

CHAPTER ONE

Historical Antecedents to the Conflict

Introduction

1. In the final decade of the twentieth century, Sierra Leone – a tiny country on the coast of West Africa made up of just 4.5 million people – became the scene of one of the greatest human tragedies of our time. On 23 March 1991, armed conflict broke out in Sierra Leone when forces crossed the border from Liberia into the town of Bomaru near the eastern frontier. Over the next eleven years, the country was devastated by a complex and bitter war that unleashed appalling brutality against the civilian population.
2. How did a peace-loving nation become engulfed, seemingly overnight, in horror? What events occurred in the history of Sierra Leone to make this conflict possible? Explanations put forward have varied from 'bad governance' and 'the history of the post-colonial period' to 'the urge to acquire the country's diamond wealth' and the roles of Libya or the Liberian faction leader Charles Taylor.¹ The international community initially dismissed the war in Sierra Leone as just another example of tribal conflict in Africa; another failed state imploding in the context of environmental degradation and acute economic crisis.²
3. The Truth and Reconciliation Commission ("TRC" or "the Commission") was established in 2000 with a primary objective "to create an impartial historical record of ... the armed conflict in Sierra Leone, from the beginning of the conflict in 1991 to the signing of the Lomé Peace Agreement."³ The functions of the Commission, as set out in its founding Act, included investigating and reporting on the causes, nature and extent of the violations and abuses that occurred, including the antecedents to those violations and abuses and the context in which they took place.⁴ From its outset, the Commission interpreted these provisions broadly, aiming to fulfil the intention of the drafters of the Act that the TRC should "compile a clear picture of the past."⁵ Accordingly the Commission devoted considerable resources towards examining the pre-conflict history of Sierra Leone.

¹ Charles Taylor led the faction called the National Patriotic Front of Liberia (NPFL), which launched an insurgency in Liberia in December 1989. Taylor warned in a BBC radio interview in 1990 that Sierra Leone would "taste the bitterness of war" because of the country's membership and backing of the West African Intervention Force (ECOMOG) that was attacking his bases in Liberia.

² See Kaplan R., 'The Coming Anarchy', *Atlantic Monthly*, February 1994. Also see Clapham C., 'Sierra Leone: The Global-Local Politics of State Collapse and Attempted Reconstruction', *Failed States Conference*, Florence, 10-14 April 2001.

³ See Section 6(1) of the Truth and Reconciliation Commission Act 2000. For further details, see the chapter entitled 'The Mandate of the Commission' in Volume One of this report.

⁴ See Section 6(2) of the Truth and Reconciliation Commission Act 2000.

⁵ This objective is contained in Section 1 of the Lomé Peace Agreement, as expounded in the 'Memorandum of Objects and Reasons', attached to the Truth and Reconciliation Commission Bill when it was tabled before Parliament in February 2000 by the then Attorney General and Minister of Justice, Solomon Berewa.

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4. This chapter reflects a brief summary of the Commission's research into the 'Historical Antecedents to the Conflict'. The chapter attempts to locate causes of conflict in Sierra Leone's past, place the conflict within its proper historical context and offer explanations for what went wrong. It identifies social trends that spawned division and confrontation between the various groups that make up Sierra Leone. It picks out fault lines and key events that created the structural conditions for conflict. It highlights decisions on the part of the political elite that were designed to strengthen their grip on power at the expense of common benefit, progress and ultimately peace.
5. Central to the study contained in this chapter is the social and political interaction among Sierra Leone's constituent groups. Throughout Sierra Leone's history, the nature and extent of such interaction – often negative and limited – has influenced people's perceptions of the state in which they live and their own places within it. These perceptions have in turn presented the greatest challenges to the concepts of nationhood and citizenship. They have served to undermine the positive sense of national identity needed to build a strong and unified independent nation.
6. In order to adduce a balanced historical perspective on the conflict, the Commission invited a host of national and international stakeholders to make submissions about the key events of the past. It held public and closed hearings at which individuals, institutions of state, non-governmental organisations and donor agencies were able to express their views and opinions. It substantiated the material from all these testimonies by referring to multiple secondary sources, including books and periodicals on the country, as well as memoirs by Sierra Leoneans. The resultant chapter compiles a concise narrative out of these various resources and reflects contrasting versions of history in an impartial manner to the greatest extent possible.
7. The 'Historical Antecedents to the Conflict' have been divided into three sections for the purposes of this chapter. 'Part I – The Historical Evolution of the State' examines Sierra Leone's social, political and economic development under colonial rule and in the first few years of independence. 'Part II – The Management of Power by the APC' is a short synopsis of the system of government adopted by Sierra Leone's longest-serving and most influential pre-war Government, under the All People's Congress (APC) party. 'Part III – Local Historical Antecedents' traces pre-conflict dynamics in a variety of important Districts that help to explain the manner in which the war unfolded across the nation. The main points of the chapter are drawn together at the end in a brief 'Conclusion'.

PART I – THE HISTORICAL EVOLUTION OF THE STATE

8. The Commission has identified four distinct phases in the historical evolution of Sierra Leone, which it regards as crucial to understanding the roots of the conflict and some of the challenges that the country still faces today. These four phases are analysed below in the following order:
- The Colony and the Protectorate. Rather than constructing a unified Sierra Leonean state, the colonial government effectively created two nations in the same land. The divide between the entities known as the 'Colony' and the 'Protectorate' had far-reaching implications for issues such as citizenship, land tenure rights and conflict of laws.
 - The Era of Party Politics (1951-1961). After the 1947 Constitution had amalgamated Sierra Leone's 'two nations' in preparation for independence, party politics became the greatest obstacle to national cohesion and identity. Party allegiance proved just as divisive as ethnicity, class or regional prejudice in the battle over who should succeed the British. On the cusp of independence in 1961, the ten-year-old Sierra Leone People's Party (SLPP) was joined in the political arena by the All People's Congress (APC), which would become its main rival in contesting elections.
 - The Sierra Leone People's Party (SLPP) in Power. The euphoria and perceived unity of the immediate post-colonial period appear with hindsight to have been artificial. The first independent government, formed by the majority SLPP party, served to polarise public opinion in the country, introduced notions of cronyism in many state institutions and laid the foundation for military involvement in politics. This period had terrible, albeit foreseeable consequences on the unity of the young state and served to deepen existing cleavages.
 - The 1967 Elections and their Aftermath. The elections of 1967 were scarred by bitter power struggles based on ethnicity, personality and party affiliation. Although the APC won the most seats, the leadership of the SLPP stoutly refused to concede defeat. The resultant standoff signalled a watershed in the political fortunes of the country and ultimately led to the destruction of the multi-party system.

The Colony and the Protectorate⁶

9. Before 1947, Sierra Leone was divided socially, geographically and historically into two entities. The colonial capital Freetown, known as the Colony, and the much larger area of provincial territory, known as the Protectorate, were political creations of the British, designed to facilitate their administration of the people as part of their expanding Empire. The Crown Colony State, established in 1808, was originally limited to the area of Freetown and its immediate environs on the Western peninsula, later taking in the Bonthe Urban District of Bonthe Island. The Protectorate, encompassing the remainder of the territory known in modern times as Sierra Leone, was established in 1896.

⁶ This section of the chapter encompasses three periods, which are historically distinct from one another: 1808-1896; 1896-1947; and 1947-1961

10. The imperial leadership pursued a social engineering strategy that was deeply divisive in its nature and impact. Simply put, the Colony and the Protectorate were developed separately and unequally. The colonialists used commerce, Christianity and notions of 'civilisation' as their tools to manipulate the relationships among the indigenous peoples, who had intermingled and dealt with one another for centuries. In place of harmonious co-existence, the colonialists sowed seeds of distrust, competition and intransigence.
11. By way of example, the chiefs and peoples of the Sierra Leonean interior had originally welcomed the arrival and gradual resettlement of various categories of freed slaves⁷ on the Western peninsula. Several traditional rulers even made their land available to the freed slaves. Yet the British colonial administration promoted the notion that western values and Christianity were superior to the traditional customs and religions practised in the Protectorate. The people in the Protectorate were thus effectively discriminated against on the basis of their belief systems.
12. In terms of land area, the Crown Colony was not more than 200 square miles. The Protectorate, on the other hand, extended some 182 miles from West to East, and 210 miles from North to South.⁸ The Colony had only about sixty thousand people by the end of the colonial period, while the Protectorate had about two million people.⁹ These massive disparities in land size and population, however, appeared to be inverted by the sociological and political divide.
13. The British had acquired the original land in the peninsula and its environs (now known as the Western Area) for the Colony in 1787, from the Temne ruler, King Nimbana, whose northern Koya Kingdom extended to the western tip of the territory. With colonial expansion, Bonthe Island, off the south-western shore, was later added. The Sierra Leone Company, a corporate entity created by the British Abolitionists who had led the campaign to end the slave trade in the United Kingdom, administered the Colony at first. By 1800, former slaves and their descendants had developed into a distinctive social group who were known as the Creoles, or Krios. They developed a language from among their various dialects, which became known as Krio.¹⁰ By 1808, with the collapse of

⁷ The categories of slaves freed onto the Western peninsula included the black poor from England, the labourers of Nova Scotia, the Maroons and the Recaptives. For a more detailed discussion of these immigrations, see Fyfe C.; *A Short History of Sierra Leone*, London, Longman, 1962 (hereinafter "Fyfe, *A Short History of Sierra Leone*"), at pages 26, 32, 38 and 61.

⁸ See Gwynne-Jones D.R.G., Mitchell, P.K., Harvey, M. E. and Swindell, K.; *A New Geography of Sierra Leone*, Essex, Longman, 1978 (hereinafter "Gwynne-Jones, et al., *A New Geography of Sierra Leone*"); at pages 4-5.

⁹ The peoples of the area formerly covered by the Protectorate include three dominant ethnic groups: Temne - 30%, originally in the Northern Province; Mende - 30%, originally in the Southern and Eastern Provinces; and Limba - 20%, originally in the Northern Province. Other minority tribes include the following: Susu, Koranko and Yalunka in the North; Vai, Krim, and Sherbro in the South; and Kono, Kissi and Gola in the East. Scattered among these groups are the Fullah and Mandigo tribes, as well as increasing numbers in the Lebanese community (4,000 in 2002 at end of the conflict, following massive emigration). For details of population distribution, see Manifesto 1999; *Traditional Methods of Conflict Management and Resolution of Possible Complementary Value to the proposed Sierra Leone TRC*; unpublished internal report; Freetown, July 2002 (hereinafter "Manifesto 99, *Traditional Methods of Conflict Management and Resolution*"), at page 6. See also Fyfe, *A Short History of Sierra Leone*, at page 174.

¹⁰ Krio (sometimes referred to as 'Creole') is a unique pidgin English that incorporates words and phrases used in popular dialect by the freed slaves in the eighteenth and nineteenth centuries. It is the *lingua franca* of Sierra Leone today.

the Sierra Leone Company administration, the Creoles had become colonial subjects governed directly by the British crown.

