period in the form of frequent rioting and violent labour disturbances like riots in 1955 and 1956.³ The diamond was discovered in



1930 in Sierra Leone and it became major British colonial interest as before that Sierra Leone was considered mainly as a dumping ground for British slaves. In 1935 the British colonial administration granted exclusive control for Sierra Leone diamond mining to the company Sierra Leone Selection Trust (SLST) run by De Beers Company (originally founded by Cecil Rodes, a British financier and colonizer) for 99 years. Locals got deprived of this valuable and vast resources thus they mostly tried to engage in illegal mining and trade of diamond. Even gangs were organized to control or loot diamond traders.

Post Independence 1961-1967 Period

The country was given independence on 27th April 1961 and the first independent government was headed by Milton Margai. His rule (1961-64) under his SLPP (Sierra Leone Peoples Party) was of flourishing democracy having political pluralism, freedom of press, religious and ethnic-political tolerance. But after Milton Margai's death his brother Albert Margai's 3 year rule (1964-67) witnessed strong centralization, crushing on political opposition in the country. He introduced and tried to implement one party rule in 1965. This move witnessed huge protest from the opposition parties - United Democratic Party (UDF) and All Peoples Congress Party (APC). Sierra Leone Labour Organisation and students organizations like National Union of Sierra Leone Students (NUSS) joined the movement and thwarted this move. Albert Margai involved and inducted his tribesmen (Mendes) in military, civil services, police, government and other high posts. In army he promoted his brother-in-law David Lansena to the post of Brigadier and later on to Force Commander. When Albert Margai (PM) lost his election in 1967 against APC, he encouraged his supporters in army to organize coup.

APC Rule 1968-1992 and Emergence of RUF Civil War (1991)

From 1968 to 1992, All Peoples Congress (APC) ruled the country, first under the leadership of Siaka Stevens (1968-1985) and secondly under Joseph Saidu Momoh (1986-1992). Siaka Stevens was trying to remain in power for long time and made political arrangement with this consideration. He adopted a Republican Constitution and himself became the President as well as the Head of the government in 1971. In the by elections of 1972 the opposition SLPP complained of intimidation and obstruction by the APC and militia. As a result, the opposition SLPP boycotted 1979 general elections and the ruling APC won 84 out of 85 seats.⁴ Siaka Stevens made Sierra Leone one party state in 1978 and no other political party was allowed to operate. This undermined democracy. One Party Constitution continued from 1978 to 1990. The president acquired tremendous power in appointing and dismissing the civil servants and judges. Independence of judiciary was also restricted. Even the judge of the Supreme Court could be asked by the President to retire any time after attaining the age of 55 years.⁵ Stevens passed Press Bill in 1980 to curtail the freedom of press. Stevens brought military commander Major General Joseph Saidu Momoh as his successor, who was elected to Presidency on 1st October 1985.

President Momoh tried to broaden the existing one party rule and made the country a multi – party system which was approved by the Parliament in 1991. But by that time damage was done and already the civil war had started by Foday Sankoh and his Revolutionary United Front (RUF) in 1991 in the eastern part of the country as a reaction against the monopolistic control of one party rule of APC, corruption and favouritism. Although, President Momoh initiated political reforms to make multi-party state but he was not very serious as the APC rule continued to be making abuse of power. The ruling party APC was hoarding arms and planned a violent campaign against the opposition parties ahead 1992 general elections.

Military Rule 1992-1996

President Momoh was removed (and went into exile) in a military coup led by Captain Valentine Strasser, who ruled the country for four years with a military ruling council. The military rule suspended 1991 Constitution, Freedom of Press and rights of the people. In another coup in January 1996, Valentine was replaced by Brigadier Gen. Julius Maada Bio, who later on handed over the power to Ahmad Tajan Kabbah, a civilian leader after the elections in 1996, of the Sierra Leone People's Party (SLPP), which was earlier banned by the APC government. In 1997, civilian President Kabbah also faced a military coup and he went into exile in Guinea.⁶ After eight months, the exiled President Kabbah (an ethnic Mandingo and SLPP leader) was reinstated in March 1988 into the office by the Nigeria led ECOMOG forces of the regional organization Economic Community of West Africa (ECOWAS).

