

ANNEXURE B

CONFLICT TIMELINES AND BRIEF HISTORICAL OVERVIEW

Without going into extensive detail about the histories of each country in the Mano River Basin sub-region of West Africa threatened by or engulfed in conflict, it is worth noting that the individual development of socio-economic and ethnic tensions in historical perspective is a crucial part of understanding current situations. The “repatriation” of black slaves from America to the Liberian coast in the early 19th century led to a colonial system in which those who had been oppressed and enslaved replicated plantation life, this time living it as the elite and discriminating against indigenes. In Sierra Leone, a long history of post-independence corruption and a culture of patrimonialism alienated and excluded the country’s youth for decades before the outbreak of civil war. Continuing tension in all four countries (Liberia, Sierra Leone, Guinea, and Côte d’Ivoire) between underpaid militaries and their government leaders has created instability and a history of coups. The following timelines are meant to provide an abbreviated reference to events in the countries discussed in following chapters.

Liberia timeline⁷¹

Early days

1847 - Constitution modelled on that of the USA drawn up.

1847 July - Liberia becomes independent.

1917 - Liberia declares war on Germany, giving the Allies a base in West Africa.

1926 - Firestone Tire and Rubber Company opens rubber plantation on land granted by government. Rubber production becomes backbone of economy.

1936 - Forced-labour practices abolished.

1943 - William Tubman elected president.

1944 - Government declares war on the Axis powers.

1951 May - Women and indigenous property owners vote in the presidential election for the first time.

1958 - Racial discrimination outlawed.

1971 - Tubman dies and is succeeded by William Tolbert Jr.

1974 - Government accepts aid from the Soviet Union for the first time.

1978 - Liberia signs trade agreement with the European Economic Community.

1979 - More than 40 people are killed in riots following a proposed increase in the price of rice.

Instability

1980 - Master Sergeant Samuel Doe stages military coup. Tolbert is murdered and 13 of his aides are publicly executed. A People's Redemption Council headed by Doe suspends constitution and assumes full powers.

1984 - Doe's regime allows return of political parties following pressure from the United States and other creditors.

1985 - Doe wins presidential election.

Taylor's uprising

1989 - National Patriotic Front of Liberia (NPFL) led by Charles Taylor begins an uprising against the government.

1990 - Economic Community of West African States (ECOWAS) sends peacekeeping force. Doe is executed by a splinter group of the NPFL.

1991 - ECOWAS and the NPFL agree to disarm and set up an Interim Government of National Unity.

1992 - The NPFL launches an all-out assault on West African peacekeepers in Monrovia, the latter respond by bombing NPFL positions outside the capital and pushing the NPFL back into the countryside.

Tentative ceasefire

1993 - The warring factions draw up a plan for a National Transitional Government and a cease-fire, but this fails to materialise and fighting resumes.

1994 - The warring factions agree on a timetable for disarmament and the setting up of a joint Council of State.

1995 - Peace agreement signed.

1996 April - Factional fighting resumes and spreads to Monrovia.

1996 August - West African peacekeepers initiate disarmament programme, clear landmines and reopen roads, allowing refugees to return.

1997 July - Presidential and legislative elections held. Charles Taylor wins a landslide and his National Patriotic Party wins a majority of seats in the National Assembly. International observers declare the elections free and fair.

Border fighting

1999 January - Ghana and Nigeria accuse Liberia of supporting Revolutionary United Front rebels in Sierra Leone. Britain and the US threaten to suspend aid to Liberia.

1999 April - Rebel forces thought to have come from Guinea attack town of Voinjama. Fighting displaces more than 25,000 people.

1999 September - Guinea accuses Liberian forces of entering its territory and attacking border villages.

2000 September - Liberian forces launch "massive offensive" against rebels in the north. Liberia accuses Guinean troops of shelling border villages.

2001 February - Liberian government says Sierra Leonean rebel leader Sam Bockarie, also known as Mosquito, has left the country.

2001 May - UN Security Council re-imposes arms embargo to punish Taylor for trading weapons for diamonds from rebels in Sierra Leone.

2002 January - More than 50,000 Liberians and Sierra Leonean refugees flee fighting. In February Taylor declares a state of emergency.

2002 September - President Taylor lifts an eight-month state of emergency and a ban on political rallies, citing a reduced threat from rebels.

Rebel offensives

2003 March - Rebels open several battlefronts and advance to within 10km of Monrovia. Tens of thousands of people displaced by fighting.

2003 June - Talks in Ghana aimed at ending rebellion overshadowed by indictment accusing President Taylor of war crimes over his alleged backing of rebels in Sierra Leone.