14. The territories of the Protectorate, meanwhile, came under British rule through the gradual and subtle advance of the colonialists into the hinterland. The British took their lead from Krio traders and Christian missionaries, whose entry into the outlying territories provided the context and the conditions for their annexation. By 1896, the British had expanded their coverage and control to a sufficient extent to be able to declare the hinterland a Protectorate. Thus, almost nine decades after the resettled former slaves had come under British colonial rule in 1808, the remainder of the population also lost their sovereignty to the avarice of imperialism.
15. The British treated the peoples of the Colony and the Protectorate quite differently. The inhabitants of the Protectorate were classified as “protected subjects” and were commonly referred to as “natives”. The people in the Colony were considered to be direct British subjects and were thus referred to as “non-natives”. These designations were not merely descriptive, but rather had huge political, social, economic and administrative implications. Only the Crown Colony State was governed by the monarch and recognised as part of the British Empire. The Protectorate was administered indirectly, as a British “protected territory”.
16. The existing rulers of the hinterland, who were monarchs in their own right, were nevertheless quickly subordinated to the colonialists. They had previously governed their people directly, but now became representatives of the Crown and were answerable to the local British administrator. In the past, these rulers had derived their legitimacy through a process of selection in accordance with the customs and traditions of their people. They represented the interests of their people and served as symbols of unity. They were subject to a variety of in-built checks on their power that purportedly prevented them from becoming abusive or autocratic.¹¹
17. In the process of acquiring territory and expanding the frontiers of the British Empire, the colonialists in Sierra Leone entered into treaties and agreements with traditional rulers in approximately 400 land units, which they designated as chiefdoms. The leader of each of these chiefdoms was given the title of ‘Paramount Chief’. In terms of functions and powers, Paramount Chiefs were restricted in comparison to the pre-colonial rulers.¹² Hierarchically, Paramount Chiefs fell directly under the District Commissioners, who were mainly white, British citizens. Only if a Paramount Chief fulfilled the District Commissioner’s demands for labour and taxes, as well as “maintaining law and order” within his territories, would he be given a degree of autonomy to rule his subjects.
18. Conscious of their steady marginalisation, the Chiefs objected strongly, albeit in vain, to colonial domination. Their protestations culminated in the so-called ‘Hut Tax War’ of 1898, led by Bai Bureh of Kasseh and a number of Mende chiefs, such as Nyagua of Kpanguma. The ‘Hut Tax War’ was a revolt against the proposed imposition of a tax based on the size of one’s homestead. The British suppressed the rebellion and the tax was retained. The perceived ringleaders of the protest were arrested and 98 of them were hanged in

¹¹ See Abraham, A.; *The History of Chieftaincy in Sierra Leone*; UNDP Governance Issues, 2003 (hereinafter “Abraham, *The History of Chieftaincy*”), at pages 3 – 4.

¹² See Abraham, *The History of Chieftaincy*, at pages 6 – 8.

Bandajuma. Indeed most of the Chiefs who had rebelled were punished – some of them imprisoned, others banished – while those who supported the British were rewarded along with their subjects.¹³ The period of unrest around the ‘Hut Tax War’ thus marked the effective consolidation of colonial rule. All the chiefs were compelled to adjust to their new status as the servants and representatives of the colonial government.

19. The overhaul of the structure of Chieftaincy was to have grave implications on the ways in which traditional rulers related to their subjects and on the socio-political organisation of the communities. The overbearing attitudes and behaviour imbibed by the Chiefs from their colonial masters led to their assuming new and overwhelming powers over their subjects. Some of these measures, such as the ability to impose fines or other punishments for errant behaviour, were retained long into the post-colonial period and permanently defined the negative perceptions of Chiefs among many of their subjects. Indeed, these negative perceptions carried over into the conflict in Sierra Leone in the 1990s as a partial explanation for the brutality of the treatment meted out to Chiefs and other figures of status or authority.
20. No system of Paramount Chieftaincy existed in the Colony. Instead the Office of Colonial Governor was charged with administration. By 1863, the people of the Colony were allowed some form of representation in the colonial Legislative Council and therefore had the opportunity to learn and grow in the management of their own affairs. The Municipality Act of 1893 inaugurated the City Council, the equivalent of local government for the Colony. The existence of a City Council in Freetown gave the inhabitants of the Colony a distinct advantage over their counterparts in the Protectorate. The institution was to become a significant factor for the people of the Protectorate as they dealt with their fears of domination by the Krios in the years before self-government.

Education

21. The disparities between the Colony and the Protectorate were particularly acute in the realms of social and economic development. British colonial policies afforded the residents of the Colony vastly superior access to resources such as education. These advantages for the Krios, the predominant residents of the Colony, endured until the end of colonialism in 1961.
22. Education in the Colony flourished to the extent that some residents were able to attain what were considered high standards in the West. In 1827, one of the first universities in sub-Saharan Africa was established in Freetown in the shape of Fourah Bay College. The Krios, who were the sole beneficiaries of such facilities, became the first professional lawyers, doctors, missionaries, educators and engineers.¹⁴

¹³ For more details see Squire, C. B., *Ill-fated Nation?*; Ro-Marong Limited, Freetown, 1995 (hereinafter “Squire, *Ill-fated Nation?*”), at pages 63 – 67. See also Fyfe, *A Short History of Sierra Leone*, at pages 141 – 158. A further negative consequence of this period of unrest was the killing of a large number of Krios, especially those living in Mende territories, because they were seen as collaborators of the British colonialists.

¹⁴ See Earl Conteh Morgan and Dixon-Fyle, M.; *Sierra Leone at the End of the Twentieth Century: History, Politics and Society*; Peter Lang, New York, 1999 (hereinafter “Dixon-Fyle, et al., *Sierra Leone at the End of the Twentieth Century?*”), at pages 20 – 28.

23. In respect of primary education, the Colony had 67 schools, which was a disproportionately high number compared to only 104 schools in the Protectorate. Moreover, the colonial government supported 50 out of 67 schools in the Colony and only 24 out of 104 in the Protectorate. This disparity in educational provision manifested itself clearly in the contrasting percentages of children attending primary school in the different regions of the country in 1947:¹⁵

Southern Province (Protectorate)	4.8%
Northern Province (Protectorate)	1.8%
Western Area (Colony)	50%
Eastern Province (Protectorate)	N/A

24. A cursory examination of these statistics against population figures reveals that the Western Area had far more children attending school than the rest of the country combined. There were also notable disparities within the Protectorate itself, given that the number of children attending primary school in the South was twice that of the North.
25. There was an upsurge in the number of school-going children between 1946 and 1953, following the establishment of the Colonial Development Welfare Fund and a massive investment in education in the Protectorate.¹⁶ However, the expansion did little to address any of the disparities because the new facilities were totally inadequate.
26. Further problems could be ascertained by examining the social profile of the children who were given the opportunity to go to school. In Bo, the main town of the Southern Province, for example, a school for boys was set up in 1906. Yet this school catered almost exclusively for the children of the elite and included the nominees and children of Chiefs. The establishment of such a school promoted the notion in the minds of ordinary people that members of the traditional ruling class were forming themselves into an elitist group. Indeed, this 'traditional elite' would provide the country's leadership from the end of colonialism. Meanwhile, there was only one school for girls anywhere in the Protectorate, namely the Hartford School at Moyamba.
27. With regard to teacher training colleges, the Northern Province had none at all, while there was one each in the South and East, owned and run by the missionaries in Bo and Bunumbu respectively. The highest qualification obtainable at these colleges in the Protectorate was the Teacher's Elementary Certificate, which qualified the holder to teach only at primary school level. No holder of such a certificate could enter Fourah Bay College, as the teacher training colleges did not offer Latin or science, both compulsory subjects for entrance to the university.

¹⁵ The source for these figures is Tucker, P., *The SLPP at 50: 42 Years of Trials and Tribulations*; originally printed in the *Standard Times International*, Vol. 1, No. 30; reprinted in *West Africa* magazine, 2 May 2003 (hereinafter "Tucker, *The SLPP at 50*"), at page 11.

¹⁶ The number of primary school-going children in the Protectorate expanded in a three-year period between 1950 and 1953 alone, from 18,931 to 24,889. By that period the South had nearly half (176 out of 367) of all the primary schools in the Protectorate. The entire North had only 96, while the East had 95. See Tucker, *The SLPP at 50*, at page 11.

28. As only persons who were “suitably educated” could serve in the colonial administration, the Krios had a massive advantage over people from the rest of the country. Accordingly, the Krios dominated all the important positions in the colonial government. Even the emergent entrepreneurial class relied on a literate work force, which was essentially Krio. The Krios were therefore extended inordinate advantages over other Sierra Leoneans, considering their population size.
29. The enduring disparities in education were not the result of some historical accident that favoured the Krios. On the contrary, the colonial rulers were adept at promoting specific indigenous groups with particular skills, which served their own interests. Communities close to the coast were the first to encounter the Europeans and had access to western education long before communities in the hinterland. The population from the coastal areas provided the bulk of interpreters, court officers, messengers and other support staff for the colonial administration.
30. The Krios were in a sense doubly advantaged because they were already literate by the time the Colony was governed directly from London and they had direct familial and other links to the United Kingdom arising from their historical relationship. They were classed as British subjects, which conferred certain privileges upon them and enabled them to be influential players in the period leading to self-government. Their only major drawback was their paucity of numbers. In 1947, when a constitutional debate addressed the question of voting rights, the Krios opposed an extension of the franchise to illiterate people. This opposition was widely considered to have been a self-preservation tactic on the part of the Krio minority, aimed at excluding illiterates (most of whom were from the Protectorate) from the political arena and thus allowing the Krios to continue to dominate domestic affairs. The move created deep resentment among the emerging educated elite in the Protectorate and heightened the perception of discrimination against Protectorate people.
31. Even educated Krios soon began to realise the impact of limited opportunities, however, when they found that there was a certain level in the colonial service beyond which non-British persons could not advance. The Krios were then quick to mobilise public opinion against the policies of the colonial government. With a vibrant civil society including established media houses, they constantly attacked the divisive politics of the colonialists. Experiences elsewhere on the African continent had demonstrated that such threats to colonialism were inevitably neutralised through the promotion of the interests of the numerically superior natives by the colonialists. Sierra Leone proved to be no exception. The British increasingly began finding common cause with the Protectorate peoples and the emergent immigrant groups such as the Lebanese and the Syrians. New constitutional arrangements that granted increased representation to the numerically superior Protectorate were ostensibly designed to expand public participation in governance. It is difficult to escape the impression, though, that in reality these measures were the first steps by the colonialists towards reining in the vocal and perceptibly “over-educated” Krio elite.

