



5-2003

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Recommended Citation

Talentino, Andrea (2003) "Rethinking Conflict Resolution: Matching Problems and Solutions," *Peace and Conflict Studies*: Vol. 10 : No. 1 , Article 2.

DOI: 10.46743/1082-7307/2003.1030

Available at: <https://nsuworks.nova.edu/pcs/vol10/iss1/2>

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Abstract

This paper addresses international conflict resolution and the disparity between the number of attempts at resolution and the number of successes. It argues that one flaw in efforts thus far has been a lack of understanding of local actors and motivations, leading to ineffective strategies for resolution. In regions where conflict crosses borders, contributes to the trend of politics, and involves mercenary sub-state actors, traditional methods of resolution may be ineffective. Purveyors of violence have little interest in the power-sharing and consensual politics that international actors often try to promote. They also have significant and negative effects on regional stability. This paper further addresses the need to reconsider approaches to conflict resolution, and the significance of taking better account of local circumstances in an effort to construct strategies to address them.

Keywords: *international conflict resolution, regional stability, violence, West Africa*

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RETHINKING CONFLICT RESOLUTION: MATCHING PROBLEMS AND SOLUTION

Andrea Kathryn Talentino

Abstract

This paper addresses international conflict resolution and the disparity between the number of attempts at resolution and the number of successes. It argues that one flaw in efforts thus far has been a lack of understanding of local actors and motivations, leading to ineffective strategies for resolution. In regions where conflict crosses borders, contributes to the trend of politics, and involves mercenary sub-state actors, traditional methods of resolution may be ineffective. Purveyors of violence have little interest in the power-sharing and consensual politics that international actors often try to promote. They also have significant and negative effects on regional stability. This paper further addresses the need to reconsider approaches to conflict resolution, and the significance of taking better account of local circumstances in an effort to construct strategies to address them.

Introduction

Learning how to pursue conflict resolution more effectively is an important challenge for the international community. Since the end of the Cold War, a variety of international organizations have committed themselves to ending conflict. Unfortunately, it is still easier to produce a list of places where their efforts have failed than where they have succeeded. One problem is that internal conflicts present difficult circumstances. They include but are not limited to groups that view accommodation as a death sentence for their ethnic, tribal, or religious community; grievances rooted in historical claims of prejudice and persecution; leaders who do not feel bound to adhere to treaties or agreements; and often, weak states that cannot provide for their citizens, sparking competition for the most basic resources.

But the larger problem may be that international actors do not yet understand the ramifications of these circumstances. A better understanding of how the conflicts work and what groups want is essential to pursuing effective resolution. Oddly enough, that has not been the priority of international organizations. Instead, they have emphasized standard approaches, such as promoting consensus and power sharing, strategies that do not always fit the parameters of the conflict in question (UN 2001). It is time to reevaluate how international actors approach conflict resolution. If failure results in spite of an intervener's best efforts, there is little anyone can do. But we need to ensure that the best effort is indeed brought to bear. In some cases strategies may not be well suited to the conflicts they address. The result is wasted time, money, and goodwill, and the persistence of violence that harms both individuals

and states.

The premise of this article is that conflict resolution may be better served by going from the bottom up. That is, we need to look at the conflict first and see what particular challenges and problems it presents. By doing so we may discover that the characteristics of many conflicts are not compatible with our approaches to resolution. Too often external actors have developed strategies in a vacuum, conceiving of an approach without considering how it might work in the local context. That failure stems from a larger theoretical divide.

International actors, who are motivated by normative concerns rooted in peace and justice, pursue resolution efforts. Local actors who are motivated by realist concerns rooted in profit and power confront them. The two do not mix well (Buzan 2000; Posen 1993; David 2001). In states where political structures have broken down there are few avenues for citizens to express their preferences. Instead, those willing to use violence control agendas of negotiation. Rebel groups frequently care little for state stability and a great deal for personal enrichment; peace agreements that limit their impunity and enforce consultation do not interest them. Yet the international community bases its legitimacy on seeking reasonably just outcomes and is criticized when it fails. The problem is how to reconcile these two perspectives. Institutions and states pursuing conflict resolution need to be sensitive to local interests and traditions, but they also need to be able to limit the actions of local elites who may want to promote personal and possibly criminal agendas. We need to rethink international efforts, within the context of the conflicts they address, in order to make them more effective. Only then can we tailor our responses accordingly.

One weakness in current approaches to conflict resolution is that international actors often work from a top down perspective. Participants look at the organizations or groups undertaking the effort and try to figure out how they might work better, or in greater coordination. The focus is on the external actors and the attempt to maximize the resources they apply (human, financial, diplomatic, institutional) toward the conflict. The assumption is that if we can only make the organizations work better they will succeed (UN 2000; Brahimi 2000). Failures are ascribed to the inability of organizations to commit enough time and money to create a solution. Such an approach, however, may overlook crucial components of the problem. The obstacles to resolution may come from inside the target country, as well as from outside actors. A large portion of the problem may be not that organizations do not commit enough effort, but that they commit to the wrong things.

A second weakness of current conflict resolution efforts is that they often operate from a state specific perspective. International actors work to reform the institutions of the target state to create greater transparency and consensus among groups. That is a laudable goal, but also an inadequate one. Weak regions present cases where conflict is both internal and cross-border. We rarely see conflicts defined neatly by state boundaries or involving the attack of one government force against another. Instead, conflicts are internal, pitting dissident rebel groups against each other and the government. They are also transnational, with sub-state groups frequently crossing state lines and neighbors easily drawn into violence (Byrne & Irvin, 2000). Economic power may be coveted more highly than territory, with groups willing to

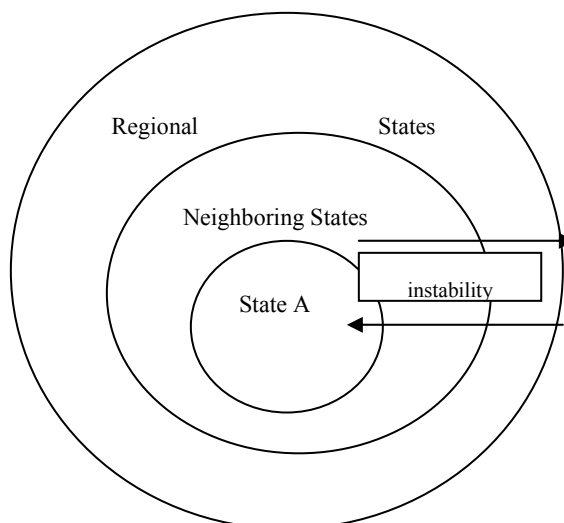
foment violence anywhere rewards are promised.

These realities present a different type of problem than we are accustomed to addressing. Territorially based resolution efforts will not succeed in regions where conflict is transborder, non-territorial and based in economic concerns rather than political ones. Likewise, single state efforts will not succeed because the nature of the conflict facilitates the involvement of neighbors. Conflict is both internal and regional, with resolution of one relying on resolution of the other. We need to change our approach to conflict resolution in order to address these issues. That means adopting different strategies that more closely reflect the peculiar logic of the conflicts we address.

This paper addresses these obstacles and the consequences for third party resolution efforts. It proposes a model of conflict that takes account of regional effects, both from the target to the region and vice versa. The second section analyzes the nexus between state formation and security and the particular problems faced by developing states in regime consolidation. The third section applies these issues to the case of West Africa, focusing on Sierra Leone as the target of stabilization efforts and analyzing the involvement and interests of other regional actors.