Reasons for Civil War

The RUF civil war led by Foday Sankoh had been very destructive which continued for 11 years. Foday Sankoh had even ordered his rebels to eat away human bodies of the killed soldiers and opponents which served three purposes: one to terrify the people, the second to solve the food problem in the forest area and third to gain strength for fighting as it was locally believed that human body parts used to vitalize human strength. They even killed and eaten away the body parts of a number of United Nations' soldiers,⁷ who were trying to control civil war and bring peace in

the country. Children and women were forced to become rebels in the large number. Such a ferocious civil war had emerged out of the several reasons:

- (I) The immediate reason for the civil war was the bad governance by the APC party government which got reflected in the poor economy, banning of opposition parties from contesting elections and monopolizing power by making the country one – party rule.
- (II) The decline of economy and bad living conditions of majority of Sierra Leoneans, since 1980 also became factor for civil war. The corruption was very high in the poor economy and employment opportunities were very low. 70% people were poor. This poor economy reflected very high inflation, illiteracy, brain drain, increase in crime and illegal means to survive and frequent blackouts. The United Nations Development Programme (UNDP) Human Development Report of 1990 placed Sierra Leone to 126 rank in human development index.⁸
- (III) Liberian rebel leader Charles Taylor who also became President, supported Sierra Leone opposition leader Foday Sanko to start civil war against his government which had banned his party. Taylor was also trying to control Sierra Leone diamond resource indirectly through Foday Sanko. Through rebels diamonds were sold in Liberia for arms and weapons. Charles Taylor supported rebels because he was unhappy with the role of Sierra Leone government in setting up ECOWAS force ECOMOG to control rebels in Liberia. The UN and Sierra Leone Government's joint international war tribunal Special Court for Sierra Leone (SCSL), indicted Liberian President Charles Taylor for war crimes against humanity for supporting Sierra Leone rebels and atrocities in Sierra Leone since 30th November 1996.⁹
- (IV) Due to the poor economy and civil war, the ethnic groups got mobilized in favour of rebel groups or in favour of government on ethnic considerations. Most of the military coups were also ethnically motivated to oust the rule of another ethnic group leader.
- (V) The frequent derailment of democracy and illegitimate rule eroded the mass support of the government and the governments suffered with the problem of legitimacy. At the time of crisis, the government did not get the required support of people and the ethnic groups.

Thus multiple factors led to the long continuation of civil war. These factors were the combination of historical, political, economic, social and cultural factors. The civil war of 11 years and the counter operations by the government forces led to the huge killings, destruction of economy, infrastructure, agriculture and commerce. It adversely affected all government institutions, mining, health, education and other sectors. There was not only the total collapse of law and order, rather there was the collapse of the state machinery as a whole.

Problems and Challenges in Reconstruction for Peace

The post-war reconstruction of Sierra Leone was essential for long lasting peace. It was a major challenge not only for the government of Sierra Leone but also for the international community as well. The problems and challenges related to reconstruction for peace can be roughly grouped in four,- (1) the challenge of state building, (2) the challenge of economic development and restarting economic installations and activities, (3) challenge of tackling corruption, and (4) the development of ethnic amity and cooperation. In Sierra Leone the 11 years war had almost destroyed the whole state organizations and institutions. The central government was just confined to the capital with armed forces extremely weakened. The state and district officials, engineers, courts' judges and magistrates had fled and the official buildings were destroyed. Thus reconstruction meant reconstruction of army, police, judiciary, state governments, public services, parliament and central government organs and institutions. In this effort some old institutions had to be remodeled and new one had to be created. Several warlords and chiefs had started their own system of tax collection and rule that had to be tackled. The large number of rebels had to be disarmed, demobilized and rehabilitated. It was not just building up infrastructure, rather it was building up the whole state. The economic units and activities were almost ruined and people had fled to either other countries or other areas. Agriculture was abandoned, diamond areas were illegally controlled and diamonds were illegally sold and smuggled. Where entire government machinery was not functioning for decade, things were moving in corrupt, unaccountable and non-transparent ways mostly by paying bribes in the form of money, things or sex. This had to be tackled and legally right system and procedure had to be evolved. This was also very essential as the post-war huge funding by international donors and

agencies should not be misused and siphoned away. The ethnic amity and cooperation had to be created afresh. The past 11 years war and conflicts created and promoted sever ethnic conflicts in the country, either in support of RUF rebel forces of Foday Sanko or the central government rulers. Many times the military coups were ethnically motivated as soldiers and officials grouped on ethnic lines to oust the control and rule of other ethnic group rulers. The secret grass-root militia, Kamajore had also come up joined by the many displaced persons. They had lost faith in both the government forces and the RUF rebels and took up arms for their own protection. In the process of building amity especially the two major ethnic groups Temne and Mendes had to be brought together with spirit of cooperation and peace.