Legal duality

32. The distinction between the Colony and the Protectorate was also reflected in the laws that governed them. Whereas the Colony adopted the English Common Law, the Protectorate operated a combination of legal doctrines and a three-tier court system, as follows:
- (a) The Court of Native Chiefs, which regulated matters relating to land and factional fights. It had no jurisdiction over criminal offences;
 - (b) The court of the District Commissioner, which had original jurisdiction over all offences; and
 - (c) The Court of the District Commissioner and Native Chiefs, on which both parties sat to try criminal cases. This court had the power to impose the death penalty.¹⁷
33. The ambiguity over the hierarchy of these three courts in the Protectorate created a great deal of confusion about the powers and the limits of the Chiefs. In theory, the Chiefs were not permitted to adjudicate on criminal cases alone. In practice, however, they often did so and they became very powerful as a result. The Chiefs frequently exploited their people's uncertainty about the legal system to impose fines and other kinds of punishment as a means of consolidating their authority. Their abuse of the courts sowed the seeds for conflict over which law would prevail in any given situation. Quite apart from the differences between the Colony and the Protectorate, the Chiefs created a harmful situation of legal duality within the Protectorate itself.
34. The multiple conflicts of laws were to reverberate long into the post-colonial period. The Colony had a heritage of applying only the Common Law, whereas the Protectorate had a mixed system of inconsistent and irrational application. The Common Law was supposed to supersede customary law in the event of a conflict between the two, but in reality most disputes were decided at the whim of the adjudicator. The Common Law was codified while Customary Law was not, making the latter more susceptible to arbitrary interpretation, varying from Chiefdom to Chiefdom as well as between different ethnic groups. The impact of this legal duality was that people were treated differently in response to the same forms of illegal behaviour. The people of the Protectorate were given cause to resent the law and feel aggrieved at their second-class treatment; they looked spitefully upon the Krios, who seemed to have everything tailor-made for them.
35. As custodians of custom, the Chiefs were responsible for creating and adjusting the laws of the Protectorate. Their interpretations were often influenced by considerations other than a sense of justice. An impression spread among the people that the Chiefs had become predators on their own subjects.¹⁸ Such a negative perception undermined the legitimacy of the Chiefs and further alienated them from the ordinary folk. In addition, survival as a Chief came to depend almost entirely on one's subservience to the colonial authority rather

¹⁷ See Abraham, *The History of Chieftaincy*, at page 7.

¹⁸ See Palmer, I., *Investigating the Antecedents of the Rebel War in Sierra Leone*, narrative report on a project commissioned by the Ford Foundation for the Truth and Reconciliation Commission, University of Sierra Leone, Freetown, July 2002 (hereinafter "Palmer, *Investigating the Antecedents of the Rebel War*").

than on one's allegiance to the population one was elected to serve. Sadly this did tradition became entrenched to the extent that it did not change when colonialism ended. Chiefs were to be co-opted in an identical fashion by the post-colonial political parties, who relied on them to corral support from their people at election time. In exchange, the parties offered their support to help the Chiefs retain their positions even when there was good cause to remove them.

Systems of local government

36. The Colony and the Protectorate were also governed differently at the local level. In the Colony the Municipality of Freetown was established as far back as 1895. The management of the Freetown council was by election of a substantial percentage of the population who were literate and had assets that qualified them to be on the voters' list.
37. By contrast, in the Protectorate native administrations were first established in 1937, District Councils in 1946 and Town Councils in 1950. These institutions were perceived by the people in the Protectorate not to be progressive as they were dominated by Paramount Chiefs who were elected on a limited franchise by only the Tribal Authorities, to represent their Chiefdoms on the Councils. Feelings of disenfranchisement took root quite early in the Protectorate and contributed to a diminished sense of self-esteem and perception of enforced marginalisation, especially among the youths, which became a recurring theme as a cause of conflict.

Resources

38. The endowment of resources was another area in which the Colony and the Protectorate experienced contrasting fortunes. On the face of it, the Protectorate enjoyed a natural advantage in this regard, as it was blessed with all the economic resources (including bauxite, iron ore, rutile (titanium ore), diamonds, coffee and cocoa) the country needed to develop, while the Colony had virtually nothing to offer.
39. However, what the Colony lacked in economic resources it compensated for with its highly literate and privileged population. The people of the Colony were to form the professional classes that were needed to run the post-colonial bureaucracy. Centralisation of government enabled those in the Colony to enrich themselves using the resources that the people of the Protectorate had produced. The profits of Sierra Leone's resource endowment were channelled almost exclusively into the Colony, financing the construction of huge houses, hospitals and other infrastructure, as well as a clean water supply for the citizens of Freetown. The citizens of the protectorate were deprived of any such benefits and remained in abject poverty.

Strangers in the same country

40. The British colonialists suspected the Krios of inciting the people of the Protectorate into rebellion during the Hut Tax War in 1898. The colonial administration therefore enacted stringent laws to exclude all Krios from the hinterland. Krios became "strangers" in the Protectorate by virtue of the Protectorate Ordinance of 1896 and they had to pay "stranger" fees to the local Chief, making them a lucrative source of revenue. Given that Krios were regarded as 'foreigners' in the Protectorate territories, they were afforded only those rights extended to them by the local Chiefs.
41. In the Colony, the different ethnic groups from the Provinces were segregated and compelled to reside in designated areas: for example, the Mendes stayed in Ginger Hall, East Freetown, while the Fullahs were put in the area that became known as Fullah Town. Apart from living in individual ghettos, people from the Protectorate could not acquire voting rights in the city since they were illiterate and had no assets that qualified them to be on the roll of voters.¹⁹ The Krios of the Colony did not mix with the Protectorate people in any way that could have fostered greater understanding of each other. Being ignorant of one other, it was easy and convenient for the Krio elite to characterise the Protectorate people as uncivilised. This stereotype was applied to the Mende people in particular, as illustrated by the following newspaper excerpt from the 1920s, which depicted them as:
- "...dressed, or rather undressed, in a style which would have been considered scanty even in the days when Adam delved and Eve spun. [They] go about our thoroughfares offering silent and nude reproaches to the existing local regulations, our civilisation and ideas of decency. The Kossoh folk or, as they liked to be called, Mendes... filled along the streets, all in a row, like skewered herrings, clothed for the most part with hideous grins and adorned with dirt. The lower apparel or rather appendage, which they ought not to wear, only render[s] the absence of those which they ought to wear more conspicuous..."²⁰
42. The endurance of this prejudice was such that, by 1947, the Protectorate people in the Colony outnumbered the Krios²¹ but were totally excluded from Colony politics.
43. The arrival of Lebanese and Syrian immigrants in 1905 created new dynamics in inter-group relations. The Protectorate people embraced the new arrivals and diverted the bulk of their trade to them. The Lebanese and the Syrians were efficient, humble and literate and they had capital. They were willing, unlike the Krios, to grant credit to the Protectorate traders. In a short time, the British also began to favour the Lebanese and the Syrians over the Krios. This shift in economic alignment removed the remaining opportunity for inter-dependency between the people of the Protectorate and the Krios.

¹⁹ See Kande, J. D., "Politicisation of Ethnic Identities in Sierra Leone", in *African Studies Review*, 1992 (hereinafter "Kande, *Politicisation of Ethnic Identities*") at page 7.

²⁰ See Sierra Leone Weekly News, 9 September 1922, at page 8.

²¹ *Ibidem*, at page 8.

44. In the period between 1896 and 1947, the separation between the Krios and the people of the Protectorate grew ever wider. The two groups became strangers to each other in the same land. The deepening division had stark effects on the approaches of both groups to post-colonial politics. The Krios, fearful that they would not be treated fairly under a Protectorate government, formed a party of their own, the National Congress of Sierra Leone, to protect their interests. The Protectorate people, in defiance of the Krios, seized the opportunity at independence to assert themselves and to redistribute the national wealth in a manner reflective of their numerical strength.

Land tenure and ownership

45. The differences in the rules for land tenure and ownership between the Colony and the Protectorate contributed in large measure to the neglect of the Protectorate and a glaring lack of investment in its rich arable lands. Whereas Sierra Leoneans from all parts of the country had similar rights in the ownership of land in the Colony, the same was not true in the Protectorate.
46. Three types of land ownership obtained in the Protectorate: communal land holding, family land holding and individual land tenure.²² Irrespective of the type of land ownership an individual asserted in the Protectorate, different land laws applied to Sierra Leoneans depending on whether they were “natives” (those originating from the Provinces) or so-called “non-natives” (those originating from the Colony). “Natives” could hold an indefinite interest in land in the Protectorate but “non-natives” could only acquire land and hold it on limited tenancy. The Provincial Land Act of 1906 stated that “no non-native shall acquire a greater interest in land in the Provinces than a tenancy for fifty years.” The same statute contained the further clause that “nothing in this Section shall prevent the insertion in any lease of a clause providing for the renewal of such lease for a second or further terms not over twenty one years.”²³
47. The Provincial Land Act of 1906 was manifestly discriminatory, as it gave certain advantages and privileges to the Protectorate people by reason of their place of birth or origin, which were not extended to other Sierra Leoneans. The Chiefs could arbitrarily recover land sold to “non-natives” if they so desired, especially if the land was formerly communally owned. The Act was designed to protect lands in the Provinces and have them available for use by the local people. In practice, however, it constrained the conversion of land into economic capital and prevented “non-natives” from making long-term investments in the Provinces for fear that their capital was not secure, being subject to recovery by the chiefs. Therefore, despite the huge agricultural potential in the Provinces, economic activities there focused mainly on trading and mining. Only the government made any real investment in agriculture in the Protectorate (through the Integrated Agricultural Projects scheme). The overwhelming majority of private economic investments were concentrated in Freetown and other parts of the Western Area.

²² As regulated by Section 4, Article 122 of the Provincial Land Act 1906, in the *Laws of Sierra Leone*.

²³ Both passages come from Section 4, Article 122 of the Provincial Land Act 1906, in the *Laws of Sierra Leone*.

48. Discriminatory provisions against Krios and others regarded “non-natives”, such as the Lebanese, existed in the statutes of Sierra Leone for a period of 85 years, from 1906 to 1991. The effect of these discriminatory laws was a deep-rooted reluctance to invest in the Protectorate. Thus even where the possibility existed for partnerships to make the land profitable, the majority of the people in the Provinces, lacking the capital and restricted by law and communal ownership, remained poor in the midst of an abundant land. In particular, the banks and commercial enterprises interpreted the restriction imposed by Communal Ownership as a basis to reject Provincial land as collateral for loans. The people of the Provinces saw no route out of poverty.
49. Meanwhile the population of Freetown was able to secure commercial bank loans and access state services with comparative ease. This development steadily deepened the social gap between the two peoples and explains the perception of people in the Protectorate that those in the Colony consumed all the country's wealth.
50. The cumulative outcome of socio-economic divisions, coupled over time with a host of other disparities between the Colony and the Protectorate, would induce people who had lived harmoniously for most of history to become polarised along ethnic and regional lines at moments of crisis. The polarity that is captured in the phrase ‘two nations in the same land’ was an ominous historical antecedent for future civil conflict with ethnic and regional undertones.