Broadening Approaches to Conflict Resolution

As mentioned above, efforts to lessen conflict frequently focus on the problems of one state. International organizations such as the United Nations (UN) identify weaknesses in political and economic structures and seek to develop more transparent and consensual processes of governance. In weak regions, however, such approaches may be of limited utility. They rightly focus on the conflict's origin but ignore its proliferation. Intrastate conflict has interstate consequences. Even in cases where the most extreme violence occupies a small area or remains in one state, border raids, the availability of unemployed fighters, and the potential sponsorship or indirect involvement of sympathetic governments have broad effects. The problem does not flow in a single direction out from the center but creates consequences, which flow back to affect the initial focus or conflict. A more effective way to conceive of the problem is therefore with a bull's eye model, with one or perhaps more states at the center and crisis and instability flowing outward and inward.



Simple though the model is, it emphasizes the effect of the target on the region as much as the region on the target. The issue is not simply state security but regional security. Neither can be sustained without the other. Using this perspective captures the spreading quality of conflict and acknowledges that implications exist for the region as a whole. The involvement of a state in the second circle—by hosting insurgents, providing financial assistance to belligerent groups, trafficking in arms, or a number of other activities—might then spark actions in the third circle to support or counteract those in the middle, or simply encourage unrest in third-circle states. That in turn can alter the fortunes and possibilities of the groups that initiated the violence. This is all the more likely in states with strong societal divisions, where domestic factions might seek support from external sources or use other conflicts to encourage instability at home. The spreading circles could, in a worst-case scenario, create new bulls' eyes, which then overlap with the initial source of conflict.

The proposed model highlights several relevant issues for regional security and potential conflict resolution. First, it illustrates the fact that regional instability most often has one or more specific loci. Though the effects are broad, the sources are often more limited. Second, it captures the radiating nature of spreading instability, with crisis widening as it moves out of the originating state. Third, it highlights the potential role of neighboring states, since their responses to conflict may have a significant effect on either where it begins or how it spreads. Finally, it may help conflict resolution efforts focus on containment as a function of resolution. The broader the conflict becomes the more difficult the solution is likely to be. Limitation and containment are, therefore, an important first step in resolution.

This paper uses West Africa as a case study for analyzing these issues because it highlights both the complicity of neighboring states and the bi-directional effects of instability. The state currently the target of the most intense conflict resolution efforts in West Africa is Sierra Leone. The country has been experiencing civil war since 1991, but conflict resolution efforts did not begin until the democratically elected president was ousted in 1997 and the Economic Community of West African States (ECOWAS) installed a peace enforcement operation, now taken over by the UN. The country is characterized by unrest but is in the midst of a tenuous peace agreement. The broader region hosts a wide swath of conflict and is the focus of conflict resolution efforts by both international and regional organizations. Conflict transcends borders, with each setback or advance in one country creating consequences elsewhere. It thus provides a good test case for assessing the connections between state and regional security. This is also a region with very limited absorptive capacity in the sense that its fragility limits its ability to adapt easily to change.

Finally, West Africa is a region that highlights the clash between normative and realist interests. Concern for the region's stability is widespread, particularly since the relative weakness of states in the region heightens their vulnerability to violence. The local purveyors of conflict are motivated by greed, and use the region's lucrative resources for personal advantage. They operate "shadow states" by focusing on extracting benefits, developing supporters through a policy of selective reward, and using "security as a more exclusively

private good” (Reno 2000, p.57). This perception is not uniquely Western; citizens in the region also express frustration at the willingness of some leaders to foment violence and hijack state resources. Below those leaders is a vast network of mercenaries and officials who are motivated only by profit. Counteracting that are international and regional efforts to reduce conflict, protect individuals from violence, and build stable and consensual government in the target countries. While the international objective is to enhance stability and peace for the benefit of all, the warlords seek to enhance power and security for their own benefit. The two visions are incompatible and make resolution far more complex.

States and Security

Assessments of state security usually focus on cross-border crises—military threats or attack—as the primary sources of concern for state survival. Security is viewed as an external construct pertaining to threats from other states and the strategies employed to increase military, economic and political power to meet those threats. The security dilemma defines in part the challenges states face, but also the interstate nature of security (Buzan 1983; Graham 1994; Jervis 1996). Likewise, the common understanding of the state itself relates to Western style entities with clear divisions and means of operation. Though wording may differ, all definitions emphasize the state’s institutional character, functions, and ability to monopolize and use force. As Joel Migdal describes it, a state is a set of organizations with the ability to regulate the actions of its citizens and implement its own decisions (Migdal 1994).

These definitions change, however, when we analyze the particular issue of security and states in the developing world. Mohammed Ayoob highlights competing foci of authority as a problem for Third World states, with society weaker than the state in terms of coercive capacity but equal to the state in terms of legitimacy (Ayoob 1992). These competing internal elements pose challenges to the regime’s longevity that may be more salient than external challengers. Realism applies here in the domestic context because leaders are preoccupied with maintaining their power and security vis-a- vis internal challenges. This situation exists because of the broad international consensus on the territorial integrity of states, a concept particularly relevant in Africa. At the time of decolonization African leaders accepted the territorial definitions then existing as the fundamental basis of statehood (Herbst 2000, pp. 103-6). Though there are some examples of actual or attempted border change—Eritrea, the Ethiopian-Somali Ogaden dispute—borders are remarkably stable, particularly considering the weakness of many African states. That means that while the incentives and opportunities for external attack are held in check by international norms, internal strongmen and would-be leaders have few constraints because the state must rely on force rather than legitimacy for its rule. African leaders face the same type of challenges from within that are usually associated with interstate interactions. The primary and continual task is to secure and maintain one’s own position against challengers. Any concept of security applied to the Third World must take account, therefore, as Amitav Acharya points out, of the need for physical protection of the state structure and maintenance of the legitimacy of the regime (Acharya 1992, p. 143). While external security is relevant, real threats come from primarily inside rather than outside the state.

That reality creates what Ayooob calls a “security predicament,” where interstate conflict is “inextricably intertwined with domestic issues of state making, state breaking, and regime legitimacy” (Ayooob 1995, p. 49). Groups competing for recognition and power often have inter-state economic or political connections, helping the salience of domestic issues to flow across borders. And because other states face similar types of internal challenges they may be quite unscrupulous about meddling elsewhere in order to secure their own domestic and regional positions. Neighbors may attempt to steal resources or extend support to a preferred faction or group, offering money, arms, or safe haven to opposition fighters. Nearby states are rarely disinterested observers in the face of power struggles. This is particularly true in West Africa due to the twin concerns of the francophone/anglophone competition and the hegemonic power of Nigeria. Neighbors may not create security crises, but they will exploit and manipulate weakness to improve their own position. Because bystanders so readily become participants, internal changes in states profoundly affect the regional balance by altering how that state participates as well as the encouragement or discouragement it offers to others.

The connection between state legitimacy and area security has particular effect in what Migdal calls cases of dispersed domination. These include places where strong societies with sharp lines of division (religious, ethnic, tribal, etc.) create a situation in which various actors compete with the state for authority in a variety of arenas (Migdal 1994; Job 1992). Michael Bratton describes a similar process through which societal actors either engage or disengage with the state (Bratton 1994). These challenges of state making and the failure to translate juridical statehood into empirical statehood leave a state with what Ayooob describes as two options: to revel in anarchy; or splinter into ethnically defined mini-states. Internal power struggles widen as leaders and challengers attempt to command resources that will allow them to consolidate their hold on power, reaching beyond the state in the process. As the case of West Africa demonstrates, state borders may become increasingly irrelevant in the drive for internal security, although the regional involvement is a by-product of the legitimacy contest.