Peace Building Reconstruction Programmes

(I) Peace Building and Disarmament of Rebels

The major peacekeeping operations started by the United Nations in 1999 in Sierra Leone through its mission called United Nations Mission in Sierra Leone (UNAMSIL). The UN started deploying troops in 1999 and the deployment reached to 17, 500 troops in Sierra Leone by 2001. On the UN pressure Lome Peace Accord (July 1999) was agreed between the Sierra Leone Government and the RUF rebels. As per this agreement RUF rebels agreed to cooperate and disarm, on the other hand the government agreed to rehabilitate rebels and establish two Commissions, the Commission for Consolidation of Peace, and the Truth and Reconciliation Commission to examine and punish aggression during the war. The Government established the National Committee for Disarmament, Demobilisation and Reintegration (NCDDR) and the National Commission for Reconstruction, Resettlement and Rehabilitation later called National Commission for Social Action (NCSA). In disarmament, the United Nations Assistance Mission in Sierra Leone with its force was assisting and playing a leading role. The rebels had to be demobilized and disarmed for long lasting peace. A district level programme to disarm the rebels was put in operation. At the same time with the help of UN, Government and NGOs programmes were started for the surrendered rebels like, non-formal education, vocational training and small scale credit schemes as well as community assistance programmes. Unlike Liberia, the disarmament programme was successful in Sierra Leone as President Kabbah cooperated with the

UN forces and the international community. While in Liberia, President Charles Taylor did not cooperate with the UN and the international community. The UNAMSIL and the Sierra Leone Government were able to demobilise 72,490 rebels, collected 42,300 weapons and 1.2 million rounds of ammunition.¹⁰ These efforts facilitated general elections in 2002. By 2002 UN troops had disarmed 75,000 rebel combatants in Sierra Leone.¹¹ This included 6,774 child soldiers. The UN troops began to withdraw in 2006 as its mandate ended in 2005. As the institutions in Sierra Leone are still very weak, the UN Security Council referred the concern of Sierra Leone to the UN Peace Building Commission (UNPBC). The UNPBC approved \$35 million in December 2006 to support Sierra Leone programmes for the capacity building, democracy and good governance, security, justice and employment programmes.

(II) Economic Recovery and Reconstruction

The Sierra Leone Government started Community Reintegration and Rehabilitation Project (CRRP). This project has two parts, one is the Emergency Recovery Support Fund (ERSF) and Training and Employment Programme. Both these programmes are getting 90% of the cost meted out by the World Bank and the African Development Bank. The Government established the National Commission for Privatisation by an act of the Parliament in 2002 to work out modalities of reforms in public sector, disinvestment and private companies' participation. In 2003, the United Nations mission (UNAMSIL) and the UNDP jointly appealed for \$69.2 million for emergency relief and \$13.7 million for the recovery of projects in Sierra Leone.¹²

(III) Working for Good Governance

With the help of international community, the Sierra Leone government has started defunct local governments and has began emphasizing on decentralization. The government formulated the National Strategy for Good Governance in 1997. In this area also UN mission and UNDP are helping. By 2002, 96 paramount chiefs and regent chiefs had returned to their chiefdoms, more than 50 district officials had returned to their districts, courts and magistrates started operating in most of the provinces. However, still there is lack of logistic support in sector of districts, local courts and chiefdoms. In 2003, UNAMSIL and UNDP appealed for \$670,000 help to recover

basic capacity of judicial institutions.¹³ In order to ensure transparency the government is also encouraging the civil society to participate in public expenditure review and monitoring of services delivery.

(IV) UN Special Tribunal for Sierra Leone

The UN Security Council through the Resolution 1315 of 14th August 2000 authorised the creation of Special Tribunal for Sierra Leone under International Court of Justice to try war crimes, crimes against humanity and other major violations of international humanitarian law in Sierra Leone. This tribunal indicted former Liberian President Charles Taylor and later on arrested him for supporting RUF war in Sierra Leone. Taylor has been presently facing trial at The Hague.¹⁴ This tribunal also indicted former Sierra Leone Deputy Minister of Defence Sam Hinga Norman and former interim leader of RUF Issa Sessay. RUF's dreaded warlord Foday Sanko was arrested by the UN Peace keeping force in 2000. He was facing trial for war crimes and died in jail on 29 July 2003.¹⁵ The massive celebrations by Sierra Leoneans after Foday Sanko's arrest reveals that people were fed up with war and wanted to get rid of him and his civil war.