The Era of Party Politics

51. The system that governed the Colony and the Protectorate as two separate entities lasted until 1947. Up to that point, the only contact between the two entities in terms of governance was the presence of three Paramount Chiefs on the colonial Legislative Council, as provided for in the Constitution of 1927. The numerical strength of the Protectorate was not reflected in the disbursement of institutional influence or state resources. It was iniquitous for such a small number of people as lived in the Colony to have such access to and control over state resources.
52. Contradictory views on the management of state resources had fostered such mistrust between the Krios and the Protectorate people that it would largely shape the subsequent political alignments of both groups. The impact of this mistrust came to the fore in 1947 when a new Constitution (known as the ‘Stevens Constitution’ after its chief drafter Siaka Stevens) was proposed in order to prepare the country for independence. This Constitution amalgamated the Colony and the Protectorate into a single political entity, but divided their elite representatives into opposing factions, each dedicated to protecting the interests of its own people.
53. Among the key provisions of the 1947 Constitution were:
- The creation of an elected “unofficial” (non-executive) majority in the Legislative Council, comprising 22 members;
 - 14 “unofficial” positions in the Legislative Council for representatives from the Protectorate. These representatives would be elected by fellow Paramount Chiefs and members of Tribal Authorities to the Protectorate Assembly (which had been set up in 1946 as a counterbalance to the Legislative Council in the Colony), and then on to the Legislative Council;

- 7 “unofficial” positions in the Legislative Council for representatives from the Colony, who were to be directly elected.
54. The creation of a single legislature for the country signalled the demise of Krio dominance since the Krios were numerically far inferior. The Krios in the Colony argued vehemently against the 1947 Constitution on the basis that it was wrong and impracticable to have uneducated Chiefs making laws for people who were colonial subjects. The Krios therefore advocated that a separate legislature should be created for the Colony. To champion their respective positions, the factions from both Colony and Protectorate formed themselves into narrow, regionally-based political parties with little or no national agenda.
 55. In the Colony, the original ideals of the West African Youth League,²⁴ namely to bring together the working class in both the Protectorate and the Colony to fight the evils of colonialism, gave way to the movement of Creole ethnic protectionism. This movement in turn gave birth to the National Congress of Sierra Leone, headed by Dr. Bankole Bright.
 56. In the Protectorate, pressure groups such as the Protectorate Educational and Progressive Union, which was dominated by Paramount Chiefs, and the Sierra Leone Organisational Society, which was dominated by the Protectorate elite, were galvanised into action. They united into a single force, putting aside their differences at least temporarily, to meet the Creole challenge.
 57. The political agenda became a battle over which regional elite would succeed the British. Little consideration was given to the majority of the inhabitants in either the Colony or the Protectorate. The debate on the issue of a single national legislature was indicative of this battle. Dr. Bankole Bright was reported to have said, “the Colony and the Protectorate are two hills standing opposite each other and can never meet.”²⁵
 58. The feelings of the Protectorate people were equally uncompromising, as vented by Bai Koblo Path Bana, one of the Protectorate representatives in the Legislative Council:

“We warn the inhabitants of the Colony that they are embarking on dangerous grounds in making any claims of independence from us. We would urge them to reflect on what is happening between India and Pakistan and between the Arabs and the Jews in Palestine, before they persist in claiming exclusive rights. If our emancipation should come, as we earnestly hope it will, we could well depend upon our treaties to reclaim our here lands ceded to the British crown, now known as the Colony area, and I would therefore ask our Colony brethren to locate themselves elsewhere.”²⁶
 59. A variety of political groups in the Protectorate came together in 1951 to create the Sierra Leone People’s Party (SLPP). They included the Protectorate Education Progressive Union (PEPU), the People’s Party (PP) and the

²⁴ The West African Youth League was set up by I. T. A. Wallace Johnson as a pan-African organisation.

²⁵ See Tucker, *The SLPP at 50*, at page 11.

²⁶ See Tucker, *The SLPP at 50*, at page 11.

Sierra Leone Organising Society. Moderate members of the Krio community joined the party as well. This effort to forge a link between the Colony and the Protectorate was not welcomed among the elite Krios.²⁷ Despite claiming to be a party for all the people of the Protectorate, the SLPP was composed almost entirely of Protectorate middle class interests, the only exception being Siaka Stevens, who was a trade union leader. The party was not a broad-based party of mass appeal and relied on Chiefs to “deliver” popular support in the communities. Its origins would affect its management of power in the post-colonial period.

60. The 1951 Legislative Assembly elections pitted the NCSL against the SLPP. The result was victory for the SLPP. Protesting Krios, who constituted themselves into the Settlers’ Descendant Union, challenged the constitutional legality of imposing “native” rule on them, without success. Having failed to stop the SLPP, political and economic survival for the Krios depended on creating an alliance with any group opposed to the SLPP. This strategy was to prove convenient in elections held at the end of the colonial period and it places in context the historical link between the Krios and the Northern-dominated All People’s Congress (APC).
61. The defeat of the Krios in the political theatre did not eliminate their impact on the newly self-governing state of 1951, as they continued to dominate the positions in the state bureaucracy. With its electoral victory, the SLPP was invited to choose members who would sit on the Executive Council, a kind of nascent cabinet. The Executive Council assumed a more indigenous character than the colonial administration, with the SLPP members becoming its Ministers and Sir Milton Margai becoming the Chief Minister.
62. In 1956, the Protectorate Assembly was finally dismantled. A year before its abolition, in 1955, the weak nature of support for the SLPP among the working class and peasantry was revealed by strikes in the North, South and East of the country, as well as in Freetown. Sierra Leoneans were rising up against various oppressors. In the North, the imposition of the precept – an extra tax levied by the Native Administration – sparked an open rebellion by the people against their Chiefs. Residences of Chiefs were burnt down, goods were looted from Lebanese shops in Port Loko, Kambia, Bombali and Tonkolili Districts and many people were killed.²⁸ Buildings belonging to either Chiefs or Tribal authorities were burnt.
63. In the Southern District of Moyamba, similar acts were repeated. In the Eastern District of Kono, the Chiefs were targeted for their appropriation of diamond licence fees and for failing to improve the general welfare of the people. Finally in the Western Area, Marcus Grant, the Secretary General of the Artisanal and Allied Workers Union, led his group of urban unemployed and working class into rioting against official corruption and poor labouring conditions. The SLPP was not in tune with the mood of the provincial working classes, the support base it would need to win elections.

²⁷ La Ray Denzer, *Constance Cummings-John: Memoirs of a Krio Leader*, Sam Bookman publishers, Ibadan, Nigeria, 1995 (hereinafter “*Cummings-John: Memoirs of a Krio Leader*”), at pages 43-59.

²⁸ See Cartwright, J. R., *Politics in Sierra Leone 1947 – 1967*, University of Toronto Press, 1970 (hereinafter “*Cartwright, Politics in Sierra Leone 1947 – 1967*”), at page 79.

64. In 1957, the British colonial authorities conducted another election. This time the NCSL found an ally in the Kono Progressive Union, an ethnic-based party, to challenge the SLPP. It appeared for a time as if the NCSL-SLPP party rivalry was subsiding and being replaced by a division based on ethnicity, class and regionalism. The KPU won all the parliamentary seats in the Kono District. The overall victory of the SLPP was assured, however, as the party had no effective rival in the rest of the Protectorate.
65. The SLPP victory of 1957 was soon to be undermined by an internal split in the party. Albert Margai had defeated his brother Sir Milton Margai in the contest for party leader and should therefore have become Chief Minister. Yet the leaders of the party prevailed upon Albert Margai to allow his brother to remain as leader. When forming his cabinet, Sir Milton Margai removed from the list those members of the party who had opposed him, despite the list having been approved by the party's executive council. Among the members excluded was Siaka Stevens, while Sir Milton Margai's brother, Albert, was retained.²⁹
66. The internal split in the SLPP led to the formation of the People's National Party – the PNP. The breakaway group that formed the PNP included Albert Margai, Siaka Stevens and many others who had been marginalised by Sir Milton Margai. An ethnic dimension was added to this opposition against the conservative wing of the party when Sir Milton Margai effected a cabinet change in 1960, which jettisoned Temne members from his cabinet.
67. The strikes of 1955, the formation of a splinter group from the SLPP, the defeat of the NCSL and the perceived Temne exclusion from cabinet had all contributed to the fragmentation of the political system by 1960. The constitutional talks underway in London, in contrast, called for some form of unity if the British were not to postpone the granting of independence. Anxious to rid themselves of colonial rule, the political class coalesced by necessity into the United National Front and went to London to negotiate for independence. Among the main players in the delegation was Siaka Stevens of the PNP, who would become a key player in post-independence Sierra Leone.
68. At the London talks, Siaka Stevens refused to sign the final document, which established the basis for granting independence to Sierra Leone in 1961. Stevens objected because, as he put it, the British "had given us the goat and held onto the rope."³⁰ His turn of phrase was a clear reference to the defence agreement between Sierra Leone and the United Kingdom for the use of the Freetown port as a naval facility for the British armed forces. Stevens returned home and immediately acted to exploit popular disenchantment with the political elite by forming The All People's Congress party – the APC.
69. The new APC party was quite different in composition from the SLPP. The majority of APC leaders came from working class backgrounds, while the SLPP leaders came from established traditional Chieftaincy homes. While the SLPP boasted numerous university graduates, the APC had none. The SLPP comprised mostly older men while the APC had a higher proportion of younger men.³¹

²⁹ See *Cummings-John: Memoirs of a Krio Leader*, at pages 118 – 121.

³⁰ See Cartwright, *Politics in Sierra Leone 1947 – 1967*, at page 79.

³¹ Of the United National Front delegation that went to London in 1960, the average age of its SLPP members was 53 years old, while the average age of its APC members was 35 years old.

70. The APC was also ideologically detached from the SLPP. The SLPP motto of “One People, One Country” signified that national unity was important to the party.³² The APC motto of “Now or Never” centralised the notion of capturing state power. While the SLPP claimed it wanted unity between the Colony and the Protectorate, the APC professed socialist ideals: a welfare state with no tribalism, no class distinctions, and no exploitation.³³ In addition, the APC was against the autocratic rule of Paramount Chiefs and wanted the whole institution of Chieftaincy to be democratised. Chiefs still provided the main bastion of support for the SLPP. Most important of all, the founding fathers of the APC were almost exclusively of Northern origin.
71. From 1960 onwards, the fight for political power would develop into a protracted rivalry between these two opposing parties. On the one hand, the APC sought to appeal to the proletarian masses and the influential tribes of the North; on the other hand, the SLPP drew on the backing of the middle class, traditional elite, dominated by the ruling houses of the South and East. From the 1960s onwards, party politics supplanted the Colony-Protectorate divide as the greatest obstacle to national cohesion and identity, and as a premise for prejudice, hostility and, ultimately, conflict.