This problem is exacerbated in Africa by the informalization of politics on the continent. Patrick Chabal and Jean-Pascal Daloz contend that a state develops when politics is emancipated from society and “constituted into increasingly autonomous political institutions” (Chabal and Daloz 1999, p. 5). They go on to argue, however, that this has never happened in Africa, creating a state that is “vacuous and ineffectual,” an empty shell that elites prefer not to institutionalize (Chabal and Daloz 1999, p. 14). Elites resist emancipating the state from society because the non-state is actually profitable, allowing them to control the dispersal of resources and thereby gain prominence and social status. Legitimacy rests on distributive imperatives, or what we might call the provide to survive rule, whereby elites command legitimacy on the basis of the benefits they can disperse to their clients. This principal of clientelistic accountability confers legitimacy on the regime, even though the state itself does not conform to Western expectations.

Chabal and Daloz (1999) also distinguish between two types of armed conflicts in Africa, the political and the criminal. Political conflicts they describe as straightforward

struggles for power, endowed with legitimacy because they are viewed, at least by their supporters, as the last resort for necessary political change. Interests focus on control of the state's apparatus. Criminal conflicts, on the other hand, are not considered legitimate because the violence is perceived to result from the "private greed of war makers" (Chabal and Daloz 1999, pp. 82-3). This is the realm of the warlords, who can be described as businessmen of war who use violence as an instrument of economic activity and economic activity as an instrument of political control. Here the pursuit of power is purely for personal gain and often degrades the institutions of the state. William Reno (1999) focuses on this second category as a distinctive logic that develops in response to the problem of reform and the difficulty in maintaining authority. He postulates that de-institutionalization makes sense for some weak-state rulers because it allows them to command the biggest source of legitimacy, money, and create unofficial networks that constrain potential challengers (Reno 1999). The distinction is important because the type of conflict that afflicts a state is relevant to determining the effect on the region and appropriate strategies of conflict resolution.

The spreading of insecurity throughout a region holds implications for global security as well because of the humanitarian and aid related issues involved. The institutional emphasis on conflict resolution, peacekeeping, and peacebuilding reflects the rise of normative interests revolving around protection of individuals and responsible governance. It is growing more difficult for third parties not to take action in the face of extreme human suffering and widespread destruction. The International Commission on Intervention and State Sovereignty (ICISS) contends that capable states have a responsibility to end conflict and suffering when it is possible to do so and there are no other options (ICISS 2001). Moreover, the rising emphasis on conflict resolution as an international expectation creates a growing imperative for involvement on at least a diplomatic level (Damrosch 1993; Reed and Kaysen 1993; Otunnu and Doyle 1996; Schnabel and Thakur 2001). This creates a three-layer model of security—domestic, regional, global, where each level has the potential to spill into the next and create the involvement of more states and multilateral organizations. But the trend for normative international involvement clashes with the realist pursuit of local power (Posen 1993; Snyder and Jervis 1999; Buzan 2000). Each side seeks markedly different goals, and views the problem in a fundamentally different way. That, along with the non-territorial nature of conflict, requires external actors to rethink how they approach conflict resolution.

These arguments have considerable significance for West Africa, a region that has experienced over a decade of unrest and been the target of several regional and international conflict resolution efforts. The endemic and spreading problem of instability in the region and the brutal quality of the various conflicts themselves have prompted international attention and slow but increasing commitment to finding solutions. This interest is spurred in part by the rapid spread of instability and normative concerns for human rights and state collapse. In 2001 the UN undertook an Inter-Agency Mission to coordinate its approach to the region's instability and establish structures for working more closely with ECOWAS. One important element of this initiative has been to recognize the linked nature of many of the conflicts. The recommendations of the Mission, however, do not take into account the particular internal

crises of African states or the transborder challenges posed. It also assumes that local actors want the development of stable states. For example, it targets monopoly power as a problem and recommends more inclusionary politics (UN 2001). In states defined by criminal rather than political conflicts, however, such an approach may be irrelevant. Control of economic power lies at the heart of many conflicts (Reno 2000; Collier, 2000; Duffield 2000). Those pursuing criminal agendas use that control to enhance personal power and erode that of the state. They are unlikely to participate in strategies based on consensus and collective responsibility. Likewise, encouraging greater support for civil society initiatives, another recommendation, might do more harm than good. In countries experiencing tension between societal and regime pursuit of legitimacy it would simply intensify the conflict and encourage the spread of violence.

The consequences of these problems for conflict resolution need more careful analysis. The central claim here is that the transborder nature of conflict and the clash between international and local interests requires new thinking on conflict resolution. The type of conflict we face is more complex than we thought, and less related to state control. These problems need to be more directly addressed. That may help limit the widening of the bull's eye model and ultimately lead to more durable third party efforts.

Conflict in West Africa

The Bull's Eye--Sierra Leone

Sierra Leone lies at the center of crisis in West Africa. Although it is the focus of international resolution efforts, the country is only the first step in addressing the region's violence. The International Crisis Group (ICG) describes Sierra Leone as lying "at the heart of a series of conflicts that risk forming an arc of violence from southern Senegal to the Ivory Coast." Overall, the ICG considers this "a security nightmare for all West Africa" (ICG April 2001, p. i). These descriptions demonstrate that the problem cannot be solved by attention to a single country. The crises in other countries, including the Mano River Union members and Senegal, have links to factions from the Sierra Leonean war and their economic activities. The line of instability is caused by the problems of state consolidation in the region, criminal conflict, the presence of lucrative resources, and disaffected populations that have little loyalty to the state. Leaders and citizens alike exploit state weakness to gain wealth and the power it conveys. The more closely connected are the two, the greater are the incentives to encourage conflict. Savvy operators profit from the chaos it creates.

Two separate processes of instability afflicted Sierra Leone throughout the 1990s. The first was a civil war that began in 1991 and involved an internal insurgency operating in collusion with neighboring states. The Revolutionary United Front (RUF) claimed to operate on an anticorruption platform but its activities soon proved otherwise. It quickly focused on gaining control of the country's rich diamond mining areas and establishing smuggling operations. It also launched a campaign of brutality against citizens. The second source of instability was a series of coups, which brought periodic military rule. The military operated

with little accountability when it was not in power, and civilian presidents frequently relied on professional security agencies for control. This upheaval seemed to end in 1996 when President Ahmed Tejan Kabbah was democratically elected, bringing four years of military rule to an end. His government was extremely weak, however, and relied on a South African firm for security. The military operated autonomously, with untrained and ill-paid soldiers often cooperating with the rebels. One year later the military reclaimed the government and forced Kabbah into exile in Guinea. The coup temporarily ended the civil war by creating an alliance between the military and the rebels. It also motivated intervention by ECOWAS, which inserted a military monitoring group (ECOMOG) the following day.

The ECOMOG troops were dominated by Nigerian forces, subsequently joined by personnel from Gambia, Ghana, Guinea, and Mali. Their stated purpose was to restore the weak but legitimate rule of Kabbah, by force if necessary. The Organization of African Unity (OAU) endorsed this position. While the UN did not officially sanction it, Secretary-General Kofi Annan, among others, admitted that force might be the only solution. ECOMOG troops were welcomed by the citizens and succeeded in toppling the junta in February 1998. Kabbah returned on March 10, at which time ECOMOG's effort in resolving the crisis was praised and supported by the UN. The problem was far from over, however. RUF rearmed and retrained when it was forced back into the bush. Former soldiers, sometimes in alliance with RUF and sometimes working in independent bands, also fought the government. Fierce violence engulfed Freetown and ECOMOG in early 1999. The regional forces regained control over the capital but the security situation remained unstable. Success against the RUF required sustained offensives that ECOMOG did not have the manpower to mount. The national army was being reorganized and retrained by Great Britain but was still in no position to fight. The UN, ECOWAS, and independent heads of state mediated several peace agreements, all of which were broken by RUF. The most controversial was the Lome accord of 1999, which brought infamous RUF leader Foday Sankoh into government, gave him control over diamond mining, and offered amnesty to RUF fighters.