(V) World Bank, African Development Bank, British Government and the US actions in Sierra Leone Reconstruction

In Sierra Leone the World Bank has been very supportive to the Economic Recovery Support Fund (ERSF) and Training and Employment Programme (TEP). In cooperation with the African Development Bank, the World Bank is financing a maximum of 90% of the total cost of ERSF Projects, which meet the cost of the infrastructure, vehicles, construction material, training and technical assistance, health and education. The World Bank also provides support to NCDDR and the local NGOs in infrastructure, project implementation and financial arrangement to enhance capacity of the country. In 2003 the World Bank agreed to provide \$ 103 million to help Sierra Leone meet the challenges, including \$ 40 million in grants.¹⁶ In the previous year 2002 the World Bank and United Nations organized meetings with non-governmental organisations who

pledged \$ 650 million for poverty alleviation. With these help 440,000 refugees were settled in Sierra Leone.

The British Government is participating in training and restructuring of the Republic of Sierra Leone Armed Forces (RSLAF) and Sierra Leone Police. The British Government participated in the Lome Peace Accord in 1999. The British Government is providing training in observance of the Human rights in different sectors including Army and Police. The British Government has appointed Civil Advisors and Military Advisors to the Government of Sierra Leone. The UK Department for International Development (DFID) is actively helping Sierra Leone Government to enhance the institutional structure to handle corruption by funding Anti-Corruption Commission established in 2000. The commission has powers to search and arrest the corruption offenders. The British Government is also providing intelligence inputs. The United Kingdom has been spending for last several years some of \$ 60 million per year on building and reconstructing the army, police and judiciary.¹⁷ In 2006 UK provided \$ 76 million as direct budget support and programme assurance aimed at strengthening the justice, security and governance sector.¹⁸ United States of America has been spending huge money in reconstruction programmes in Sierra Leone. America spent \$ 45 million for reintegrating former combatants and improving control and management of diamond sector.¹⁹ America has also been the largest contributor for the SCSL's budget which was revised in 2004 and increased to total \$ 71.5 million for three years.²⁰ By 2004 the reconstruction was costing United Nations \$ 64 billion a year and the British Government Pound 100 million per year.²¹

However, still there are numerous problems in Sierra Leone. In 2010 the World Bank has estimated unemployment at 80%. The Secretary General who had visited Sierra Leone in 2007 had raised concern over unemployment. The *World Bank Report* of 2011 states that life expectancy in Sierra Leone is 48 years while adult literacy rate is 41%. Due to poverty corruption, prostitution, sex crimes and sex slavery are very high. The good news about Sierra Leone is that the economy is growing in recent years by 8.8% which is helpful and positive sign towards national growth.

Role of India

India deployed 4000 strong military and air force soldiers and officers in the UN Assistance Mission in Sierra Leone out of the total 17, 500 UN soldiers. Thus India was the largest contributor of soldiers in the UN force. The Indian contingent was initially under the command of Brig. S. C. Joshi as head of the 10 member Military Liaison Unit. This was attached to the office of the Special Envoy of the UN Secretary General for Sierra Leone. The Indian command was later on led by Major General Vijay Jetley from 2000. Indian force played major role in ending civil war and controlling rebels. 500 UN soldiers including Indian soldiers, were held hostage for months by the RUF rebels. The Indian force rescued the UN troops from the rebel RUF's hostage in joint operation with British troops. In July 2000 Indian Defence Minister George Fernandes visited Sierra Leone to boost the morale of Indian troops. The Indian troops were phased out in 2001 but they had left positive impact among the Sierra Leoneans.