The Sierra Leone People's Party (SLPP) in Power

72. On 27 April 1961, independence was granted to Sierra Leone. The new Constitution made provision for a legislature consisting of but one chamber, in which twelve Paramount Chiefs would sit alongside other, elected representatives. The Chiefs who were to be voted on to the legislature by a limited franchise of the Tribal Authorities, whereby one Chief would represent each of the twelve districts. The SLPP majority party formed the first post-colonial government, with Sir Milton Margai as Prime Minister. Key members of the APC were arrested on the eve of independence on suspicion that they wanted to stir up trouble. Consequently Sir Milton Margai declared the first state of emergency in independent Sierra Leone.
73. Barely a year after independence, the 1962 elections revealed the depths of ethnic and regional polarisation in the country and the superficiality of the ideological differences between the two main parties. First, perhaps predictably, the victorious SLPP obtained far more of its seats in the South and the East than in the North and the Western Area. The party won 18 of the 32 seats on offer in the South and the East and only ten of the 29 seats on offer in the North and the Western Area. It lost seats in its “safe areas” of Bo and Kenema due largely to the votes of northerners settled in these areas, the majority of whom were traders and diamond miners. It also failed to win any seats in Kono.
74. The poor showing of the SLPP in the North, the Western Area and in Kono illustrated that a growing divide was pitting the South and the Southeast (pro-SLPP strongholds) against the North and the West (apparently anti-SLPP territories). This divide seemed to be overlaid by a divergence of attitudes between traditionalists, on the pro-SLPP side, and youths, or radicals, against.

³² See Sierra Leone People's Party (SLPP), Submission to TRC Thematic Hearings on Political Parties, 2003.

³³ See All People's Congress (APC), Submission to TRC Thematic Hearings on Political Parties, April 2003.

In addition, the rout of the SLPP in Kono District suggested the emergence of two new political forces. First, the impact of migrant workers in diamond-mining areas had demonstrated their clear potential to influence local politics. Second, the rejection of the SLPP by Kono voters represented their firm desire to retain ownership of the District's diamond resources. The SLPP Government, in collaboration with local Chiefs, had sold off many diamond licences to the foreign-owned Sierra Leone Selection Trust (SLST), which was an unpopular move.

75. Partly due to the fact that its main support base came from areas populated by Mende people, and partly because of opposition across the rest of the country, the impression grew that the SLPP was a "Mende man's party." The SLPP Government was therefore labelled as a Mende government.

Cronyism and the public perception of the SLPP

76. The image of a single, strong ethnic group running the government polarised public opinion in the country yet further and introduced notions of cronyism and nepotism in many state institutions.
77. In 1964, Sir Milton Margai died in office and was succeeded by his brother, Sir Albert Margai. The manner of succession was to cause another major fission in the Party. Section 58 (2) of the 1961 Constitution empowered the Governor General, Sir Lightfoot Boston, to appoint as "Prime Minister any Member of Parliament who appeared to him likely to command the support of the majority in the House". This was a controversial clause. In the first place, no person could know, prior to any vote, which MP commanded the majority at any given time. The clause therefore introduced the potential for a damaging split in the ruling SLPP. Predictably, Sir Albert Margai's appointment caused just such a split.
78. The controversy was underscored by the immediate measures Sir Albert Margai took against those who opposed his appointment. He sacked most of the prominent dissidents from his Cabinet,³⁴ with little appreciation of the rancour his move would cause. Most of those he sacked were not only strong erstwhile party members, but also men with formidable individual, ethnic and regional support bases. Each of them left the SLPP to join the APC, carrying large sections of their supporters with them.
79. Sir Albert Margai's reduction of the cabinet from nineteen to eleven members, coupled with the promotion of younger men who were personally loyal to him, seemed pre-destined to estrange the conservative members who had benefited under Sir Milton Margai's cabinet. The downsizing of the cabinet was also perceived as an attempt to sideline the North, especially the Temne ethnic group. The cabinet had five Mendes, four Creoles, one Temne and one Susu. There was no Limba and no Kono representation.

³⁴ The members of the SLPP Government sacked by Sir Albert Margai included Honourable Y.D. Sesay, Honourable D. L. Sumner, Honourable A. D. Wurie, Honourable M. S. Mustapha and Dr. J. Karefa-Smart.

80. Sir Albert Margai increasingly turned to his own Mende ethnic group to consolidate his power. When he doubled the percentage of Mendes in the officer corps of the Sierra Leone Army from 26 percent to 52 percent,³⁵ his actions were perceived as an attempt to “Mende-ise” the forces. In addition, he gave David Lansana, a Gola affiliated to the Mende, accelerated promotion until he became the Force Commander. Nepotism on the basis of ethnicity became rampant in the Army from Sir Albert Margai’s rule onwards.³⁶
81. After the Army, Sir Albert Margai turned his attention to the judiciary. He appointed his long-standing friend, Gershon Collier, to the post of Chief Justice and then sent the Acting Chief Justice C. E. O. Cole (whose loyalty he doubted) to become Sierra Leone’s Permanent Representative to the United Nations.³⁷ This replacement was aimed at neutralising and bringing into line a dissonant judiciary, which was filled with Creoles allied to and increasingly supportive of the APC.
82. In the Civil Service, the changes effected by Sir Albert Margai created the impression that he was purging it of non-SLPP members. As Mendes received appointment to a number of high-profile jobs in the public sector, the perception of “cronyism” with ethnic undertones continued to deepen.³⁸
83. Many Sierra Leoneans point out that such pro-Mende discrimination was not as pervasive as it appeared given that Krios retained 80 percent of all civil service jobs. One reason often cited as justification for these appointments was that Sir Albert Margai wanted to address the inequality of Krio domination in a proactive fashion. The very suggestion of such radical changes, however, increased concern among the affected elite and encouraged them to find common cause with the sidelined Temnes and Limbas who predominated in the APC.

Local elections and ethnic polarisation

84. The town and district council elections of 1966 proved that ethnic polarisation had become entrenched in politics. Moreover, it showed that the incumbent Prime Minister would go to any lengths to save himself and his party from defeat. Prior to these elections Sir Albert Margai took several measures to suppress the opposition. In 1965, for example, he used the Defamatory Libel Act to silence APC supporting journalists.³⁹ He was also alleged to have used Paramount Chiefs actively to suppress his opponents. In some constituencies he encouraged the Chiefs openly to take part in elections,⁴⁰ while in others the Chiefs refused permission for APC candidates to campaign in their Chiefdoms.⁴¹ Increasingly the Chiefs were sucked into partisan politics and commanded less and less respect in the eyes of their subjects. Although the SLPP won the election, it was a hollow victory secured largely by intimidating the opposition and manipulating the Chiefs.

³⁵ See Dixon-Fyle, et al., *Sierra Leone at the End of the Twentieth Century*, at page 78.

³⁶ Major (Retired) Abu Noah, Submission to TRC Thematic Hearings on the Sierra Leone Army, May 2003.

³⁷ See the report in the *Daily Mail* newspaper, 27 November 1965.

³⁸ See Tucker, *The SLPP at 50*, at page 17.

³⁹ One example of the use of this legislation was the prison sentence given to A. F Thorlu Bangura of the *We Yone* newspaper, as reported in the *Journalist Daily Mail*, 22 December 1965.

⁴⁰ See the report in the *We Yone* newspaper, 25 September 1965.

⁴¹ See Cartwright, *Politics in Sierra Leone 1947 – 1967*, at page 197.

85. An examination of the electoral returns of 1966⁴² seems to lend credence to the theory that Chieftaincy had become a political office. For example, 172 of the 208 seats in the Mende Chiefdoms of the South and East were obtained unopposed by the SLPP candidates. In the North and in Kono, the SLPP obtained only 47 unopposed seats out of the 165 on offer.
86. The SLPP could only really count on the Mende votes of the South and East to secure its majority. In the North, the results would suggest that the Temnes were assuming their own political identity in the form of the APC. In Freetown, the Krios threw in their lot with the APC, largely because of their view of the SLPP as a common adversary.
87. A widely held view among academics in Sierra Leone is that the SLPP was the first political party to have manipulated the electoral process through the intimidation of political opponents. The SLPP was alleged to have used such tactics as preventing aspiring adversaries from appearing at nomination centres in order for SLPP candidates to be declared as 'elected unopposed'. The cynical tactics of the SLPP under Sir Albert Margai amounted to a very flagrant denial of the right of the electorate to choose their leaders. Indeed, its practices were to be perfected and put to yet more debilitating use by the APC when it came to power later.
88. The victory of the APC in Freetown local elections brought Siaka Stevens to the seat of Mayor. The northern-led APC was now in control of the municipal government in the capital. The electoral tactics of both parties, along with the unashamedly "chameleonic" nature of Sierra Leonean politicians, ensured that disillusionment was the main reaction of ordinary people to politics. Nevertheless, it must be noted that while District Council election results arose from a limited franchise (only the Tribal Authorities could participate in the poll), the local elections of 1966 were indicative of the real political pendulum and therefore served notice that the 1967 general elections would be hotly contested.

⁴² The figures included in this paragraph are obtained from the official election results as published in the Sierra Leone Gazette of 26 May 1966.

The 1967 Elections and their Aftermath

89. With the experience of the District Council elections having emphasised the fragility of his grip on power, Sir Albert Margai is alleged to have taken measures to prevent a defeat in the general elections of 1967. First he attempted to introduce a one party state, but in the face of intense opposition from civil society, his bill was withdrawn before it was presented to Parliament. He then announced a coup attempt on 9 February 1967, implicating some prominent Krios like Dr. Sarif Easmon and Dr. Davidson Nicol as its sponsors. He arrested eight military officers including the Deputy Force Commander, John Bangura, who was the only Temne among the six top-ranking officers in the armed forces.⁴³
90. The arrests of Krio and Temne military officers overtly fuelled the accusations of an SLPP campaign to target people from these ethnic groups. Predictably there was a backlash. Anti-Mende feelings were whipped up to unprecedented levels prior to the election in Freetown.⁴⁴ SLPP attempts to rig the elections and widespread personal corruption were to be documented in the report of the Forster Commission of Inquiry, which was set up after the assumption of political power by the Army some time later.
91. On the eve of the general election in 1967, Sir Albert Margai was confronted with division and dissatisfaction that were largely of his own making. He had denied the party symbol to his internal opponents and prevented them from standing as official candidates of the SLPP. He encountered huge hostility from the Western Area and, in the shape of the APC, an aggressive opposition party that had successfully mobilised popular sentiment against the SLPP, particularly in the Northern Province. On the whole, the elections were scarred by bitter power struggles based on ethnicity, personality and party affiliation. The results, when they were eventually discerned from amidst the confusion, would spell defeat for Sir Albert Margai personally and for the SLPP party.
92. The SLPP officially won 28 seats out of a total of 66. When the Electoral Commissioner declared that the party had obtained 32 seats, the same number as the APC, it stoked a pervasive confusion that dominated the days after the elections. Just as at the local level, there were again stark regional variations in the election results. Most of the SLPP seats were obtained in the South and the East. It won only one seat in the North and not a single seat out of the eleven contested in the Western Area.
93. By ethnic division, the SLPP won 19 Mende seats and nine non-Mende seats, of which a total of six were "unopposed". The APC, on the other hand, won 32 seats, mostly in the North and West. The APC returned 15 Temne seats, seven Krio seats, two Kono seats and eight seats in areas of mixed-ethnicity electorate, including Limbas, Korankos and Mendes.⁴⁵ On the basis of these results, it appeared that the country was divided in half along ethnic and regional lines.

⁴³ Captain (Retired) Moigboi Moigande Kosia, former officer in the Republic of Sierra Leone Military Forces (RSLMF) and later recruited into the RUF by Foday Sankoh as his first 'G-1' officer; TRC Interview conducted at TRC Headquarters, Freetown; 7 May 2003.