ECOMOG troops withdrew in late 2000 and were replaced by the United Nations Mission in Sierra Leone (UNAMSIL), which took over primary responsibility for implementing and enforcing the peace process. Although international efforts were uncoordinated for some time, in early 2001 the UN imposed tougher sanctions on RUF sponsor Liberia, and a British commitment to defending Freetown made clear that military victory would be impossible. In May the RUF finally dropped its demand that the Sierra Leone Army (SLA) disarm and agreed to return to the disarmament process. By the end of 2001, nearly half of the former combatants had been disarmed, the cease-fire was holding, and government authority extended to the majority of the country's territory. Kabbah was reelected in May 2002.

Sierra Leone is currently an example of success in peacemaking, although the ICG cautions that "the RUF's commitment to peace is fragile and dependent upon sustained international pressure (ICG October 2001, p. i). Internal security has not yet been consolidated, and the preparation for the elections was rushed (ICG, December 2001). The potential threats

to peace come from both without and within. Inside Sierra Leone there are several groups, notably the Civil Defense Force (CDF) and SLA that could disrupt the process by seeking to gain greater power or position within the country. The CDF is mainly composed of a traditional hunting brotherhood called the Kamajors and was used by Kabbah to protect civilians from the army and the rebels. The CDF distrusts the army and resents the attention it gets from international actors. Its internal structure also appears to be fragmenting. The SLA has ruled the country before, and may have an interest in doing so again. The military has historically been unaccountable to government and has reason to oppose democratization. It also has some interests in common with the RUF. Prior to 1998 military personnel often moonlighted with the rebel force, earning the title of “sobel.” The SLA has colluded with RUF to avoid battle and participated in smuggling activities. Although being retrained and reorganized by the UK, the army inspires little confidence.

Externally the country is faced with the influence of President Charles Taylor of Liberia and tensions with Guinea. Taylor has fomented much of the unrest in Sierra Leone and, as will be described below, is attempting to spread instability. Involvement in the conflict is attractive, for Taylor and others, because of Sierra Leone’s lucrative diamond mines. Taylor, the RUF, the SLA, the government, and various quasi-independent mercenary groups compete for control over the mines. Trafficking in arms is another source of revenue, involving officials from several surrounding countries. Peace is not in the best interest of most of these actors because it would shut down their access to resources and prevent the sale of arms. Odd as it may seem to say, conflict has truly become a business enterprise in West Africa, providing an important revenue base for those who give it support and nurture.

Resolving the conflict in Sierra Leone is neither possible nor effective without addressing this wider network of relationships. Unrest has spread to Guinea and to Liberia, and is affecting Senegal and Guinea-Bissau as well. If we take Sierra Leone as the center of the bull’s eye we can begin to sort out the spreading nature of instability. Liberia helped create unrest in Sierra Leone, which in turn led to unrest in Guinea, which is now affecting Liberia. Guinea also has border problems with Guinea-Bissau and Senegal. The extension of conflict is not osmotic, but often a calculated move by leaders to alter their domestic or regional position. Liberia’s Taylor used the weakness he created in Sierra Leone to foment conflict in Guinea. He uses the RUF as a personal army to spread his influence, as discussed below. Guinea now seeks to settle the score by employing refugees and disgruntled fighters to exploit weakness in Liberia. The movement of former and current combatants throughout the region harms progress toward peace. A pool of mercenaries is in ready supply for anyone with the cash to pay them. Without concerted efforts to these regional problems the current success in Sierra Leone could turn out to be simply the eye in the storm.

The Second Circle--Liberia

Few places demonstrate the link between state consolidation struggles, internal conflict, and interstate conflict as clearly as Liberia. Liberia’s emergence as a regional force began with the election of Charles Taylor in 1997. Taylor’s assumption to the presidency

capped seven years of turmoil, instigated when he began an armed insurgency against President Samuel Doe in late 1989. The war led to widespread dislocation of the population and destruction of the state apparatus. The economy is extremely weak, with 80 percent unemployment and an enormous international debt (CIA 2001). Taylor has weakened rather than strengthened the institutions of the state, first as rebel leader and now as president, because it allows him to control the dispersal of resources and build his own sources of economic activity. Although numerous other factions developed during the war, Taylor's National Patriotic Front of Liberia (NPFL) remained the most significant because of his ability to control economic resources. The NPFL controlled the majority of the country throughout the war, dubbed Taylorland, and used it to initiate illegal economic networks.

These ingredients combined to make the transition from war to peace very precarious and increased Taylor's ability to shape the state at will. In some ways a true transition never took place because Taylor shifted the networks supporting his de facto regime to serve his official position. The "state" Taylor presides over is essentially a criminal network of organized violence, which "thrives in poor societies where politics is weakly institutionalized, where law and order is fragile and where the parallel economy is strong" (Chabal and Daloz 1999, p. 77). When Taylor ascended to the presidency the hope (albeit scant) of international observers was that democratic reforms would be at least partially consolidated, allowing the gradual strengthening of state institutions. The reality has been almost the reverse.

Taylor has a personal stake in every major business in Liberia, and directs the financial and security services (ICG April 2001). Any hopes that elections would bring further reforms have proven terribly misplaced. Businesses fled during the civil war, making it even easier for Taylor to take control of the economy. Domestic security is still very unsettled, with the government practicing the brutal suppression of its critics, including rape and torture. The hardships of squeezing out a living day by day have been increased by a new civil conflict between the government and Liberians United for Reconstruction and Democracy (LURD) which began in July 2000. The LURD is funded by and based in Guinea, and composed mainly of fighters previously affiliated with the United Liberian Movement for Democracy in Liberia (ULIMO) faction from Liberia's civil war. In February 2002 the group launched attacks on Tubmanburg, just 38 miles from the capital of Monrovia, prompting the flight of citizens to Cote d'Ivoire. Both Liberian government forces and LURD forces have committed what Human Rights Watch calls "war crimes and other gross abuses of human rights" (HRW May 2002). The attacks led Taylor to declare a state of emergency and rail against the UN arms embargo, imposed in May 2001, which he claims limits Liberia's ability to respond. However, many aid workers inside Liberia suspect that Taylor may be using the insurgency to garner international sympathy and increase his power in order to gain a freer hand for the upcoming 2003 elections. While these suspicions are not proven, reports that army elements were rampaging in some of the most conflict-prone counties have added fuel to the fire (Tostevin February 14, 2002).

Liberia is defined by "the warlord pursuit of commerce" (Reno 1999, p. 79), which is detrimental enough within a single state. But the struggle for resources and power reaches

outside Liberia, co-opting cross-border commerce by political elites. Taylor has proven himself a master at using commerce as a means of gaining political resources. He perfected this tactic during the civil conflict and then transferred it to his political agenda when he took control of the state. Taylor has created a wide zone of conflict throughout the region by pursuing the atrophy of the state in favor of personalized control over criminal commercial networks. The networks that he commands, or allows others to command, are by their nature not confined to a single state. Instead they follow the movement of goods and resources and require collusion throughout the region to circumvent official controls. Even his security services are irregular, composed of dissidents from around the region and foreign mercenaries. Taylor promotes a style of power not defined by state boundaries that in many ways directly contradicts the traditional perceptions of sovereignty, authority, and control. He holds power because he commands money and resources and can use the promise of gain to entice others to join his networks. Though he rules a sovereign state and receives international recognition on that basis, Taylor's legitimacy and authority are not connected to its territorial definition. His power is far more diffuse, extending beyond his borders to encompass a regional and informal style of power. Taylor has "innovated," in the words of Reno, by moving away from the territorial logic of organization to create a political authority based on the private control of resources (Reno 1999, p. 91).