2003 July - Fighting intensifies; rebels battle for control of Monrovia. Several hundred people are killed. West African regional group ECOWAS agrees to provide peacekeepers.

2003 August - Nigerian peacekeepers arrive. Charles Taylor leaves Liberia after handing power to his deputy Moses Blah. US troops arrive. Interim government, rebels sign peace accord in Ghana. Gyude Bryant chosen to head interim administration from October.

2003 September/October - US forces pull out. UN launches major peacekeeping mission, deploying thousands of troops.

2003 October - Gyude Bryant sworn in as head of state.

2003 December - UN peacekeepers begin to disarm former combatants, deploy in rebel territory outside Monrovia.

2004 February - International donors pledge more than USD500m in reconstruction aid.

2004 March - UN Security Council votes to freeze assets of Charles Taylor.

2004 October - Riots in Monrovia leave 16 people dead; UN says former combatants were behind violence.

2004 November – UN announces successful disarmament of over 100,000 former combatants and the disarmament and demobilisation phase of DDR comes to a close.

2005 – Elections scheduled for 11 October. Voting will not be allowed in camps; only IDPs who return home will be able to vote.

Sierra Leone timeline⁷²

Early days

1787 - British abolitionists and philanthropists establish a settlement in Freetown for repatriated and rescued slaves.

1808 - Freetown settlement becomes a crown colony.

1896 - Britain sets up a protectorate over the Freetown hinterland.

1954 - Sir Milton Margai, leader of the Sierra Leone People's Party, is appointed chief minister.

One-party rule

1961 - Sierra Leone becomes independent.

1967 - Military coup deposes Premier Siaka Stevens's government.

1968 - Siaka Stevens returns to power at the head of a civilian government following another military coup.

1971 - Sierra Leone is declared a republic and Stevens becomes executive president.

1978 - New constitution proclaims Sierra Leone a one-party state with the All People's Congress as the sole legal party.

1985 - Major-General Joseph Saidu Momoh becomes president following Stevens's retirement.

1987 - Momoh declares state of economic emergency.

War and coups

1991 - Start of civil war. Former army corporal Foday Sankoh and his Revolutionary United Front (RUF) rebels begin campaign against President Momoh, capturing towns on border with Liberia and taking control of Kailahun.

1991 September - New constitution providing for a multiparty system adopted.

1992 - President Joseph Momoh ousted in military coup led by Captain Valentine Strasser and the NPRC. Under international pressure, Strasser announces plans for the first multiparty elections since 1967.

1996 January - Strasser ousted in military coup led by his defence minister, Brigadier Julius Maada Bio.

1996 - Ahmad Tejan Kabbah elected president in February, signs peace accord with Sankoh's rebels in November.

1997 Peace deal unravels. President Kabbah deposed in May by coalition of army officers led by Major-General Paul Koroma and members of the RUF; Koroma suspends the constitution, bans demonstrations and abolishes political parties; Kabbah flees to Guinea to mobilise international support.

1997 July - The Commonwealth suspends Sierra Leone.

1997 October - The United Nations Security Council imposes sanctions against Sierra Leone, barring the supply of arms and petroleum products. A British mercenary company, Sandline, nonetheless supplies "logistical support", including rifles, to Kabbah allies.

1998 February - The Nigerian-led West African intervention force ECOMOG storms Freetown and drives rebels out.

1998 March - Kabbah makes a triumphant return to Freetown amid scenes of public rejoicing.

1999 January - Rebels backing RUF leader Foday Sankoh seize parts of Freetown from ECOMOG. After weeks of bitter fighting they are driven out, leaving behind 5,000 dead and a devastated city.

UN intervention

1999 May - A ceasefire is greeted with cautious optimism in Freetown. In hospitals and amputee camps, victims of rebel atrocities express hope that eight years of civil war may soon be over.

1999 July - Six weeks of talks in the Togolese capital, Lomé, result in a peace agreement, under which the rebels receive posts in government and assurances they will not be prosecuted for war crimes.

1999 November/December - UN troops arrive to police the peace agreement - but one rebel leader, Sam Bokarie, says they are not welcome. Meanwhile, ECOMOG troops are attacked outside Freetown.

2000 April/May - UN forces come under attack in the east of the country. First 50, then several hundred UN troops are abducted.

2000 May - Rebels close in on Freetown; 800 British paratroopers sent to Freetown to evacuate British citizens and to help secure the airport for UN peacekeepers; rebel leader Foday Sankoh captured.

