

AFE BABALOLA UNIVERSITY ADO-EKITI, EKITI STATE

PEACE AND CONFLICT STUDIES

ASSIGNMENT ON SIERRA LEONAN CIVIL WAR

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ASSIGNMENT

Question

With respects to our class on the Sierra Leonean Civil War held over Telegram Messenger yesterday 06-04-2020, the following task is here assigned

Watch two (2) documentaries on the Sierra Leone Civil War on YouTube

Write a review/critique on each of the documentary in the following format:

- a. The title of the documentary
- b. Date uploaded, author and channel where it is hosted
- c. Summary of the documentary highlighting the nature of the conflict, its causes, course during the war and implications for regional security and peace
- d. critique/review of the documentary

ANSWERS

2a Title of the Documentary: Sierra Leone Civil War (War for Profit Documentary)

2b Date Uploaded: 22nd July 2013

Author of the Documentary : Nicholas Berret

Channel: YElucky pictures

2c Summary of the Documentary:

Nature of the Conflict

The decade-long civil war in Sierra Leone formally ended in January 2002 following the British government's successful military intervention to suppress rebel insurgents. However, the conflict has not completely finished yet; some features of brutality and viciousness in the conflict are still lingering in the minds and bodies of Sierra Leoneans. The recent trial of former Liberian president, Charles Taylor, clearly reveals the indelible scars left to people even ten years after the official declaration of end of the war. After he was found guilty of 'aiding and abetting the war crimes during the Sierra Leone civil war' in the UN-backed Special Court for Sierra Leone on April 26 2012, one victim, whose forearms were amputated during the war, indignantly talked to the BBC: 'Taylor deserves 100 years in jail for his role in the atrocities'.

The forced recruitment of child soldiers by the Revolutionary United Front (henceforth the RUF) and the rebels' atrocious behaviour against civilians are the most frequently featured aspects of this war. Indeed, vast numbers of Sierra Leone children were conscripted into the conflict by both parties – the RUF and the Sierra Leone government forces. Yet no precise number of abducted children has been confirmed, and estimated figures vary according to agencies. For instance, the United Nations Assistance Mission in Sierra Leone (UNAMSIL) estimated that 10,000 children were involved in various fighting forces, and the United Nations Children's Fund (UNICEF) indicated that 6,000 children were forced into violence over the years. One UNICEF

report also shows that 8466 children was officially documented as missing between 1991 and 2002 with 4448 children missing solely in 1999 (Williamson 2006).[i] In addition, more than 50,000 people appear to have been killed whilst almost two-thirds of the total population in Sierra Leone was displaced. These figures do not properly show the actual agony and resentment of those victims, though. Up to today, a huge number of Sierra Leoneans including former child soldiers are still enduring pains in their souls and bodies.

The dreadful result of the war, both in figures and in reality, makes us wonder why this war broke out. Some economic literature asserts that civil wars are more likely to be motivated by opportunities of economic profit (greed), than by political and social dissatisfaction (grievance). This assumption about the primary role of economic opportunities appears plausible to explain the persistence or escalation of civil wars. However, one can doubt whether there is a strong correlation between the motivation of greed and civil war onset. The civil wars occur and then describe the wars merely as products of less politics, more criminality or environmental collapse. The atrocities committed during the war were also portrayed as evidence of a mysterious and mindless rebel movement without legitimate political grievances. These one-sided or abstract approaches provide a limited picture of what really happened.

Causes of the Sierra Leonean War

1. The Formation of the RUF and Its Invasion in Sierra Leone

Despite the accumulated grievances throughout history, circumstantial factors do not directly trigger violence; there should be active protagonists who take advantage of these grievances by channelling them into the road to war. In Sierra Leone's case, the main protagonist was the RUF which had been militarily assisted by Charles Taylor from Liberia.

The initial reason for the founding of RUF was to overthrow a cruel dictatorial government. Along the way, Sankoh used tactics of murder and other brutal violence against innocent people in his unsuccessful coup for the government.

Foday Sankoh and Founding Members of the RUF

Although the sole name of Foday Sankoh is widely known by the public, the RUF was actually founded by three Sierra Leoneans who received a military training together in Libya in 1987-88: Foday Sankoh, Abu Kanu and Rashid Mansaray. The rebels' atrocious behaviour against civilians during the war does not necessarily illustrate their initial motivation to start the war. Therefore, the process of the formation of the RUF and the roles of all these three founders need to be analysed to better understand the original characteristics of the rebel group.

In the beginning, the RUF was nothing but 'a loose collection of individuals who had returned from military training in Benghazi' with a collective leadership of three: Sankoh, Kanu and Mansaray. The three travelled a lot in Sierra Leone and Liberia to

recruit combatants and open a link with the National Patriotic Front of Liberia (NPFL), and eventually by 1989, they managed to make an informal deal with Charles Taylor to help him in return for his military assistance.

It was seen that in 1991 the whole conflict got out of hand and it couldn't be controlled. However it was then seen that RUF has the utmost control of Sierra Leone they controlled several aspects of the country. They turned children to child soldiers made them kill their parents and take all manner of hard drugs like marijuana and cocaine. RUF claimed that they were freedom fighters but they didn't actually fight for freedom rather they fought against freedom. Concerning the cutting of limbs in the land, the RUF leader was interviewed he said "they are telling lies, they are not sincere" he also went to say that Africans always tell lies. RUF was seen to be the major cause of the conflict in the land.