Taylor's ambitions appear to extend well beyond Liberia. He uses the RUF of Sierra Leone as a proxy army, supplemented with mercenaries from various states, to pursue regional hegemony. Taylor funded the RUF during Liberia's civil war and provided them with training camps in Liberia in areas under his control. He has been the primary sponsor of their war against the government of Sierra Leone, and has profited handsomely as a result through the illegal diamond trade. The economic networks he now controls were begun largely through this relationship during Liberia's civil war. Even before he controlled the state Taylor earned approximately \$75 million a year from taxes on the passage of diamonds, timber, rubber, and iron ore (Ellis 1999, p. 90). Although he has been forced to withdraw some sponsorship because of international sanctions, Taylor retains strong influence with the RUF. He is currently using RUF members to fight for him against the LURD, and has warned that he may carry the fight across the Sierra Leone border (ICG December 2001).

Taylor's stated intent to use the RUF and access through northern Sierra Leone to attack Guinea appears to be part of a larger plan to control the Mano River countries (ICG April 2001). He justifies these actions because of Guinea's known support and assistance to LURD, but there is also evidence that Taylor encouraged earlier RUF incursions into Guinean territory (UN 2000). Taylor has created a broad network of cronies engaging in illicit economic activity throughout the countries of West Africa. He also recruits criminals from Lebanon, Ukraine, Russia, and South Africa, creating a widespread culture of impunity and corruption and harming the economic development of his neighbors. Taylor's ambitions are astonishing, particularly within the context of the restrictions of sovereignty recognized as controlling norms within the international community. He is actively exporting the criminalization of state structures, and providing incentives for neighbors and allies to collude

in the degradation of the state and informalization of politics.

Burkina Faso is a close ally, and is known to have personnel active with RUF. Cote d'Ivoire previously shared extensively in the booty to be gained from the smuggling networks, particularly in diamonds and arms, although its current government has distanced itself from Taylor. Niger is also now a key transit point for weapons to the RUF. Although weapons supplied to the RUF are purchased by arms merchants or brokers, most come through countries with governments sympathetic to the rebels. The transit of arms requires numerous cross-border shipments. In countries cooperating with Taylor all controls, legal procedures, and regulations on the export and import of military equipment have broken down. The arms brokers have the cooperation of border and customs inspectors, as well as the government licensing departments, to circumvent UN sanctions and even standard controls (UN, 2000). While such corruption may not be new in West Africa, its level of coordination has reached new heights under the influence of Taylor.

Taylor's chief mediums for exporting regional insecurity are the timber and shipping industries. These remain his two main sources of revenue since the imposition of UN sanctions on the trade of conflict diamonds. Thus far the UN has resisted similar restrictions on timber exports. Through these structures Taylor is able to fund conflict in Sierra Leone and contribute to its spread throughout the region by distributing arms and increasing criminal activity. The two industries are clearly linked to the regional arms trade and the healthy revenue base of Taylor's government. In fact, there is evidence that Taylor has increased the illicit timber trade in order to compensate for losses of revenue elsewhere due to the sanctions. The shipping industry is less elastic, but it has been implicated in the regional arms and diamond trades. Both are identified by Global Witness as "pillars" of financial stability to a regime which uses its funds to destabilize its neighbors (Global Witness 2001).

Liberia's timber industry has expanded enormously during Taylor's years in power, from annual production of 157,000m³ in 1998 to 934,000m³ in 2000 (Global Witness 2001, p. 3). There are two problems with this. The first is that the rate of production is unsustainable and is stripping the country of an important resource. The second is that while the amount of production in 2000 had a market value of at least \$187 million, only \$6.7 million was received by the Central Bank of Liberia (Global Witness 2001, p. 5). Most timber is smuggled out through Cote d'Ivoire, allowing the proceeds to go directly to financing arms shipments and other illicit activities. Taylor has even secured statutory backing for his commercial activities, passing a law that gives the president "sole power to execute, negotiate and conclude all commercial contracts or agreements with any foreign or domestic investor for the exploitation of the strategic commodities of the Republic of Liberia" (UN, 2000). He is using that authority to expand his regional smuggling networks and security forces. The UN found that "roads built and maintained for timber extraction are also conveniently used...for the onward shipment of weapons to Sierra Leone," and that large amounts of the proceeds of the timber industry "are used to pay for extra budgetary activities, including the acquisition of weapons" (UN 2000, pp. 37, 44). Taylor has a total commerce monopoly in Liberia, and is extending that control elsewhere. Many of the logging companies have links to the arms trade either through the

direct supply of arms or assistance in funding and supporting armed militias for Taylor's use. Several companies maintain their own private militias, which they also make available for "state" purposes.

The other way Taylor makes easy money is by renting his flag to ship owners, making a flag of convenience rather than of nationality. This concept of an "open register" was created in the 1940s, with the assistance of US business, so that US ship-owners could avoid onerous regulations in their home country. Taylor personalized this activity much like everything else, reducing legal controls and increasing his share of the revenues. The requirements for registering a ship in Liberia are extremely loose, and for that privilege owners are willing to pay high fees. As of 2000, Taylor received an estimated \$15-20 million per year from the registry (Global Witness 2001, p. 32). The shipping registry is also a critical link in the smuggling of diamonds from Sierra Leone (in contravention of the UN embargo on trading conflict diamonds) and an important transit medium for other illicit diamonds. By using Liberian flagged ships and setting up fake companies in Monrovia, Taylor is able to export smuggled diamonds to Belgium and sell them as Liberian.

Although such networks existed long before Taylor, now they are explicitly used to fund regional conflict. He built and rules through a network of transnational bandits. Diamonds are traded for guns, and often provoke violence themselves in disputes over possession and payment. Many former combatants from the Liberian civil war remain committed to violence because of the limited opportunity for advancement in Liberia. They now roam between Liberia, Sierra Leone, and Guinea, engaging in mercenary activities and cutting into diamond smuggling (UN 2001). This is a source from which both Taylor and the LURD can draw. The Gambia, Guinea, and Cote d'Ivoire are closely involved in the illicit diamond trade (UN 2000). Nigerian military personnel serving in UNAMSIL may also be involved.

The effect of Liberia's behavior on the West African region is quite profound. Taylor is using his position to spread personalized and non-territorial economic activities that encourage corruption in neighboring states and fund conflict. Liberia's actions also harm the ability of ECOWAS to pursue effective conflict resolution throughout the region. The problem is most evident in Sierra Leone, where Taylor has supported and many argue directed the RUF even while playing a role in peace talks through the UN and ECOWAS. The latter's ability to successfully resolve the crisis in Sierra Leone and restore regional stability, a purported goal, was undercut by Taylor's commitment to exporting destabilization in a bid to extend his warlord style control. So too are the organization's efforts in Guinea-Bissau, another focus of peacekeeping efforts. The peace now holding in Sierra Leone was the product of intense and continuous international effort by the UN, Britain, the US, and regional actors. That "success" has intensified problems elsewhere, however, creating a new pool of unemployed fighters for hire. Taylor is now redirecting the RUF efforts into Guinea, and members of a UN mission who toured the region in 2001 predicted further deterioration (UN 2001). Though ECOWAS member states are continuing their efforts to seek stabilization for the region, they have little chance of success.

