

**MOBILIZING FOR OR AGAINST THE STATE: STATE FORMATION AND CIVIL WAR IN  
FOUR WEST AFRICAN STATES**

A THESIS

PRESENTED TO THE FACULTY  
OF  
THE FLETCHER SCHOOL OF LAW AND DIPLOMACY

BY  
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In partial fulfillment of the requirements for the  
Degree of Doctor of Philosophy

APRIL 2016

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### EDUCATION

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**The Fletcher School**, Tufts University, Medford, MA

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#### **M.A. in Law and Diplomacy (MALD)**

**The Fletcher School**, Tufts University, Medford, MA

May 1999

#### **M.A., Political Science** (minors: French literature; international law)

Rheinische Friedrich-Wilhelms Universität, Bonn, Germany

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#### **Certificat d'Etudes Politiques (CEP)**

Institut d'Etudes Politiques de Paris, France

June 1995

### PROFESSIONAL HISTORY – LONGER-TERM EMPLOYMENT

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#### **Deputy Director, Research, Evaluation and Learning, International Rescue Committee**

New York, NY

November 2015 - Present

- Oversee three strategic initiatives to turn the IRC into a fully outcomes-driven and evidence-based humanitarian organization
- Supervise three teams of approximately ten staff to define outcomes and evidence, strengthen measurement and monitoring and evaluation systems, and establish regular cost analysis as part of IRC's routine program decision-making

#### **Deputy Regional Director of Programs, International Rescue Committee**

Kinshasa, DR Congo

Aug 2011 – March/July 2015

- Oversaw program quality and implementation of a \$300m+ post-conflict development and humanitarian program portfolio in local governance, health, education, women's empowerment/gender-based violence, emergency response including several large-scale RCT impact evaluations (governance, education, GBV)
- Supervised seven technical directors and program support staff

#### **Acting Country Director, International Rescue Committee**

Freetown, Sierra Leone

Sept. 2004 – Jan. 2005

- Managed all programs and operations and supervised all senior staff for implementation of multi-sector US\$6m program portfolio of comprehensive refugee and IDP reintegration including child protection, Gender-Based Violence, education, health, economic rehabilitation

**Deputy Country Director, International Rescue Committee,**  
Freetown, Sierra Leone Dec. 2003 – May 2005

- Oversaw and directed all program development, implementation, monitoring and evaluation of US\$6m multi-sector refugee and IDP reintegration program portfolio

**Field Coordinator, International Rescue Committee,**  
Kenema, Sierra Leone Feb. – Nov. 2003

- Managed all operations and program activities in the Kenema field office including GBV, health, education, child protection programming and management of Gerihun refugee camp

**Monitoring & Evaluation Coordinator**  
**Program Development and Information Manager**  
International Rescue Committee, Baku, Azerbaijan Aug. 2002 – Feb. 2003  
Aug. 2001 – Aug. 2002

- Managed all program development, donor reporting, donor relations and M+E for US\$8m IDP assistance and post-conflict development program

**Program Assistant, Africa & Near East** Nov. 1999 – Aug. 2001

**International Foundation for Election Systems (IFES),** Washington, DC

- Provided programmatic support to electoral assistance and civil society support projects in the Democratic Republic of the Congo, Nigeria, and Ghana
- Co-organized election observation missions for African election commissioners for the 2000 elections in Ghana and the United States

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**Facilitator, Advanced Conflict Analysis for Peacebuilding course,** New York May 2015

- Co-designed and facilitated four-day training course on conflict analysis and peacebuilding planning and programming for UN HQ and agency staff

**Facilitator, Peacebuilding Program Development pilot course,** Guinea March 2012

- Co-facilitated four-day training course on peacebuilding program development and design for the UN Country Team and government officials

**Expert on state fragility, U4 Anti-corruption Resource Center,** Kinshasa, DR Congo May 2011

- Gave presentation on "Governance Challenges in Fragile States" and served as resource person at seminar on Public Integrity Approaches for Natural Resource Management

**Political Advisor, Electoral Observation Mission, The Carter Center,** Guinea Sept. – Nov. 2010

- Liaised with political parties, government officials, and civil society

- Provided daily written and verbal briefings to The Carter Center's electoral observation mission on political developments before, during, and after the November 7 runoff election

**Facilitator, Conflict Prevention: Analysis for Action (CPAA), Guinea** October 2010

- Designed and co-facilitated three-day conflict analysis skill building workshop for UN Country Team to integrate conflict analysis into UN planning processes and programs