2. Economic Causes

Despite the lack of evidence of the diamonds' role in initiating the civil war, it is quite clear that diamonds played an essential part in the war by offering the RUF an invaluable funding source to sustain its warfare. With the growing interests of both parties – the RUF and government soldiers – in illegal diamond-mining, battles often occurred over diamond-abundant areas (Keen 2008). The RUF is estimated to have made an approximate profit of 200 million dollars a year between 1991 and 1999 through the illicit diamond trade. These illicit diamonds are widely known to have been traded with Charles Taylor in return for arms and ammunitions, which were later falsely identified as Liberian in origin and then legitimately exported abroad.

Although diamonds played a significant role in financing the war, this factor solely cannot explain the initial intention of actors involved in the conflict. Rather, some of the problems caused by the abundant diamond reserve are more useful to explain the structural inequality in Sierra Leonean society which later fed into the war. For instance, unequal benefits arising from diamond extraction were augmented as the ownership of diamond mines and mining licenses had been mostly given to the ruling families and loyal supporters of the ruling regimes. Thus, this economic inequality led to growing frustration among the population who were excluded from the benefits. To make matters worse, the Sierra Leone government was not able to properly collect tax from the diamond sector. The low purchase price of the Government Diamond Office (GDO) encouraged smuggling and, as a result, failed to increase tax revenues necessary for empowering civil sectors

In order to argue that there was a direct and clear connection between diamonds and motivations of the war, it is necessary to substantiate that the first priority of the RUF's war aims was to secure diamond mines for gaining a huge commercial profit beyond the necessity of equipping themselves with weapons. The RUF did not demonstrate such an obvious aim in the beginning of the war.

2d The 3 R's were carried out Reconciliation, Rehabilitation and Rebuilding.

1. Reconciliation

The Sierra Leonean government asked the UN to help set up a Special Court for Sierra Leone, which would try those who "bear the greatest responsibility for the commission of crimes against humanity, war crimes and serious violations of international humanitarian law, as well as crimes under relevant Sierra Leonean law within the territory of Sierra Leone since 30 November 1996." Both the Truth and Reconciliation Commission and the Special Court began operating in the summer of 2002.

2. Rehabilitation

After the war many of the children who were abducted and used in the conflict need some form of rehabilitation, debriefing and care after the conflict came to an end. Only a handful of the children could be immediately sent home after six weeks of debriefing at a center for ex-combatants. This is due to many of the children suffering from drug withdraw symptoms, brainwashing, physical and mental wounds, as well as a lack of memory of who they were or where they came from before the conflict.[130]

There was an estimated one to two million displaced persons and refugees who wanted to or needed to be returned to their villages.

3. Rebuilding

Reportedly thousands of small villages had been severely damaged due to looting, and targeted destruction of property that was held by perceived enemies. There was also heavy destruction of clinics and hospitals, leading to a concern about infrastructure stability.

These 3 things were carried out to prevent a recurrence of the war a second time. They brought about to bring a total end to the Civil War and also to take the country of Sierra Leone where it belongs. It was seen to bring unity among the citizens. The people of Sierra Leone have not seen peace for about 11 years. In 2012 the war criminal Charles Taylor was sentenced to 50yrs in jail for aiding and abetting the RUF on 11 charges.

2e Critique and Review of the Documentary

- * Death Toll was estimated at 50,000
- * One third of the population were displaced
- * 10-15000 children were abducted and used as soldiers
- * 100,000 civilians were deliberately mutilated
- * The initial population of the country was just 6 million people

It was seen that in the Documentary RUF played a major role in the Civil war. The civil war lasted for 11 years from 1991-2002. RUF was seen to have formed allies with Charles Taylor the President of Liberia as at that time. RUF leader Foday Sankoh wanted democracy that will elevate the people to live with the community of nations. RUF commuted many crimes in the country.

RUF first came as freedom fighters in Sierra Leone to safeguard the diamond in the land and protect the people. RUF said they were a political party to bring about proper

democracy in the land. RUF didn't fulfill their promises instead they started killing people in the land. They turned children into Child soldiers, the children were told to safeguard the Diamond fields and attacks the houses in the Villages. Many children were forced to murder their own parents to show that they had what it took. It was seen that RUF also used cocaine to make them fearless.

Interview of a Child

He prays God forgives because he was abducted and forced to do these things
Sometimes if the children cry in remembrance of their parents they would shoot them dead. RUF did all these things to make the children strong

RUF amputated limbs of several citizens of Sierra Leone. The RUF leader was interviewed and he said that the people were telling lies that he wasn't amputating limbs and killing of innocent people.

In 1991 the Government recruited persons to join the military from the ghettos. However the government could not supply or pay its men. The army was disintegrated, badly trained and poorly equipped. The Government inability to defend local communities led in 1993 to the right of the common goal.

A presenter Yves a French man said

- * Everything is destroyed it is unbelievable the town of Chebyuema is a ghost town.
 - * Most of the population lives in dreadful condition.
 - * They are In the bush obliged to eat raw food, in order not to be spotted.
 - * They are between 30,000 and 50,000 totally malnourished without care or whatsoever, it's tragic
 - * All the women over 12 are pregnant or already are mothers
 - * They are skinny and don't have milk.
 - * The children can't hold their heads up.
 - * The children will be dead in 3 weeks.
- It's a terrible situation after all.

Various measures were carried out

- * The leader of RUF Foday Sankoh died in July 2003 natural causes while waiting to be tried for war crimes.
- * Liberian Ex President Charles Taylor was sentenced to 50years in jail for aiding and abetting rebels in Sierra Leone in May 2012.
- * Former leader of (RUF) Revolutionary limited Front sentenced to long jail terms in April 2009.
- * The horrific civil war was officially ended in January 2002.