Another problem is the effect Taylor has on relationships within the region. This was

evident even before he became president, when Taylor allies Burkina Faso and Cote d'Ivoire squared off against Taylor opponents such as Nigeria. Even though his connections to those countries have diminished somewhat, Taylor's networks have infiltrated many neighboring governments and provided incentives to politicians throughout the region to obstruct democratic reforms at home and limit the activities of ECOWAS in pursuing regional stability. Though ECOWAS is hardly credited with being the most effective organization, its conflict resolution efforts are important. No other organization has the interest or geographical position to address problems in the region. It also recently received increased UN backing. The UN has outlined an internationally supported role for ECOWAS in monitoring arms shipments, ensuring compliance with any UN embargoes, and providing frontline peacekeeping operations. If the membership is fractured between those nations seeking liberalization, or even the status quo, and those seeking greater informalization, its capacity to have any positive effect on the region may be destroyed. As Taylor's networks expand and provide greater revenues it becomes harder and harder for nearby politicians to promote systems that demand limited rewards and extensive accountability. It is possible; therefore, that Taylor's influence could gradually informalize the region.

Liberia's emergence from civil war thus presents unambiguous negatives for the region as a whole. Prior to 1990 the problems of Liberia were mainly internal, with a political elite benefiting disproportionately from the state and repressing opposition. It was a warlord state internally, but that description did not transcend state boundaries. The emergence of the Liberian state under Taylor has produced insecurity region-wide. Not only is Liberia reveling in anarchy, but it appears to be encouraging the same throughout the region. Taylor is exporting the dismantling of state institutions by creating criminal networks that spread beyond Liberia and degrading the potential for positive reforms elsewhere. Sierra Leone and now Guinea are direct targets that he is actively working to destabilize. Burkina Faso, Cote d'Ivoire, Niger and others are entwined with his networks in illicit trade. Taylor's desire to build a criminal empire that transcends borders, and his willingness, even eagerness, to destroy existing states by fomenting violence and increasing the informalization of politics throughout the region has wide-reaching effects. The West African criminal cartel he seeks to create presents a tremendous challenge to both ECOWAS and the UN.

The Third Circle

The arc of conflict the ICG describes spreads from Senegal east to Cote d'Ivoire. Separatist rebels in the Casamance region of Senegal have waged a long standing, simmering feud against the government. Although the country remains relatively stable, the opposition is a source of potential exploitation for leaders or individuals looking to increase their own power. It also makes the country vulnerable to the meddling of external actors. Officials in Guinea-Bissau have been accused of supporting the rebels, fueling the conflict in Senegal and creating political crisis at home. Guinea-Bissau experienced civil war from June 1998 until May 1999, sparked by the collusion of government officials with illegal networks. The violence was triggered by an army uprising protesting the president's dismissal of the Army

Chief of Staff over allegations regarding the smuggling of arms to the rebels in Senegal. That situation was resolved through international mediation and the holding of new elections in early 2000. The internal situation is very fragile, however, due to economic crisis and political weakness. Incidents on the Guinea-Bissau-Senegal border have been quite tense at times. Clashes have also extended to Guinea, leading to the deployment of an ECOWAS force to monitor the situation. Guinea therefore faces violence on two fronts—from the south and west via Liberia and Sierra Leone and from the north and west via Senegal and Guinea-Bissau. Guinea, one of the poorest nations in the world, is struggling even more as a result of hosting thousands of refugees from Sierra Leone. Although some found or built homes, many families are living on the streets of Conakry and other cities, contributing to Guinea's economic crisis. Alongside the prospect of greater violence, the instability among these countries provides more fertile ground for extending illegal economic networks. The more there are areas where authority is disputed, the easier it becomes to move guns, diamonds, and other resources without controls.

One of the countries most vulnerable to the further spread of violence in the region and important for its control is Cote d'Ivoire. Rebellion broke out in September of 2002 and rebels now control the north of the country. A negotiated peace settlement failed to hold, several new rebel groups have emerged, and violence was continuing through December. Tensions began with the elections in 2000, when the government targeted political opponents of the regime as well as specific ethno-religious groups. Since then officials have actively incited ethnic violence. The introduction of national identity cards helped fan resentments, and the primary architect of that policy was killed in the September violence. The crisis is particularly important because Cote d'Ivoire had been viewed around the region as an exemplar of stability. Although a few officials in neighboring countries feared the potential of conflict, most still considered Cote d'Ivoire the next "big dog" behind Nigeria. Now there is tremendous concern about the effect of its collapse on the region, and fear that the loss of an important stabilizer may encourage the spread of violence.

The potential presence of mercenaries or smuggled arms is a serious problem that could exacerbate existing tensions. In the spring of 2001 Cote d'Ivoire closed its territory to arms transfers from Burkina Faso to Liberia. Now the Ivoirean government has accused Burkina Faso and Liberia of aiding the rebels, and UN officials suggest there may be some truth to the charge (Reuters December 2002). There is a strong suspicion that outsiders are encouraging the late-developing rebel groups and perhaps providing fighters and weapons. The emergence of these new factions helped destroy the peace agreement brokered in October. Mediation efforts have been unsuccessful over the last two months, and regional leaders fear the crisis will spark broad destabilization, particularly if bands of fighters roam into neighboring countries. The problem is serious enough that ECOWAS is developing plans for a military intervention.

Burkina Faso is a particular point of concern because it is known to be indirectly supporting Taylor and the RUF by participating in arms smuggling. Benin is probably also

involved. Officials within these countries work with Taylor, either through the collusion of the government or their ability to behave as independent contractors. They are an important part of the culture of impunity that exists in the region, and a threat to any leader that hopes to impose the rule of law. The loss of Cote d'Ivoire as a potential brake on arms smuggling is very significant because it provides one more link in the regional chain of violence and aids the spread of illegal activities. In spite of its perceived stability, Cote d'Ivoire proved very vulnerable; weaker states can thus be expected to have even less resistance. The more connections Taylor has, the harder it becomes to clamp down on his activities and limit the spread of conflict. Corruption is enticing because it provides greater and more immediate payoffs than democratic procedures. All the states in the third circle are therefore linked in some way, even indirectly, by their connections to the corruption and gun-running that characterize the region. They threaten to either erupt into greater violence, or to serve as agents of further corruption.

Ramifications for Conflict Resolution

The circumstances of West Africa highlight several important ramifications for conflict resolution efforts. One lesson is that the erosion of state sovereignty may not come only, or even primarily, from the MNCs or global organizations usually implicated. Instead, we see the development of state leaders who have an interest in diminishing rather than strengthening the state. That development is counterintuitive because we usually think of leaders as those most adamant about increasing sovereignty. Yet Liberia shows the reverse, the rise of a leader eager to increase informalization in his own state and others because of the personal benefits of monopoly control. And though most leaders in West Africa are not like Taylor, his pursuit of informal political and economic power has harmful consequences for other states in the region, forcing outside actors to rethink conflict resolution and peace building approaches. The local commitment to establishing power without relying on the institutions of the state is a logical response to the challenge of establishing legitimacy, but it conflicts with the international effort to limit violence by strengthening processes of transparency and consensus. The reality is that mediation may not work because there are no real enticements it could offer to someone like Taylor. He has little interest in a stable state and rule of law; indeed, his power is predicated on the reverse. Even if he agrees to negotiate he is likely to resist attempts to strengthen state structures and to violate agreements with impunity.