2000 August - Eleven British soldiers taken hostage by a renegade militia group called the West Side Boys.

Disarmament, demobilisation, and reintegration

2000 September - British forces mount successful operation to rescue remaining UK hostages.

2001 January - Government postpones presidential and parliamentary elections - set for February and March - for six months because of continuing insecurity, which it said made it impossible to conduct free and fair elections nationwide.

2001 March - UN troops for the first time begin to deploy peacefully in rebel-held territory.

2001 May - Disarmament of rebels begins, and British-trained Sierra Leone army starts deploying in rebel-held areas.

2002 January - War declared over. UN mission says disarmament of 45,000 fighters complete. The UN and the Government of Sierra Leone sign the agreement that establishes a Special Court to try war crimes.

2002 May - Kabbah wins a landslide victory in elections. His Sierra Leone People's Party (SLPP) secures a majority in parliament.

2002 July - British troops leave Sierra Leone after their two-year mission to help end the civil war.

2003 July - Rebel leader Foday Sankoh dies of natural causes in prison while waiting to be tried for war crimes.

2003 August - President Kabbah tells the Truth and Reconciliation Commission that he had no say over operations of pro-government militias during the war.

2004 February - Disarmament and rehabilitation of more than 70,000 civil war combatants officially completed.

War crimes trials

2004 March - UN-backed war crimes tribunal (Special Court for Sierra Leone) opens courthouse to try those people "who bear the greatest responsibility for war crimes" committed after 30 November 1996.

2004 May - First local elections in more than three decades.

2004 June - War crimes trials begin.

2004 September - UN hands over control of security in capital to local forces.

Guinea timeline⁷³

Early days

1891 - France declares Guinea to be a colony, separate from Senegal.

1898 - Defeat of resistance to French occupation led by Samory Toure, great-grandfather of future President Ahmed Sekou Toure.

1906 - Guinea becomes part of French West African Federation.

1952 - Ahmed Sekou Toure becomes secretary-general of the Democratic Party of Guinea.

Independence

1958 October - Guinea becomes independent, with Ahmed Sekou Toure as president.

1965 - Sekou Toure breaks off relations with France after accusing it of plotting to oust him.

1984 March - Sekou Toure dies.

1984 April - Lansana Conté and Diarra Traore seize power in bloodless coup. Conté becomes president while Traore is installed as prime minister.

1985 - Attempted coup organised by Traore following his demotion to education minister.

1990 - Constitution paving the way for civilian government is adopted.

Democracy without peace

1993 - First multiparty elections are held; Conté confirmed in office.

1995 - Conté's Party of Unity and Progress wins 71 of the National Assembly's 114 seats.

1996 - Some 30 people are killed and presidential palace set on fire as 25 percent of Guinea's armed forces mutiny over low pay and poor conditions.

2000 September - Alpha Conde, leader of opposition Guinean People's Rally, is sentenced to five years in prison for endangering state security and recruiting foreign mercenaries. He is pardoned in May 2001.

2000 September - Start of incursions by rebels in Guinea's border regions with Liberia and Sierra Leone which eventually claim more than 1,000 lives and cause massive population displacement. The government accuses Liberia, the Sierra Leonean United Revolutionary Front (RUF) rebel group, Burkina Faso and former Guinean army mutineers of trying to destabilise Guinea.

2001 February - Government deploys attack helicopters to the front-line in its fight with rebels.

Referendum

2001 November - Official results show constitutional referendum, boycotted by opposition, endorses President Conté's proposal to extend presidential term from five to seven years. Critics accuse Conté of trying to stay in power for life.

2002 March - Guinea, Sierra Leone, and Liberia agree on measures to secure mutual borders and to tackle insurgency.

2003 November - Opposition leader Jean-Marie Dore detained, subsequently released, after saying President Conté is too ill to contest December's presidential election.

2003 December - President Conté wins a third term in elections boycotted by the opposition.

2004 April - Prime Minister Lounseny Fall resigns while visiting the US.

2005 January - President Conté survives what security officials say is an assassination attempt. Shots were fired as his motorcade passed through the capital.

Côte d'Ivoire timeline⁷⁴

Early days

1842 - France imposes protectorate over coastal zone.

1893 - Côte d'Ivoire made into a colony.

1904 - Côte d'Ivoire becomes part of the French Federation of West Africa.

1944 - Felix Houphouët-Boigny, later to become the first president, founds a union of African farmers, which develops into the inter-territorial African Democratic Rally and its Ivorian section, the Côte d'Ivoire Democratic Party.

1958 - Côte d'Ivoire becomes a republic within the French Community.

Independence

1960 - France grants independence under President Felix Houphouët-Boigny. He holds power until he dies in 1993.