⁴⁴ See *Cummings-John: Memoirs of a Krio Leader*, at pages 154 – 155.

⁴⁵ See Cartwright, *Politics in Sierra Leone 1947 – 1967*, at page 205.

94. The Electoral Commissioner created a new source of tension by abruptly changing the rules for the Paramount Chieftaincy election results. Whereas in the past the Paramount Chiefs were expected to join the majority party in Parliament, the Commissioner in 1967 allotted these seats unilaterally to the SLPP before a winner of the elections had been declared. The Commissioner's actions provoked blind hysteria all over the country, with both parties celebrating that they had won the election.⁴⁶ There were reports of Temnes being attacked and expelled from the South and the East, as well as Mendes being assaulted in Ginger Hall (a Mende sector of the city of Freetown).⁴⁷
95. In the course of its public hearings in 2003, the Truth and Reconciliation Commission received a number of submissions and testimonies regarding the conduct of the 1967 elections. It became clear that Sir Albert Margai's policy of excluding his internal opponents within the SLPP from contesting the elections on an SLPP ticket resulted in many of them contesting the elections as independent candidates. Four independent candidates who stood in this fashion defeated their former SLPP colleagues. Given what had transpired in 1962, the SLPP expected these independents to return to the fold after the election, which would have enabled the party to claim that it had secured 32 seats in Parliament. This prophecy was to prove impossible.
96. The independent candidates in question were Prince Williams of Bo, L. A. M. Brewa of Moyamba, Kai Samaba of Kenema and Manna Kpaka of Pujehun. This group of four insisted, apparently after consultations with members of the APC leadership, that the condition for their return to the SLPP party was that Sir Albert Margai stand down as leader. When Margai refused to step aside, the four independents declared their opposition to his continuing as Prime Minister. In effect therefore, the SLPP came out with 28 seats, four less than the tally of the APC.
97. The leadership of the SLPP stoutly refused to concede defeat, which heightened the political temperature in the country. The Governor General tried to calm the situation by inviting the leaders of the two parties, Sir Albert Margai and Siaka Stevens, to form a coalition government.⁴⁸ The APC rejected the proposal, maintaining that it had won the election by simple majority and should be allowed to form the new government. Several accounts of what transpired after this point have since surfaced. A submission to the TRC by Peter Tucker, who was Secretary to Sir Albert Margai during his reign as Prime Minister, claims that pressure was placed on the Governor General by elderly APC stalwarts, many of whom had been his former schoolmates and judges of the Superior Court. The APC delegation is said to have visited the Governor General at State House and pressed him to recognise Siaka Stevens as the winner of the election. Tucker therefore insinuates that cronyism was the key to Stevens' succession to the post of Prime Minister.⁴⁹

⁴⁶ See All People's Congress (APC); Submission to TRC Thematic Hearings on Political Parties; April 2003.

⁴⁷ See Alie, J. A. D., *Background to the Conflict (1961-1991): What Went Wrong and Why*; in Ayissi, A. and Poulton, R. E. (eds.), *Bound to Co-operate: Conflict, Peace and People in Sierra Leone*, commissioned for UNIDIR, at page 4. See also the report in the *Daily Mail* newspaper of 18 July 1968, which stated that between 21 and 23 March 1967, nine people were killed in Freetown alone, 54 were treated for gunshot wounds and 42 were admitted to hospital with other injuries.

⁴⁸ See Tucker, P. (former Secretary to the Prime Minister, Sir Albert Margai), Submission to the Truth and Reconciliation Commission, November 2003, at pages 16 – 17.

⁴⁹ *Ibidem*, at pages 16 – 17.

98. However, the four independent candidates had by this time written to the Governor General and informed him that they would not rejoin the SLPP as long as Sir Albert Margai remained leader. The undertaking of the independent candidates was proof enough to conclude that the SLPP could not command a majority in the incoming parliament. It was therefore formally correct for the Governor General, the representative of the Queen, who was still Head of State, to have invited the leader of the APC, as majority party, to form a new government in March 1967.
99. In the middle of the swearing-in ceremony of the new Prime Minister, Siaka Stevens, the Sierra Leone Army made a dramatic entrance into the mainstream political arena. The Governor General, Sir Henry Lightfoot Boston, was placed under arrest whilst conducting the ceremony by a Mende Army officer called Lieutenant Samuel Hinga Norman. Siaka Stevens and three other prospective APC Ministers were also taken captive. Lieutenant Hinga Norman, who was the Governor General's *aide de camp*, was apparently acting on the instructions of the Force Commander, David Lansana. Within twenty-four hours Brigadier Lansana had announced that the swearing-in of Stevens was unconstitutional and declared martial law.
100. The turmoil did not end at Brigadier Lansana's announcement, though. A further twenty-four hours later, when it became apparent that Lansana's move was engineered to reinstate Sir Albert Margai as Prime Minister, junior-ranking soldiers staged a coup to overthrow him. After minor internal wrangling in the military, a new administration led by Colonel Andrew T. Juxon Smith installed itself in power. It was known as the National Reformation Council (NRC).
101. The Commission can only speculate on whether the trajectory of Sierra Leonean national politics would have been any different if the SLPP had accepted defeat in the 1967 elections and gone magnanimously into opposition. What is certain is that the standoff the SLPP precipitated with the APC signalled a watershed in the political fortunes of the country and ultimately led to the destruction of the multi-party system. The consequent period of military rule under the NRC served to narrow the political space and would encourage others to seek alternative routes to power that did not depend on free and fair elections. It was a historical antecedent for conflict and instability, because it set the scene for multiple further coup attempts in the following decades.

PART II – THE MANAGEMENT OF POWER BY THE APC

102. In its official submission to the Truth and Reconciliation Commission in April 2003, the All People's Congress (APC) recalled its basis for a major policy shift upon finally assuming power in 1968. The APC stated that the SLPP-engineered military intervention of March 1967 had set an ominous precedent for the country. In the wake of that intervention, the APC perceived that the threat to remove it from office by unlawful means was ever present. Accordingly, in the interests of its own survival, the APC felt compelled to place emphasis on internal security rather than on governance.⁵⁰ Indeed, with the hindsight that history permits, it can be seen that the APC used its concerns about internal security as a pretext to stifle the nascent democratic culture.
103. On assumption of the office of Prime Minister, Siaka Stevens attended most urgently to the consolidation of his power. Despite espousing socialist principles, he adopted authoritarian methods of governance. All the institutions of the state were subjected to strict party control. Institutions that should have been checks on an overbearing executive were emasculated. The prolonged period of Siaka Stevens' rule is captured in more expansive detail in the chapter of this report entitled 'Governance', so a brief summary should suffice for present purposes.
104. First and foremost, the APC set out to ensure that it had effective control of the Army. The transformation of the Army Chief of Staff into a Member of Parliament in 1974 completed the subordination of the army as a tool for political manipulation. So fearful was Stevens of the threat posed to him by a well-equipped Army, he denied the soldiers any proper training and systematically suppressed their fighting capacity.
105. During Siaka Stevens' rule, all the gains made by Southerners and Easterners during the Albert Margai era were reversed. Government had become balkanised in the 1960s and the predominant ethnic group of the ruling party would seek to enrich and aggrandise itself, along with any co-opted members from other ethnic groups. So endemic was corruption that the government was simply expected by all sides to use state resources to advance the interests of its supporters.
106. Stevens created the Internal Security Unit (ISU), a paramilitary police force, which was more heavily equipped than the national Army and whose members were absolutely loyal to the APC. ISU recruits were chosen from the ranks of minority ethnic groups like Koranko and Limba. The current Inspector-General of the Police Service in his testimony before the Commission described the ISU, which later became the Special Security Division, or SSD, in the following terms:
- “The [ISU] group was feared even by Police Commissioners, [which] eroded the basic rules of discipline within the force. A de facto ‘force within a force’ was created, which bore little or no allegiance to the Sierra Leone Police. This divided loyalty greatly affected the cohesiveness of the police, resulting in maladministration. Inefficiency, as a direct consequence of such maladministration, became prevalent.

⁵⁰ See All People's Congress (APC), Submission to TRC Thematic Hearings on Political Parties, April 2003.

Promotions and postings were based on political patronage and were done on political recommendation.⁵¹

107. Stevens also targeted the judiciary. With power vested in the Head of State to appoint and remove judges, all judicial officers cowed in fear. Lawyers and court officials alike were afraid to take on cases involving leading party members. With the only formal institution for mediating grievance compromised, the 'rule of might' prevailed over the 'rule of law'. Political disputes were settled by invariably brutal means on the streets, at election venues and in community spaces. Even intra-party disagreements within the APC generated terrible violence. Political disputes were played out in places such as Pujehun (Ndorgboryosoi), Koinadugu and Bombali Districts, as well as in Freetown during the 1977 and 1982 elections.
108. The creation of a one party state in Sierra Leone through the enactment of the One Party Act of 1978 led to the demise of independent political alternatives, with many individuals holding widely divergent political views forced to cluster under the same banner.
109. In examining the dynamics of this method of managing power – practised to differing degrees and at different times by both of Sierra Leone's main political parties – the Commission has heard many testimonies about the adverse effects it has had on the population. Ironically, oppressive and authoritarian governance seems to have led to both inward and outward forms of defection.
110. On the one hand, the fear of political exclusion forced members of the SLPP to join the APC party during the one-party system. These 'inward defections' were largely opportunistic, reflecting an unprincipled lust for power and denying them any hint of credibility when they later proclaimed a lifelong association with the SLPP upon the promulgation of a new Constitution for a multi-party system in 1991.
111. On the other hand, albeit related, the widespread loss of confidence in the political elite and the patently fickle nature of Sierra Leonean politics have driven inordinately high numbers of talented Sierra Leoneans to abandon their country and seek opportunities abroad. These 'outward defections' testify to the hopelessness experienced by the majority under a government that sustains itself through corruption, nepotism and the plundering of state assets whilst paying no attention to the human rights of its citizens.
112. By the late 1980s, Sierra Leone had become a fragmented country in which central government was almost totally irrelevant to people's everyday lives. The population in the Provincial communities conferred their loyalty and trust in their ethnic groups and traditional associations, rather than in the leadership of the nation. Yet the corrosive practices of the APC were replicated at regional and local levels, where Chieftaincy remained synonymous with power, patronage and control of resources. All semblance of accountability or effective opposition was eliminated, leaving disgruntled Sierra Leoneans with no outlet through which to vent their grievances. The one-party system simply exacerbated the worst of the nation's existing trends towards conflict and national disintegration. Sierra Leone was left poised on the precipice of a bottomless pit.

⁵¹ Brima Acha Kamara, Inspector-General of the Sierra Leone Police Service, Submission to TRC Thematic Hearings on the State Security Apparatus, May 2003.