A second lesson relates to the development of the state. Herbst (1999) details the problems African states have with the extension of state authority and consolidation of power. He attributes this to the quantifiable problems of large size coupled with small populations in the pre-colonial period, and the philosophical acceptance of power as a relative concept that wanes the further one travels from the center of the state (Herbst, 1999). Herbst's model may be useful in shaping conflict resolution initiatives where leaders, whether consciously or unconsciously, construe power in a non-territorial manner and adopt non-traditional means to extend their control. Conflict resolution must focus not on the state as outsiders wish it exists, but in the context of the peculiar problems of authority and extension of power that African

states confront. Size is not a significant problem in West Africa, but extending control over distant areas remains difficult because of the weak nature of the state. That creates internal and external consequences. Internally it provides more opportunities to dispute the legitimacy of the state. Externally it allows leaders to extend informal networks and degrade the mechanisms of the state more easily.

This is in part the source of Taylor's success. He can exert a non-territorial style of informal economic rule because of the diffusion of authority in many neighboring states. Approaches to conflict resolution must, therefore, focus on and accept the degree of informalization that exists, and its corresponding restraints on power. Then they can craft solutions within that context. International actors, no matter how committed, will not be able to create a strong, structured state fitting Migdal's description. Nor should they try to, because imposing a Western-style state is simply not appropriate in this context. They should instead focus on addressing the problems of legitimacy and authority that lead to conflict. Building up sources of regime legitimacy within a state and decreasing the ability of leaders to reach beyond their borders for authority is an important first step. That will help local leaders build a more stable power base, and is something that citizens and officials actively wish for. Only then will leaders have the flexibility to address some of the competing interests within the state and develop structures incorporating participation and accountability.

Third, state boundaries are not entirely definitive of possibilities. The UN and ECOWAS need to break out of traditional approaches and recognize that initiatives need to address the transnational networks that feed and supply conflict. Trying to improve and rebuild government structures is not enough. This relates directly to the importance of the bull's eye model proposed here. Focusing on Sierra Leone does not affect the connections between that country, Guinea, and Liberia, or those in the next circle of Senegal and Guinea-Bissau. In fact, in response to the peace process in Sierra Leone, many former combatants have become mercenaries in Liberia for either the LURD or government forces. The LURD in particular has recruited heavily from the CDF and SLA. Likewise, focusing on Taylor does little to limit the criminal timber and diamond networks he runs, allowing him to retain an independent means of support and power. Conflict resolution needs to transcend boundaries in order to be successful, just as criminal activity and violence do, and focus on limiting the ease of such behavior while increasing the penalties.

Fourth, we need to look beyond negotiation for solutions. The style of conflict discussed here employs "warfare as an instrument of enterprise and violence as a mode of accumulation" (Reno 2000, p. 57). Hypothetically assume that the UN and ECOWAS maintain the peace settlement in Sierra Leone—what then? That does not significantly affect the spread of violence or criminal behavior throughout the region. It does not limit the access to arms enjoyed by rogue elements that have participated in war in Sierra Leone, Liberia, Guinea, or Senegal. Nor does it restrict the illicit activities that fund pariah states like Liberia and provide strong incentives to leaders elsewhere to behave similarly. Conflict is likely to start anew elsewhere. The difficult answer, if we wish to achieve some measure of stability in the region, may be increased international control of customs regulations and oversight of military,

economic and business practices. Such actions are avoided because they intrude on sovereignty by restricting the right of a leader to direct policy. But failure to control these problems encourages illicit behavior and blurs the boundaries between states. Sovereignty is an important concept. However, it should not be allowed to protect the actions of leaders who pursue criminal conflict. If resolution of West Africa's instability is a sincere wish, more aggressive and forceful actions must be adopted.

Finally, conflict resolution efforts should take careful consideration of second circle states and how they impact the conflict. Successful strategies need to accommodate that impact. Containment needs to be a central element. Leaders who are willing to abide by the rule of law and work toward regional stability should be rewarded. Those who seek illicit means of control should be sanctioned. One approach might be to establish sources of international development funds to reward countries that participate in resolution efforts. These grants could be used to fund a variety of programs that the government might want to pursue. Another approach could be to support military training and payment programs to prevent the collapse of discipline and morale that proved so dangerous in Sierra Leone and Liberia. Both initiatives could be undertaken through the UN mission in West Africa, with the goal of giving regional actors the capacity to pursue conflict resolution efforts while building stable structures at home. ECOWAS has demonstrated a commitment to conflict resolution, but needs assistance. The problem, of course, is that sufficient financial support is rarely forthcoming, even in the most extreme of circumstances.

Strategies also need to focus on limiting the effects of second circle states. Perhaps the most obvious possibility is to impose UN sanctions on the sale of Liberian timber, either by limiting the amounts it can sell or monitoring the practices of companies engaged in the timber trade. ECOWAS will then need support to monitor and implement the embargo. Unfortunately, the possibility of sanctions has not been debated seriously in the UN because of several nations' desire to protect their own commercial interests. Another step may be, as noted above, to impose some oversight of customs procedures and practices. A final step could be to expand and aggressively implement disarmament programs throughout the region. All of these possibilities require international oversight and some degree of coercion. The process is proceeding slowly in Sierra Leone, but that could be for naught if the flood of arms and continued procurement strategies by Taylor's government simply shift the focus of conflict or provide new arms to demobilized RUF personnel. Of course, all these programs are easier said than done, and are open to criticisms that they impinge on state sovereignty. However, more limited and conciliatory approaches do not seem likely to yield results.

Conclusions

International conflict resolution efforts need to be reassessed in order to make them more effective. Approaches to date have often focused on the organizations doing the resolving rather than the circumstances of the conflict in question. As a result, strategies often do not address the more intractable elements of the crisis. The problem of regional conflict in the developing world is closely intertwined with problems of state development and

consolidation. One consequence is that conflict spreads easily and can be significantly affected by internal changes in states throughout the region. A second consequence is that strategies of conflict resolution need to show sensitivity to the intra-interstate aspects of violence in order to craft workable solutions to regional crisis.

Too often, conflict resolution efforts focus on developing an inclusive political structure based on consensus and transparency. From a Western perspective that is an effective reform. But that strategy addresses the wrong type of conflict. In regions where criminal rather than political conflict is the problem, seeking political change will provide no relief. Those pursuing criminal conflict practice warlord politics focused on the control of economic resources. Their efforts will often transcend state borders and widen the culture of corruption to neighbors. Conflict resolution strategies must be prepared to meet those challenges with robust and equally transborder solutions.

Conflict resolution efforts need to be reassessed to take account of these regional problems. They must also reconcile the tension between normative approaches seeking justice and peace versus realist approaches seeking power and security. The incompatibility between the interests of international and local actors is an impediment to developing effective strategies. We need to recognize that mediation and political reform programs may be ineffective. Coercion, oversight, and international enforcement appear to provide the best solutions. That means not simply cracking down on conflict in particular states, but squeezing the networks that support and extend it throughout the region. Transborder problems cannot be solved through single state solutions. Over the last decade conflict resolution efforts have sought to facilitate rather than coerce; particularly in areas like West Africa that may be a waste of time and money. Success depends on transborder, forceful, and sustained efforts. But this raises a conundrum, because it also means that institutions and groups undertaking conflict resolution need to consider their goals carefully. In essence, the international community must pick its poison. Using coercion and force will lead to controversy over whether such methods are appropriate. But not using those methods may mean that conflict resolution always falls short of realization. That would be unfortunate for the conflict's victims, and difficult for international actors to accept. These are hard choices, but also a problem that requires far greater consideration.