1990 - Opposition parties legalised; Houphouët-Boigny wins Côte d'Ivoire's first multiparty presidential election, beating Laurent Gbagbo of the Ivorian Popular Front (FPI).

1993 - Henri Konan Bédié becomes president following the death of Houphouët-Boigny.

1995 October - Bédié re-elected in a ballot that is boycotted by opposition parties in protest at restrictions imposed on their candidates.

1999 - July - Alassane Ouattara, a Muslim, leaves job at International Monetary Fund and returns to run for president in 2000; his plan to challenge Bédié splits country along ethnic and religious lines. Opponents say he is national of Burkina Faso, not Côte d'Ivoire.

Coup

1999 - Bédié overthrown in military coup led by Robert Guei. Bédié flees to France.

2000 October - Guei proclaims himself president after announcing he has won presidential elections, but is forced to flee in the wake of a popular uprising against his perceived rigging of the poll.

2000 October - Laurent Gbagbo, believed to be the real winner in the presidential election, is proclaimed president. Opposition leader Alassane Ouattara, excluded from running in the poll, calls for a fresh election.

2000 October - Fighting erupts between Gbagbo's mainly southern Christian supporters and followers of Ouattara, who are mostly Muslims from the north.

2000 December - President Gbagbo's Ivorian Popular Front (FPI) emerges as the biggest single party in parliamentary elections.

2001 January - Attempted coup fails.

2001 March - President Gbagbo and opposition leader Ouattara meet for the first time since violence erupted between their supporters in October 2000 and agree to work towards reconciliation.

2001 - Reports of a child slave ship off Africa's west coast spark allegations of child slavery in cocoa plantations, straining international relations. Government moves to tackle the issue.

2001 March - Calls for fresh presidential and legislative elections after Alassane Ouattara's party gains majority at local polls.

2001 June - Amnesty International criticises government's human rights record over alleged extra-judicial killings of 57 northerners during presidential election campaign in October 2000. Eight gendarmes accused of the killings are cleared in August.

2001 October - President Gbagbo sets up National Reconciliation Forum. General Guei refuses to attend in protest against the arrest of his close aide Captain Fabien Coulibaly.

2001 November - Opposition leader Alassane Ouattara returns, ending year-long exile in France and Gabon.

2002 August - Ouattara's RDR opposition party is given four ministerial posts in new government.

Rebellion

2002 19 September - Mutiny in Abidjan by soldiers unhappy at being demobilised grows into full-scale rebellion, with Côte d'Ivoire Patriotic Movement rebels seizing control of the north.

2002 October-December - Short-lived ceasefire in October gives way to further clashes and battle for key cocoa-industry town of Daloa. Previously unknown rebel groups seize towns in west.

2003 January - President Gbagbo accepts peace deal at talks in Paris. Deal proposes power-sharing government.

Power-sharing

2003 March - Political parties, rebels agree on new government to include nine members from rebel ranks. "Consensus" prime minister, Seydou Diarra, tasked with forming cabinet.

2003 May - Armed forces sign "full" ceasefire with rebel groups to end almost eight months of rebellion.

2003 July - At presidential palace ceremony military chiefs and rebels declare war is over.

2003 August - Group of suspected mercenaries and their backers detained in France; they are said to have planned to assassinate President Gbagbo.

2003 September - Rebels accuse President Gbagbo of failing to honour peace agreement and pull out of unity government.

2003 December - 19 killed in armed attack on state TV building in Abidjan. Rebels rejoin government of national unity.

Hostilities and the road to peace

2004 March - Deadly clashes during crackdown on opposition rally against President Gbagbo in Abidjan. The former ruling party, the Côte d'Ivoire Democratic Party (PDCI), pulls out of the government, accusing President

Gbagbo of “destabilising the peace process”. First contingent of UN peacekeeping force deployed.

2004 May - UN report says March’s opposition rally was used as a pretext for a planned operation by security forces. Report says more than 120 people were killed and alleges summary executions and torture.

2004 November - Outbreak of hostilities: Ivorian air force attacks rebels. French forces enter the fray after nine of their soldiers are killed in an air strike, destroying the Ivorian air force fleet. Violent anti-French protests ensue. The UN imposes an arms embargo.

2004 December - Parliament passes key reforms envisaged under 2003 peace accord, including abolishing need for president to have Ivorian mother and father (which would allow Ouattara to enter his candidacy in an election).

2005 April - Government, rebels declare an “immediate and final end” to hostilities. The move follows talks in South Africa. Gbagbo invokes Article 48 of the Constitution to allow Ouattara to contest an election, a controversial move since it opens the door to other uses of the Article’s executive power. Elections are scheduled for 30 October, 2005.