**Short-term Electoral Observer, The Carter Center, Conakry, Guinea** June-July 2010

- Served as short-term observer during the June 27, 2010, presidential elections

**Case study Consultant, The World Bank, Washington, DC** Feb-March 2010

- Researched and wrote background paper on 'The Impact of Conflict on Forest Livelihoods' to inform the World Bank World Development Report 2011

**Lead Case Study Consultant for Liberia, Reflecting on Peace Practice Project, CDA - Collaborative Learning Projects, Liberia** December 2009

- Researched and wrote case study on lessons from international and national peacebuilding efforts in Liberia based on 40 key informant interviews

**Project Evaluator, Kevin Murray Strategic Consulting/Rights and Resource Initiative**  
Cameroon and Ghana November 2009

- Evaluated country and regional projects in West Africa of the Rights and Resource Initiative focusing on community rights, empowerment and forestry resource management

**Evaluation Consultant, Conflict-Sensitivity Assessment of the Programme of Enhanced Assistance to Returnees (PEAR) Plus, Search for Common Ground/UNICEF**  
Eastern DR Congo July-Aug. 2009

- Conducted assessment of UNICEF-funded IDP reintegration program in Eastern DR Congo and co-authored conflict-sensitivity assessment report

**Expert on Children and Armed Conflict, UNICEF/Truth and Reconciliation Commission**  
Monrovia, Liberia May-June 2009

- Analyzed 280 statements by children and hearing transcripts and researched and wrote children's annex of the TRC final report ([http://trcofliberia.org/resources/reports/final/volume-three-2\\_layout-1.pdf](http://trcofliberia.org/resources/reports/final/volume-three-2_layout-1.pdf))

**Technical Expert on Conflict Analysis, UN Development Programme**  
North Kivu, Democratic Republic of Congo May-July 2008

- Co-wrote North Kivu participatory conflict analysis final report and detailed conflict analyses for the territories of Masisi, Rutshuru, and Walikale

**Technical Advisor, NURC Opinion Survey, International Rescue Committee**  
Kigali, Rwanda Nov. 2007 – March 2008

- Analyzed survey data and wrote report on the status of national cohesion and reconciliation in collaboration with the Rwandan National Unity and Reconciliation Commission

**Case Study Researcher, CDA – Collaborative Learning Projects**

- Monrovia, Liberia March-April 2007
- Researched and co-wrote case study for United Nations Mission in Liberia on Government/UN strategy to seize Guthrie rubber plantation from ex-combatants
- Field Advisor, International Rescue Committee, Voinjama, Liberia** Oct. – Dec. 2006
- Oversaw and managed all of IRC's operations and community reintegration, health, child-protection and gender-based violence programs in Lofa County
- Peacebuilding Project Evaluator, CDA - Collaborative Learning Projects**  
Cambridge, MA and Lofa County, Liberia June-July 2006
- Evaluated USAID-funded peacebuilding project in Lofa County
- Emergency Field Advisor, International Rescue Committee**  
Khartoum and Bahr el Ghazal, Sudan May-August 2005
- Conducted assessment of humanitarian situation in returnee areas of Bahr el Ghazal in Southern Sudan and developed US\$6m returnee assistance strategy

## TRAINING AND PROFESSIONAL COURSES

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- Training of *Conflict Prevention: Analysis for Action* (CPAA) Resource Persons, United Nations Staff College, Turin, Italy** March 2010
- One-week training for resource persons on CPAA methodology for UN planning processes
- Graduate Institute for Teaching (GIFT), Tufts University** June 2008
- Intensive three-week summer course on pedagogy and teaching methods for doctoral students
- Institute for Qualitative and Multi-Method Research (IQMR)**  
**Arizona State University, Tempe, AZ** January 2008
- Intensive two-week seminar on qualitative and mixed methods in political science, organized by the Qualitative Methods section of the American Political Science Association
- Reflecting on Peace Practice (RPP) Training on Conflict Program**  
**Evaluation tools, CDA Collaborative Learning Projects, Cambridge, MA** April 2007
- Three-day training on conflict analysis and conflict project evaluation tools and approaches developed by the CDA RPP program

## TEACHING

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**The Fletcher School, Tufts University** Fall semester 2008
- Full-semester graduate seminar co-taught with Prof. P. Uvin and D. Mukhopadhyay
- "Violence, War, and Viruses - Africa's Development Challenges in the 21<sup>st</sup> Century"**  
**Osher Lifelong Learning Institute, Tufts University** Fall semester 2007