When elections were held in 2002 and post war government came to power in Sierra Leone, India concentrated on building strong political relations, adopted programmes for socio-economic development of Sierra Leone and enhanced its commercial and trade relations. Two member Parliamentary delegation of Sierra Leone headed by the Speaker visited India in 2003. Sierra Leone was invited to Africa Conclave in New Delhi on 6th to 9th November 2005. The visiting Sierra Leone delegation was led by the Foreign Minister Nomodu Koroma. In 2007 Sierra Leone Health Minister Francis Abdul Rahman Sankoh visited India, while in March 2008 Sierra Leone Minister of Trade A. P. Koroma visited India. India supplied 40,000 tons of non-basmati rice to Sierra Leone to meet its urgent food requirements. In the next year 2009 Indian Minister of State for External Affairs Anand Sharma visited Sierra Leone and gifted 200 military barracks to Sierra Leone which were constructed by Indian public sector undertaking. India Sierra Leone trade has picked up during the last three years. In 2007-08 the two way trade turn over was \$ 81.42 million(mn) including India's rice export of \$ 16.78 mn In 2008-09 the trade turn over was \$56.77 mn. In this India's export was of \$ 49.21 mn. And import was of \$7.56 mn. In 2009-10 the trade turn over was \$41.31 mn in which India's export was 37.15mn and import was \$4.16 mn.²² These figures show that India has been exporting more to Sierra Leone than it is importing. India's exports to Sierra Leone mostly comprises of drugs and pharmaceuticals, textiles, eggs and

machine tools. While major imports from Sierra Leone include ferrous waste and scraps, woodpulp, waste paper, titanium ores and diamond. Indian company Bharati Airtel is doing tremendous work in Sierra Leone's telecom sector. Another company ABG Group has invested in Sierra Leone Bauxite mining. India is helping Sierra Leone in rural solar electrification and pan African e-networking. Five Indian universities are also linked to the educational centres of Sierra Leone. To assist Sierra Leone in its socio-economic development India has extended concessional loans worth \$ 74.45 mn for the purchase of agricultural equipments, modernization and expansion of Sierra Leone National Telecommunications Network (SIERRATEL), and for the restoration and rehabilitation of six potable water projects in Freetown. India has also extended \$ 20 million Line of Credit to ECOWAS Bank in June 2011 for solar street lighting project in Sierra Leone.

Conclusion

Sierra Leone civil war which continued for eleven years totally devastated the country in 1990s. It ruined the life of the people by death and displacement of lakhs of people as well as destruction of economy. Historically the long time outside control over resources and the derailment of democracy as well as illegitimate capture of power generated huge conflict and became reasons for RUF civil war. The government forces' counter operations and ethnic groups' involvement in war further complicated the situation and intensified the conflict. In the generation and continuation of war, the Liberian civil war leader and President Charles Taylor played major role. In this civil war diamond areas were forcibly controlled by the rebels and diamonds were used as fuel for the civil war by purchasing weapons in exchange of diamonds. Charles Taylor's use of child soldiers and cannibalism shock the world. The ethnic conflicts further complicated the situation and hostilities in the country. In such crisis, the United Nations intervention with peacekeeping troops contributed by several countries brought peace. The UN not only established peace but even reconstructed the country with its own help as well as by mobilizing funds from the donor agencies and NGOs. In this the role played by India has been very remarkable as it was the largest contributor of peacekeeping force to the UN in Sierra Leone. The Indian force even rescued the hostage UN troops from the clutches of the rebels with the help of British force. After the war, India and the United Nations have been constantly maintaining relations with Sierra Leone Government and helping it in development of the country. While UN, US and UK have

been engaged in huge reconstruction programmes, India has provided huge line of credits and loans to facilitate Sierra Leone's economic development and trade. Though the rebels have been demobilised and disarmed but it is only the economic development of the country which will ensure long lasting peace by generating employment and economic opportunities for the poor people of the country, who are almost 2/3rd of the total population. Without tackling poverty there cannot be permanent peace, as war brings killings and poverty brings diseases and deaths and becomes further reason for conflicts. The International Community and India have played their role but much depends on the local people of Sierra Leone and their government as how they retain peace and ensure further development.

On 26 April 2012, in a historic and landmark judgment the international tribunal at The Hague convicted former Liberian President Charles Taylor guilty of aiding and abetting war crimes in Sierra Leone.²³ This is the first war crimes conviction of a former head of state by an international court since the Nuremberg trials of German Nazi leaders after the Second World War. The Sierra Leone war is also a lesson for other nations where democracy is being derailed frequently or where conflicts and civil wars are continuing for long time. If they do not resolve or tackle the conflict on time, it may blow out of proportion, annihilate the huge population and destroy the country like Sierra Leone. The leaders and rulers using autocratic, dictatorial or terrorist methods should also learn lessons from the international trial and conviction of Charles Taylor.

Maps of Sierra Leone

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