PART III – LOCAL HISTORICAL ANTECEDENTS

113. Prior to the outbreak of war in 1991, there were undercurrents of conflict in many Districts of Sierra Leone. The local dynamics of these areas would substantially influence the character and conduct of the war, from the border Districts that served as 'gateways' for the fighting forces, to the strategically located 'heartland' Districts that initially supported the insurgency to overthrow the APC. At local level as at national level, many of the answers as to why and how this conflict happened are to be found in its historical antecedents.

Pujehun District (Southern Province)

114. Pujehun District is in the extreme south of Sierra Leone, bounded in to the East by Liberia, to the West by Bonthe District and the Atlantic Ocean, to the North East by Kenema District, and to the North by Bo District.⁵² The Southern boundary between Sierra Leone and Liberia is at the Mano River Bridge in Soro Gbema Chiefdom, Pujehun District.
115. Before the conflict, Pujehun District was beset with a host of problems, including the following five issues:
- (i) Amalgamation and Chieftaincy conflicts. Disputes over the amalgamation of two Chiefdoms into Soro Gbema in 1953 and again in Barri in 1975 left lingering resentment between residents. In Pujehun's five amalgamated chiefdoms there were no formal agreements on rotation for the solitary seat of Paramount Chief, where previously there had been two positions. Chieftaincy elections became fiercely contested and candidates went all out to ensure victory. An especially bitter battle marred the election of the Paramount Chief in Gallinass Perri in 1976. With every new controversy the society became more severely divided, opening up numerous grudges, grievances and vendettas for exploitation by an armed insurgent group.
 - (ii) The presence of non-native Paramount Chiefs in three strategic Chiefdoms. The Kaikai and Sillah ruling houses in Pujehun Town, comprised of Fullahs and Susus respectively, along with the Magonas, a Mende clan, in Barri Chiefdom, were anomalous figureheads in predominantly Mende territories. These three ruling houses were installed in Pujehun as their reward for supporting the British during the Hut Tax War, despite their lack of local legitimacy with the indigenous population. The opportunity to throw off the yoke of these imposed Chieftaincies presented a strong allure to disaffected residents to take up arms against them. It became common for people who objected to their Chiefs to collaborate with the armed groups in attacking the ruling houses when the war broke out.⁵³

⁵² For background to the geography of the Pujehun District, see Gwynne-Jones, et al., *A New Geography of Sierra Leone*, at page 58.

⁵³ A similar set of local dynamics existed in the neighbouring Bonthe District, where the imposition of two Paramount Chiefs from outwith the traditional ruling houses created a massive amount of dissension among the local population. In both Pujehun and Bonthe, the Commission recorded violent attacks on Chiefs in the early years of the conflict, which represented especially traumatic events for the people of those Districts.

- (iii) The high percentage of illiteracy in the District, resulting from the late arrival of western education methods and the dominance of Koranic teachings. The illiterate masses proved easier for the militias to mobilise and manipulate based on ethnic and religious affiliations. Promises to end their marginalisation were for many of them irresistible. When the Revolutionary United Front (RUF) arrived in Pujehun pledging free education, clean water and other social services people flocked forward volunteering to serve the 'revolution'.
 - (iv) The nation-wide student demonstrations of 1977 and the heavy-handed response of the Special Security Division (SSD). This period of civil unrest had the effect of driving most students in the Pujehun District over the border into Liberia. Many of these exiled students later returned as infiltrators and rebel leaders.⁵⁴
 - (v) The lucrative diamond fields at Zimmi. The lure of illicit diamond mining attracted a huge pool of so-called "san san" boys (labourers who dig for diamonds in the sand) and hustlers from all over the country. These strong, unskilled young men would become willing tools in the hands of a manipulative invading force.
116. The most important local antecedent in Pujehun, however, was the Ndorgboryosoi rebellion, which started in Soro Gbema Chiefdom shortly after the first one-party state election in 1982. The Mende word 'Ndorgboryosoi' carried powerful connotations of the involvement of forest spirits in protecting the local people from an enemy. In 1982, according to a Pujehun resident interviewed by the Commission,⁵⁵ the enemy was the APC state security apparatus and the rebellion was directed against dictatorship, a gross disregard for human rights and the brutalisation of the rural people by the SSD.
117. There were essentially two factions in the dispute that gave rise to the Ndorgboryosoi rebellion: the Demby – Minah faction with the support of the Chiefs on one side; and the Manna Kpaka faction on the other. The election had been conducted and apparently rigged in favour of the incumbent Member of Parliament, Honourable Solomon Demby. Demby was supported by the APC strongman in the District Francis Minah, the Attorney General and Minister of Justice. Yet Demby became infuriated when a legal challenge to his election victory was filed against him in the courts.
118. Demby, with the support of President Siaka Stevens, called in the paramilitary force, the SSD, under the command of M. S. Dumbuya. The SSD was deployed to intimidate and arrest Demby's opponents in a move to have the election petition dropped. In Soro Gbema Chiefdom, where the support for Demby's opponent Manna Kpaka was strongest, a local militia was formed in order to resist the campaign of intimidation. The Ndorgboryosoi Group, as this militia became known, engaged in armed combat with the SSD for the rest of 1982 and part of 1983.

⁵⁴ A prominent example of this pattern was Richard Kemoh, one of the leaders of the 1977 demonstrations in Pujehun District. Kemoh escaped from the SSD into Liberia, only to return over a decade later as a commando fighting for the RUF. See also Palmer, *Investigating the Antecedents of the Rebel War*.

⁵⁵ Munda Rogers, former resident of Pujehun District; TRC Interview conducted at TRC Headquarters, Freetown; 22 December 2003.

119. As part of a sustained campaign in the Pujehun District, the SSD burnt down several whole villages across various Chiefdoms and killed many innocent civilians, including women and children. Hundreds of Demby opponents were arrested, while more than half of those detained died in jail.
120. The Attorney General and Minister of Justice, Francis Minah, was tasked with the prosecution of all those SSD members involved in the killing of civilians. Minah, however, procrastinated inexplicably over these cases, which many observers interpreted as an expression of his support for his friend Mr. Demby.
121. The Ndorgboryosoi rebellion ended only after the Army had been called in to assist the SSD in suppressing the militia. The hostile sentiments against the APC regime endured for much longer, though. Some of the Ndorgboryosoi ringleaders and their family members were among the first militiamen to join the RUF when it entered Pujehun District from Liberia in 1991. They formed a civil defence unit of the RUF called the 'Joso Group', deliberately invoking part of the word 'Ndorgboryosoi' in its name to represent continuity.
122. Pujehun District was thus replete with historical antecedents to the conflict, including several periods of mass unrest, which provoked repression and deprivation from the State in response. The District had a well-known history of rebellion, a large pool of exiled and aggrieved youths in Liberia and, ultimately, a volatile security climate. As Foday Sankoh and his RUF 'vanguards' plotted their entry into Sierra Leone in March 1991, Pujehun District had the vital characteristics of a 'gateway' through which the launch of an insurgency against the incumbent APC would meet with ideological support and find willing recruits.

Kailahun District (Eastern Province)

123. Kailahun District in the Eastern Province of Sierra Leone shares its boundary with both Liberia and Guinea at the point called the "Parrot's Beak". Like Pujehun, the District became a 'gateway' for the initial incursion by the RUF in March 1991. It has the same dense vegetation as Pujehun District, including thick forests that are impenetrable by armoured cars or conventional army columns and highly conducive for guerrilla warfare.
124. Before the war the Kailahun District was plagued by rivalry between its two ruling families, the Ngobehs and the Banyas (from the Kailondo ruling house). From 1943 to 1966 the Banyas and the Ngobehs produced Paramount Chiefs who were dethroned during their tenure on allegations of abusing the office and engaging in cannibalism.⁵⁶ Indeed, accusations of cannibalism against traditional rulers arose in many of the Chiefdoms in the District.
125. Kailahun District was gradually ravaged of its common identity and forcibly split into factions. Tyrannical Chiefs acted ruthlessly against suppressed subjects whenever there was a hint of rebellion. The antecedents to conflict in the District are best summarised in three points: desperately poor infrastructure, causing people to cry out for a social 'revolution'; antagonism towards APC rule and disillusionment with the ruling houses; and remoteness from the control of central authority.

⁵⁶ See Palmer, *Investigating the Antecedents of the Rebel War*.

126. This final point was critical because it emphasised the ordinary man's sense of detachment from the central government in Freetown. The resultant feeling of alienation in Kailahun was captured by the popular phrase (shared with other rural communities) when travelling to the capital city: "I dae go na Salone", meaning "I am going to Sierra Leone". Effectively Sierra Leone was associated with distance rather than belonging. The central government was irrelevant to most people's daily lives and loyalty to it was non-existent. Any promise of change in the economic and political order would prove very appealing in the Kailahun District.

Kono District (Eastern Province)

127. Kono District shares boundaries with the Republic of Guinea to the East, as well as four other Sierra Leonean Districts: Kailahun to the Southeast; Kenema to the South; Koinadugu to the North and Northwest; and Tonkolili to the West. Large areas of Kono are densely forested and would lend themselves to the creation of hidden 'bush paths' by the fighting factions during the conflict.
128. Indigenous Kono speakers were the predominant group in the District before the discovery of diamonds. Subsequent mining of the lucrative gemstone attracted vast numbers of other ethnic groups and foreign nationals to the District, especially Lebanese, Guineans and Malians. While the main offices of political power remained in the hands of the Konos, outsiders prized away control of the economic life.
129. Despite the overwhelming riches attached to diamonds, they were mined amidst mass illiteracy, poverty and general underdevelopment. The APC government did not build a single paved road in the entire District. Chiefdoms like Toli, Mafindo, Gbane, Sando and Lei remain inaccessible by vehicle to the present day. This paradox of Sierra Leone's most richly endowed territory was even more pronounced in Chiefdoms that actually produced diamonds, such as Tankoro, Kamara, Nimikoro, Sando and Nimiyama: mining proceeded in the middle of destitute wastelands.
130. Ultimately three classes of people emerged in Kono. First, rich foreign nationals lived comfortably in cohort with local traditional leaders. Many foreigners enjoyed their own private water wells, lived in huge mansions with satellite dishes on their rooftops and drove Mercedes Benz sedans. The second class encompassed the vast majority of the indigenous population. They were poor and forced to seek their own means of survival, with minimal access to the fruits of their land. The third class comprised the youths of all the ethnic groups who flooded the District and had no allegiance to traditional norms. They came from all over the country, desperate to become players in the diamond trade, as hustlers, diggers, middlemen or traders. This outcast group was referred to disparagingly as "san san" boys.
131. Only with the rarest of good fortune did a "san san" boy find a diamond in the sand. Most of these youths lived on the edge, barely able to eke out a living. They frequently resorted to banditry and petty crime to ensure their survival and were naturally willing conscripts, as both miners and combatants, when the RUF came calling.

132. Perhaps the most telling feature of Kono District was the total vacuum of state security in which its whole miniature economy operated. The nearest Army brigade was stationed at Tekoh Barracks in the central Bombali District, over 60 kilometres from the Kono headquarter town of Koidu. The APC regime's neglect of its defences and inept policing of its Eastern border made a mockery of the Kono District's genuine strategic worth to the country.