- 8-week continuing education seminar
- Topics covered include the concept of development; analyzing development data; geography as a cause of underdevelopment; slave trade and colonial legacy; international aid; big man rule and corruption; ethnic identity and conflict; U.S. interests in Africa

## HONORS and PRIZES

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- Summer field research grant for eight-week field research in Guinea – Feinstein Center for International Studies, Tufts University 2008
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- Provost Fellow, Tufts University 2005-2007
- ERP Fellow for graduate studies in the U.S., German Government 1998 – 1999
- Merit Scholar, German National Scholarship Foundation 1992 – 1998

## PUBLICATIONS

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### Journal articles

- "Limitations of International Analyses and Post-Conflict State-Building in Sierra Leone." In Berit Bliesemann de Guevara (ed.). *Statebuilding and State-Formation: A New Framework of Analysis*. London: Routledge.
- "What you see is what you get: Analytical Lenses and the Limitations of Post-Conflict State-Building in Sierra Leone." *Journal of Intervention and Statebuilding* 4, no. 2 (June 2010), pp. 205-236.
- "A Quarter-Century of Violent Upheavals!: A Review of Works on the Causes of War and Lessons for Reconstruction in Liberia." *Journal of Intervention and Statebuilding* 3, no. 3 (November 2009).
- "Greed, Grievance and Atrocities: Recent Literature on the Causes and Dynamics of the War in Sierra Leone 1991–2002." *Journal of Intervention and Statebuilding* 1, no. 1 (March 2007), 132-140.
- "Sifting Through the Fog of an African Conflict: Explaining Sierra Leone's 10-year War – A Review Essay," in: *The Fletcher Forum of World Affairs*, Vol. 30:2 (Summer/Fall 2006), 235-240.

### Conference papers

- *State formation and large-scale violent conflict in four West African states*, paper presented at the African Studies Association annual meeting, New Orleans, November 19, 2009.
- *Potential and Pitfalls of Conflict-Sensitive Development in Conflict Zones: Reflections on the Case of North Kivu*. Paper presented at the International Studies Association (ISA) Annual Convention, New York, February 17, 2009.
- *The Deep Determinants of State Formation, War, and Peace in Sierra Leone*. Paper presented at the ISA Annual Convention, San Francisco, CA, March 27, 2008.
- *African Regional Conflict Complexes and the Challenges of Understanding and Preventing Conflict Spread*. Paper presented at the ISA Annual Convention, Chicago, IL, February 28, 2007.
- *Using Early Warning Methods for Monitoring Peace- and State-building Processes*. Paper presented at the conference on "The Idea of a Failed State" at Westfield State College, MA, October 12-14, 2006.

### Published reports

- *Cumulative Impact Case Study: The Cumulative Impacts of Peacebuilding in Liberia*. Cambridge, MA: CDA-Collaborative Learning Projects, June 2010. [Available at <http://www.cdacollaborative.org/media/61069/The-Cumulative-Impacts-of-Peacebuilding-in-Liberia.pdf>]
- (with Valeria Izzi) *Etude sur la sensibilité aux conflits du Programme PEAR Plus*. Kinshasa, Democratic Republic of Congo: Search for Common Ground. October 2009. [Available at [http://www.sfcg.org/programmes/drcongo/pdf/French\\_SummaryCover\\_Final.pdf](http://www.sfcg.org/programmes/drcongo/pdf/French_SummaryCover_Final.pdf)]
- (with V. Izzi, D. Masumbuko, and C. Moyroud) *Exercice participatif d'Analyse des Conflits et des Capacités de Paix pour la Planification du Développement dans la Province du Nord-Kivu – Rapport Final* (Final Report of the Participatory Analysis of Causes of Conflict and Capacities for Peace). Cellule Provinciale d'Appui à la Pacification (CPAP) and UNDP. Goma, North Kivu, DRC, April 2009.

## ABSTRACT

This dissertation proposes a new way of looking at the causal relationship between state capacity and the outbreak of civil war in post-colonial states by addressing key weaknesses in the current literature on the topic. It makes two main arguments.

First, it conceptualizes civil war as a contest between the state and insurgents for the mobilization of support and argues that a state's mobilizational capacity can be seen as a repertoire of three dimensions – symbolic, organizational, and material – with the symbolic and organizational dimensions carrying more weight than the material aspect. States that score higher on at least two dimensions are better able to respond to violent challenges than those with lower scores.