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Endnotes

¹ I presented parts of an earlier versions of this paper on September 19, 2002 as a public lecture in the framework the Broad International Series 2002-2003 at Florida State University, and twice in October 2002 at George Mason University, VA, in the framework of a seminar sponsored by the US Department of State for international conflict resolution scholars and practitioners, and in the framework of the Institute of Conflict Analysis and Resolution (ICAR) Brown Bag Lectures Series. I have included lessons from the stirring and inspiring discussions

that followed these presentations in the actual paper.

² “Intractable conflicts are conflicts that stubbornly seem to elude resolution, even when the best available techniques are applied”. (Intractable Conflict Knowledge website, 2002).

³ This concept was suggested by Burton (1986) as a way of addressing prevention of conflicts by working with their sources in transformative ways. Destructive conflicts are prevented when their deep and direct causes disappear or are not influential any more..

⁴ Framing is a psychological trait and a cognitive process that enables us to receive and organize information in patterns, which resemble cognitive maps. New information is sorted and interpreted while using these frames.

⁵ In this paper I use the phrase reframing in its neutral connotation - a significant change of frames.

⁶ I adopt Mitchell’s (2002) doubts with regard to a presumed wide gap between the de-valuated “conflict resolution” phrase and the more recently introduced “conflict transformation” phrase, as well as his distinction between these: “Conflict transformation clearly assumes that major structural changes will always and inevitably be necessary conditions for any successful effort to deal with the conflict. ... Relationships have to be replaced and rebuilt through deliberate and directed efforts, and reconciliation can only take place as a result of these efforts. ...” (p.24)

⁷ The United Nations High Commissioner for Refugees (UNHCR), is now in charge with the protection of an estimated 20 million uprooted people. Since its establishment in 1951, this agency has helped an estimated 50 million people. Another UN agency, UNRWA, assists now close to four million Palestinian refugees.

⁸ Following research on many projects the World Bank was involved in during the last quarter of century, Michael M. Cernea and associates have developed and tested a model of impoverishment risks and reconstruction. This model includes eight interconnected components : *landlessness, joblessness, homelessness, marginalization, food insecurity, increased morbidity and mortality, loss of access to common property assets, and community disarticulation.* (Cernea and McDowell, 2000).

⁹ “In the Kossou Resettlement Project in The Cote d’Ivoire, evacuees were informed two years before the lake was impounded. All local chiefs were called to a meeting held in Yamoussoubro by President Houphouet Boigny, who personally led the campaign. The oustees were consulted about where they wished to be resettled, and their demands were taken in account” (Lassailly-Jacob, 2000, p.114).

¹⁰ Between 9 and 11 April 1948, over 100 Arab townspeople were massacred by ysh paramilitaries in Deir Yassin near Jerusalem in the British Mandate of Palestine. Seems that Deir Yassin massacre was in a way an incident within a former revenge cycle. According to Hogan (2001), during the 1948 conflict, Deir Yassin was studiously honoring a Haganah (the Jewish community's forces which boasted many professionally trained and experienced soldiers) -sponsored agreement to refrain from hostilities with neighboring Jewish areas in exchange for protection from Jewish attack. Nevertheless the village was urged as a target by Yehoshua Goldshmidt the operations chief of the Irgun (Irgun Z'vai Leumi - National Military

Organization one of two small right-wing Jewish forces, which operated as independent guerillas and were referred. by the Jewish Agency as "dissidents"). Goldshmidt, raised in Givat Shaul a Jewish Jerusalem's suburb, had been sworn by his father to avenge armed attacks emanating from Deir Yassin against Givat Shaul during Arab-Jewish-British strife of the 1920s and 1930s.

¹¹ Sharq al-Adna (Arabic Radio), 20 May 1948, 11:00 A.M., Foreign Broadcast Information Branch, Central Intelligence Agency, Daily Report, Foreign Radio Broadcasts, 21 May 1948, European Section, Near and Middle East-North African Transmitters, II 3 (Cited by Hogan, 2001).

¹² Kriesberg, L. (1995, March). Intractable conflicts. Paper presented at the conference organized by the Tami Steinmetz Center for Peace Research at Tel-Aviv University,. cited by. Bar-Tal (1998).

¹³ “One typical habit in conflict is to give very high priority to defending one’s own interests. If Cain’s interests clash with Abel’s, Cain is inclined to ignore Abel’s interests or actively to damage them... but this is not the only possible response... [The] fifth alternative implies strong assertion of one’s own interest, but equal awareness of the aspirations and needs of the other, generating energy to search for a creative problem solving outcome” (Miall et al, 1999,. p. 5).

¹⁴ For example, Edward W. Said, Palestinian scholar, criticized the peace process since its first phases. In “The mirage of peace” (1995, p. 413) he wrote: “Those of us who fought for Palestine before Oslo fought for a cause that we believed would spur the emergence of a just order. Never has this ideal been further from realization than today. Arafat is corrupt. Hamas and Islamic Jihad are no alternative. And most Palestinian intellectuals have been too anxious to bolster their own case... I do not pretend to have any quick solutions for the situation now referred to as ‘the peace process’, but I do know that for the vast majority of Palestinian refugees, day laborers, peasants and town and camp dwellers, those who cannot make a quick deal and those whose voices are never heard, for them the process has made matters far worse. Above all, they may have lost hope... “

¹⁵ Focusing on the peace leaders' discourse Jamal (2000) claims that changes in the traditional narrative would threaten Israeli society's self-perception, and therefore the old frames sustain. This statement is consistent with the definition and characteristics of intractability this paper elaborates on, but does not exclude reconciliation and transformation. Yet, Jamal (p. 36) reminds us that “Based on the biblical belief that God gave the land of historic Palestine to the Jews, the official Zionist narrative has at its core the divine bond between the Jewish people and the ‘Land of Israel’ and concludes that “This being the case, the existence of other peoples on that land, from the Zionist perspective, must have been temporary”. I would link this statement with the “actual return” query. and suggest that the “divine bond” to ALL the “Land of Israel” and the. “right of return” be reframed into complementary myths, as opposed to actual desires, claims, aims and plans.

¹⁶ Muhi ‘Abd al-Hadi and Jan de Jong (2001) proposed an extension of the Palestinian territories to include the Galilee and some areas of the Negev in order to absorb portions of

refugee populations, without denying the remainder's ROR. This solution aimed also to resolve the Israeli fear of altering the character of the Jewish state.

¹⁷ I adopt the inclusive way Lederach (1997) comprehends "peace-building" as a comprehensive concept that encompasses, generates, and sustains the full array of processes, approaches, and stages needed to transform a conflict toward more sustainable, peaceful relationships.

¹⁸ "The key is understanding that failure is how we improve. You do this not by ignoring the failure, but by recognizing it, examining it thoroughly ... Companies, government agencies and even entire professions can learn from failure in the same way. Civil engineers, for example, have analyzed catastrophes and integrated lessons learned over time into the design and construction of future projects" (Michael D'Antonio, 2000, reporting on an interview with Henry Petroski of Duke University).

¹⁹ According to Argyris and Schon (1978) *Double-loop* learning occurs when error is detected and corrected in ways that involve the modification of an organization's underlying norms, policies and objectives.

²⁰ Cohen Ben-Ami (2002) relays on some of these experiences and on insights from development induced displacement and resettlement for another Middle Eastern displacement case – Pre-planning an evacuation of the Jewish population of the Golan Heights in the context of the signing of peace treaties with Syria.

²¹ See also in Arzt (1997) solutions that engage the Arab countries in solving the Palestinian Refugees mega-problem.

²² Arzt (1997) also addressed components of permanent regional absorption of the Palestinian refugees, Palestinian population absorption target for the different areas of the Middle East, as well as compensation concerns and options for international permanent absorption.