Kambia District (Northern Province)

133. Located in the far Northwest of the country, Kambia shares a lengthy boundary with Guinea, through which the RUF attempted several raids on Sierra Leone's neighbour in 2000. In a familiar tale of neglect of outlying areas, the Kambia District's remoteness from Freetown robbed the District of infrastructural development prior to the war and has denied it serious investment for reconstruction ever since.
134. The Temnes are the dominant ethnic group in Kambia, controlling three of the seven Chiefdoms in the District. Minority ethnic groups include Susu and Limba. An examination of the antecedents to the conflict in this District reveals the following factors:
- (i) Intense competition between ruling houses such as the Yumkellas and their rivals in the Samu Chiefdom;
 - (ii) Gross injustices occasioned by arbitrary rulings and heavy fines imposed in Local Chiefdom Courts;
 - (iii) Persistent smuggling through the unprotected border with Guinea, which has remained a major source of illicit personal gain for traders at the expense of national benefit; and
 - (iv) The extreme poverty and illiteracy that are characteristic of geographical isolation, creating a sense of hopelessness among the people.
135. Kambia's historical connection to the central government in Freetown has been tenuous at best. Far removed from the bargains and benchmarks of national politics, the Chiefs wielded absolute power over their subjects. Traditionally, many young people found the stranglehold of the Chiefs so unbearable that they crossed the border into Guinea and never returned. Rather than allowing Freetown and the Western Area to benefit exclusively from their extraction of natural resources, Kambians often traded independently with Guinea. Over time, intended symbols of Sierra Leonean State authority, such as public buildings and institutions, became little more than hated monuments to the disdain displayed in Freetown towards the outlying Provinces.

Moyamba District (Southern Province)

136. Moyamba District was left scarred more than most by thuggery and election violence in the first thirty years of Sierra Leonean independence. The ruling parties had routinely overlooked candidates of the people's choice during election time, instead deploying thugs and using intimidation tactics to impose party strongmen and devoted stalwarts upon them. This scenario was most acutely illustrated in the 1982 elections, when the henchmen of the APC strongman Harry T. T. Williams forced the Paramount Chief of Kagboro Chiefdom, Honoria Ballor-Caulker, into enforced exile for nearly ten years.⁵⁷
137. The indigenous population was also aggrieved with the employment policies of SIEROMCO, the Sierra Leone wing of an international mining conglomerate, which had the lease for the mining of bauxite in Mokanji, Moyamba District. They saw the company's policy of hiring workers from outside the District as especially unjust because of the first-class social facilities offered within the company. Employees who had moved from elsewhere to Mokanji enjoyed professional and domestic luxury, while people in the host community wallowed in abject poverty and deprivation. The SIEROMCO site in Moyamba was one of numerous industrial installations that would be attacked during the conflict; local people were frequently alleged to have vented their pre-existing grudges with major firms by acquiescing or contributing to such attacks.

Bo District (Southern Province)

138. The central District of Bo was the heartland of the SLPP from the inception of the era of party politics. Although several SLPP stalwarts switched their allegiance to the APC in order to take up positions in the one-party government,⁵⁸ there was a general feeling among the residents of Bo that their fortunes would be vastly improved if the SLPP could be revived and restored to power.
139. For this reason, the idea of "revolution" in Sierra Leone was popular in Bo. Many inhabitants of the District were even in favour of an armed action to overthrow the APC and scores of youths travelled to Kailahun to volunteer for the RUF in the first few months of the conflict. As in neighbouring Moyamba, a prevailing history of election violence and thuggery had also reinforced the propensity for conflict in Bo. The centrality and high population of the District made it a natural wartime headquarters for the Southern-based Mende militia known as the Kamajors.

⁵⁷ See Palmer, *Investigating the Antecedents of the Rebel War*.

⁵⁸ Alhaji Daramy-Rogers, former Minister of the APC Government and recognised supporter of the present SLPP Government; TRC Interview conducted at TRC Headquarters, Freetown; 24 – 29 October 2003.

Tonkolili District (Northern Province)

140. Tonkolili is most central of all the Districts in Sierra Leone and is therefore, in conflict terms, one of the most "strategically located". It shares boundaries with eight of the twelve other Districts. It has ten Chiefdoms, five of which resulted from amalgamation. Economic opportunities were few in the District, with non-mechanised gold mining in the North-eastern areas providing the single most important source of employment. The Magbass Sugar Factory boasted a large industrial complex, but offered only seasonal employment in the form of casual labour. The majority of the people were either petty traders or subsistence rice growers in the *boli* lands.
141. The major ethnic groups in the area are Temnes, Korankos and Limbas but Temne is the dominant language spoken in the Tonkolili District. Significant local peculiarities that were to have an impact on the course of the war include the following:
- (i) Sibling and Chieftaincy rivalry. In Yoni Chiefdom, two brothers contested the Paramount Chieftaincy. The loser exploited the disappointment of his supporters to undermine his brother's leadership and destabilise the Chiefdom.
 - (ii) Youth deprivation. There was a desperate scarcity of job opportunities for the youths in the area, forcing many into petty trading and many more into petty crime. There developed an enormous army of unemployed youths who subsequently used the conflict to 'act out' their frustrations at the lack of economic opportunities.
 - (iii) The death of emergent political personalities from the District at the hands of the APC. When Siaka Stevens came to power in 1968, he faced increasing pressure on various issues from prominent natives of Tonkolili District who were in the Army or were members of his APC party. Dr. Mohammed Sorie Forna and Ibrahim Bash-Taqi, who were among the visionaries of the APC, broke away in acrimonious circumstances and formed the United Democratic Party (UDP) in 1970. The two men were then implicated by the Stevens Government in an alleged coup plot in 1971 and were arrested, charged and convicted, along with 13 others, in a celebrated treason trial in 1974. In July 1975 Forna, Bash-Taqi and six other men were executed.⁵⁹ Their deaths alienated most of the influential and educated members of Gbonkolenken Chiefdom from the APC, which resulted in many inhabitants of that Chiefdom taking up of arms when the conflict began.
 - (iv) The attachment to prominent sons of the District and identification with their fates. Another successful and well-loved son of Tonkolili District was Sam Bangura, the former Governor of the Bank of Sierra Leone. When Bangura died in suspicious circumstances in 1980,⁶⁰ the people

⁵⁹ Dr. Mohamed Sorie Forna's daughter, Aminatta Forna, has written perhaps the most detailed account of the circumstances leading up to his trial, along with 14 others, and eventual execution. It is contained in a memoir in narrative form: see Aminatta Forna, *The Devil that Danced on the Water*, HarperCollins, London, 2003.

⁶⁰ The original explanation given for the death of Sam Bangura was that he had fallen accidentally from his balcony. In the face of raised public suspicion, a number of alleged murder suspects were eventually arrested, but the case was never prosecuted to full trial.

of Tonkolili perceived his death as a murder, stemming from internal feuding within the APC, to the detriment of their District. Moreover Foday Sankoh, the leader of the Revolutionary United Front (RUF) hailed from the Tonkolili District. Sankoh's uncle has remained a Chief in his home community and no member of the Sankoh family has ever been punished or ostracised for the harm and suffering their relative brought to the district. A widely held view in Sierra Leone is that the launching of the conflict was very popular in Tonkolili, despite the subsequent atrocities that were carried out by the RUF and others against the civilian population. The logic of armed struggle against the APC was accepted in Tonkolili and many residents allied themselves with the fate of their native son. Upon returning to the District after signing the Lomé Peace Agreement in 1999, Foday Sankoh was even accorded what his widow described to the Commission as a "hero's welcome".⁶¹

142. The local historical antecedents profiled in this part of the chapter are not intended to put the conflict into context in an exhaustive fashion. However, they are illustrative of some of the local undercurrents that ran parallel to daily life in Sierra Leone prior to the conflict, including popular grievances with socio-economic conditions and widespread opposition to the APC State. The country in which war broke out was in fact already a cluster of unresolved disputes and barely suppressed hostilities.

CONCLUSION

143. In examining the history of Sierra Leone through the lens of the mandate of the Commission, a picture emerges of a fragmented, exploited and deeply insecure country. The colonial government was responsible for dividing the land into two nations, one in the Protectorate and one in the Colony, and developing them separately and unequally. The impact of the colonial strategy affected access to education for generations and defined social, political and economic progress, or regression, for the whole population. It bred deep ethnic and regional resentment, the manifestations of which can still be observed, albeit in more subtle prejudices, to the present day.
144. The colonial government was also responsible for destabilising the system of Chieftaincy and creating a crisis of legitimacy around the traditional rulers. The colonial government formalised the Common Law but neglected the development of customary law, resulting in mass confusion and effective legal duality. Customary law became the preserve of the Chiefs who interpreted traditions and customs in an arbitrary fashion and utilised their authority to whatever ends they so desired. The rights of women, in particular, were denied during this period.

⁶¹ Madam Fatou Sankoh, member of the RUFP and widow of the former Leader of the RUF, Foday Saybana Sankoh; TRC Interview conducted at private residence, Freetown; 07 to 09 November 2003.

145. During the post-colonial period, ethnic tensions were exacerbated by the emergence of domestic political parties. The elections of 1962 and 1967 had dangerous and divisive legacies for all the branches of government. Sir Albert Margai's overt manipulation of the Paramount Chiefs, the military sphere and the supposedly 'independent' judiciary devastated public confidence in the self-run State. When the Sierra Leone Army intervened in 1967 in an attempt to pervert the course of democracy, a precedent was set for military men to play influential roles in politics for decades to come.
146. It was during the protracted reign of the APC, however, that politicians and the processes they directed were to forfeit all credibility. A system of power through patronage developed, with blatant corruption and the plundering of state assets at its heart. Exclusionary politics led to an incestuous relationship between the APC and the SLPP: they merged into one, unprincipled "political elite". Ordinary people in Sierra Leone lost all faith in government. Up to the present day, Sierra Leoneans expect arbitrary administration of "justice", nepotism and cronyism in all public institutions, and little genuine prospect of a fairer and brighter future.
147. Neither the SLPP nor the APC has made any real effort to attend to the debasement of the post-independence politics and economy of the country. On the contrary, history speaks of a systemic failure, whereby all the members of the political elite belonged to the same failing system.
148. With time, it became difficult for Sierra Leoneans to distinguish between the SLPP and the APC. While the government changed hands from one to the other, many of the faces remained the same. The popular adage about government was that Sierra Leoneans would board "a different bus, but with the same driver". Deep-seated pessimism now prevails as to whether things can ever really get better.
149. While they may claim to be ideologically different, in reality the two parties have always shared a brand of politics that is all about power and the benefits it confers. Even a high-ranking member of the political elite⁶² conceded to the Commission that "indeed, there is no difference" between the SLPP and the APC. Tragically many of the characteristics identified in this chapter as antecedents to the conflict persist today in Sierra Leone. The vital test in preventing the recurrence of such a tragedy lies in whether Sierra Leone can learn the lessons of its past.

⁶² Alhaji Daramy-Rogers, former Minister of the APC Government and recognised supporter of the present SLPP Government; TRC Interview conducted at TRC Headquarters, Freetown; 24 – 29 October 2003.