Second, it suggests that contemporary post-colonial states' mobilizational capacity has its origins during a critical juncture at the founding moment of the modern state in the late colonial period. Two historical variables – a broad or narrow popular base and the institutions of rural control at independence – critically shaped the evolution of states' mobilizational capacity. These variables led to more inclusive or exclusive mobilizational dynamics, which, albeit weakened, still influence state leaders' contemporary mobilizational capacity through path-dependent processes.

The study addresses a series of previously unresolved questions about the causal relationship between state capacity and the onset of civil war: What distinguishes generally weak states that have experienced civil war from other weak states that have responded successfully to armed challenges and prevented civil wars? What aspects of state capacity matter in determining states' ability to prevent civil war? What are the mechanisms that link these key dimensions of state capacity to the outbreak of civil war? And what are the historical origins of states' capacity to fend off armed challenges?

## ACKNOWLEDGEMENTS

This dissertation was long in coming and along its sometimes meandering path I incurred many debts. My heartfelt thanks go to all those who believed in me and supported me throughout this lengthy and, at times, difficult process. Of course, this dissertation would not have been possible without the patience and backing of my family and friends and I am deeply grateful for their support. Sharanjeet Parmar was an important partner for a big part of this journey.

My committee chair, Peter Uvin, who has been a good humored and non-intrusive advisor who was always there for me when I needed advice and guidance, and this despite his taking first the Academic Dean position at the Fletcher School, and then moving on to other responsibilities at other universities. His critical assessments and comments of my ideas and writings were always much appreciated, as were his encouragement and reassurances when needed. I am grateful for the critical advice and support provided over the past three years by my two additional committee members, Zeynep Bulutgil and Alex De Waal, who graciously stepped in when earlier committee members had dropped off. Anna Seleny provided valuable advice early on and helped me shape my research proposal and structure my ideas in the earlier stages. Eileen Babbitt was an early mentor, sponsored my admission to the PhD program and always encouraged me to deepen my interest in the academic study of conflict and conflict resolution in the developing world. Steve Block and Carsten Kowalzyk introduced me to the thinking of economists, which helped me engage more deeply with economists' views of conflict, state- and peacebuilding.

I will be eternally grateful for my cohort of fellow PhD students for their camaraderie and for shared memories and much advice along the way. Big and warm hugs go to Kim Howe and Dipali Mukhopadhyay who, first as study buddies, offered support and camaraderie during early stages of the PhD process and whose deep friendship and wise and smart advice always helped to nudge me along or pull me out of holes in later years. Susanna Campbell also provided much valuable insight in framing my research questions and ideas and she and Andrea Strimling were good study companions in our preparation for comprehensive exams. Discussions and shared experience with many others, notably Liz McClintock, Zina Miller, Rachel Schiller, Ethan Corbin, Geoffrey Gresh, Jim Shyne, Ashirul Amin, Patrick Meier, and Mariska Kappmeier helped to navigate parts of the process. Special thanks go to Jim Shyne who generously hosted me during my research trip to Guinea in 2008 and later during a research visit to Medford. Jenifer Burckett-Picker skillfully helped me steer around the administrative cliffs of the Fletcher PhD program and was unfailingly supportive and patient. Sarah Detzner and Katharine Davis assisted with bibliographic information and editing.

I am indebted to all the key informants, scholars, policy makers, fellow humanitarian workers, local administrators and others who helped me understand the nuances of Guinean and Sierra Leonean society, politics and history. Support from the Fletcher PhD fund and a Feinstein International Center summer research fellowship helped to pay for field research in Guinea.

The patience of my bosses, Amany Michael Ebye and Ciaran Donnelly, and various colleagues at the International Rescue Committee who allowed me to take generous leave at times to make progress on my dissertation while working full-time in the Democratic Republic of Congo since 2011 was also always greatly appreciated.

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## 1. Introduction

At a time when international bilateral and multilateral donors are pouring more than USD15 billion<sup>1</sup> per year into “rebuilding” or “strengthening” war-torn and “fragile” states, the limitations of those interventions have become more obvious. Although they may help appease formerly warring parties in the short run, their long-term effects and their loftier ambitions to remodel ineffective states fall far short of expectations (Sambanis 2007; Richmond 2014). One significant criticism has been that international intervention models rely on overly stylized and faulty theoretical assumptions about how authority is constituted and institutions function in most developing countries (Englebert and Tull 2008). The social science literature on state capacity and its relationship to the outbreak of civil war and on post-conflict state state-building after war also has not provided much clarity on how state capacity is best conceptualized and how it is concretely linked to the outbreak of civil war. Although recent research suggests that there is “convincing evidence that state capacity plays a critical role in the onset and conduct of civil violence” (Sobek 2010, 267) and the correlation between weak state capacity and the outbreak of civil war is widely seen as robust in the quantitative literature on the origins of civil wars (Fearon and Laitin 2003; Lacina 2004; Hegre and Sambanis 2006), there is much confusion about the types of conflict that different studies analyze, the conceptualization of the state capacity variable, and the causal mechanisms that link suggested state capacity variables to the outbreak of large-scale internal war (Hendrix 2010).

Qualitative analyses of the linkage between state capacity and civil war onset, with a few exceptions (Sambanis 2003), usually focus on a multitude of causes specific to individual civil war cases without

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<sup>1</sup> In 2012, USD17.285 billion of official international development assistance went to activities labeled as “governance and peace” in fragile and war-affected countries. A significant share of that went to activities that contribute to state-building or strengthening such as policy and administrative reform, public financial management, democracy and elections, or judicial reform (OECD 2014).

offering more general explanatory frameworks that apply across cases. The quantitative literature that explores state capacity and civil war is limited by its reliance on vague proxies and over-aggregated datasets, and some suggest that quantitative studies on civil wars “have reached a plateau in their capacity to inform” (Tarrow 2007, 587). Indeed, many quantitative studies fail to distinguish between civil war and other forms of collective violence (Sambanis 2004) such as attempted or successful coups d’état, communal violence, and violent state action below the threshold of civil war. This leads to significant uncertainty about exactly what outcome variables the studies are trying to explain. Most studies also do not identify convincing causal mechanisms that link the suggested macro-variables of state weakness to the micro-motivations of individuals and to the escalation of conflict from mere tensions to wider civil war (Kalyvas 2008b).

Partly because of these shortcomings, it is hard to determine which of a number of competing arguments of how state capacity is linked to civil war onset has more explanatory power. One influential recent debate pitches proponents of the *opportunity school* against those who favor explanations focused on *grievances* as a central enabling force for rebellion against the state (Cederman and Girardin 2007; Fearon et al. 2007).

In its most extreme form, economists and rational choice scholars associated with the opportunity perspective see a natural proclivity among humans to rise up against existing orders when presented the opportunity and contend that, “Where rebellion is materially feasible it will occur” (Collier et al. 2009, 3) and “where no state exists or the government is so weak it does not rule outside the capital...almost anyone can launch a rebellion” (Weinstein 2007, 14). This fundamental assumption of opportunity school arguments – that rational actors continuously evaluate costs and benefits of rising up against an existing order and will seize any opportunity that presents itself - has been

criticized for being reductionist in their focus on the often assumed rather than proven economic motivations and for largely ignoring a much more complex, historically shaped political economy that influences motivations and opportunities for rebellion (Cramer 2002). Even when opportunity school scholars have offered more detailed analyses of the conditions under which state weakness may trigger rebellion, many open questions remain. Most prominently, Fearon and Laitin (2003) have suggested that generalized state weakness can be expressed in terms of low Gross Domestic Product (GDP) per capita and underperforming state institutions creates opportunities for insurgencies to form and grow into full-fledged rebellions (Fearon and Laitin 2003). In this view, GDP per capita reflects a state's ability to invest in "administrative, police, and military capabilities" and proxies overall state capacity to fight insurgent groups. Since they also found a strong positive correlation between states' share of mountainous terrain and the incidence of civil war, they feel confirmed in their interpretation of the GDP variable, since rural areas are less "penetrated by central administration" in poor states while "rough terrain" offers many hideouts for insurgents, which increases the cost of fighting insurgencies for the state (Fearon and Laitin 2003, 80). Fearon and Laitin do not try to operationalize the more specific variables of "administrative, police, and military capabilities" or rural areas that are "penetrated by central administration." They therefore have been criticized for not offering concrete evidence or a clear causal mechanism for the assumed causal interpretation of the correlation between low GDP per capita and a higher incidence of civil war and are not able to distinguish between competing causal explanations. There could also be reverse causality at play, since civil war in and of itself is a significant cause of low income per capita (Hendrix 2010, 277).

In contrast, supporters of the grievances school contend that grievances are equally or more important than opportunities created by weak state structures in explaining the origins of large-scale

violent conflict (Cederman and Girardin 2007). Building on relative deprivation<sup>2</sup> theory, research in the grievance tradition suggests that if ethnic or regional groups face unequal treatment or discrimination in access to resources, feelings of deprivation start to build up and may lead to attempts to right the perceived unequal treatment by force (Gurr 2000, 81). Such conflicts are heightened if inequality is institutionalized (Lieberman and Singh 2012). These insights have been adopted by Wimmer, Cederman, and colleagues with a specific focus on the state (Wimmer et al. 2009; Cederman et al. 2010). Wimmer et al. identify a central causal variable – ethnic power constellations within states – that links ethnic group relations to violent conflict. According to this approach, if one ethnic group, in particular a minority group, controls the state apparatus, those groups left out from access to the state power become aggrieved. These grievances may grow and lead to conflict between those groups over the control of the state. Their quantitative findings suggest that the grievances of members of ethnic groups become more acute when their loss of power is recent or when larger groups are excluded by ruling minority groups. This analysis is promising in that it suggests a more specific causal chain explaining how states are linked to the outbreak of violent conflict than most opportunity school research does.

However, despite this appealing logic, there are still gaps in this argument’s chain of reasoning. First, instead of focusing on civil wars as an outcome variable, Cederman and colleagues examine the impact of ethnic power differentials on a broader category of conflicts labeled “internal conflict.”

This includes “any armed and organized confrontation between government troops and rebel organizations...that reaches an annual battle death threshold of twenty-five” (Cederman et al. 2010,

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<sup>2</sup> According to Gurr (1968, 1104): “Relative deprivation is defined as actors' perceptions of discrepancy between their value expectations (the goods and conditions of the life to which they believe they are justifiably entitled) and their value capabilities (the amounts of those goods and conditions that they think they are able to get and keep). The underlying causal mechanism is derived from psychological theory and evidence to the effect that one innate response to perceived deprivation is discontent or anger, and that anger is a motivating state for which aggression is an inherently satisfying response.”

101), such as violent coup d'états or short-but-averted armed challenges to regimes. It is therefore possible that the purported causal relationship between ethnic power differentials and conflict explains lower-level violence rather than the outbreak of civil war. Second, Cederman et al.'s theoretical account falls short of offering a convincing causal mechanism to explain how contentious relationships between ethnic groups escalate to violent conflict. Their main argument relies on the assumption that grievances – feelings of frustration and anger against groups in power – become more acute if large groups are excluded and if they lost power recently. Under what conditions and at what threshold levels grievances may become unsustainable and when excluded groups may rise up remains unspecified. Even though they consider a mechanism called “mobilizational capacity,” it is entirely framed in terms of the demographic weight of included vs. excluded groups, arguing that larger excluded groups by their sheer numbers have a greater capacity to mobilize and rise up (Cederman et al. 2010, 96). This is an incomplete argument at best and neglects many other factors that enable groups to mobilize successfully. Instead of offering a genuine counter-theory to the opportunity school, as they claim to do, Cederman and colleagues' suggested causal mechanisms merely seem to explain political power competition between ethnically defined groups within states, but not how and when this competition escalates to violent conflict, let alone civil war.<sup>3</sup> Finally, Wimmer, Cederman, and colleagues ultimately focus on temporary control of government by ethnic groups rather than control of the state by ethnic groups. Questions remain as to why certain states have skewed distributions of power and resources between identity groups and how and when those power relationships have been institutionalized.

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<sup>3</sup> Wimmer et al. acknowledge as much: “...ethnic politics may lead to a process of political mobilization, counter-mobilization, and escalation...The conflicting demands may finally spiral into armed confrontation. Our theory does not explicitly address the logic of this escalation process...but seeks to specify the ethnopolitical configurations that make it more likely” (Wimmer et al. 2009, 321).

A third influential approach suggests that the formal Western state model is largely irrelevant to explaining African conflicts since state authority in post-colonial Africa has been usurped by actors pursuing their private interests. In this school of thought, which I label *violent patrimonialism*, formal state institutions are a mere façade and those nominally representing the state rule through networks of influence exchanging access to resources and public office against political support (Bayart 2009; Utas 2012). Alliances with external actors and access to international funding streams – whether from private companies such as formal or informal payments or from international donor governments – greatly enhance the influence of those officially in charge of formal state institutions. This system implicates all those nominally occupying a role in the state system across all levels of hierarchy where they convert control over access to state resources into private rents (Chayes 2015). In patrimonial systems, laws and formal norms are “deliberately ignored” (Médard 1982b, 162) by rulers and, instead of building state institutions, patrimonial leaders have actively undermined or dismantled state institutions inherited from colonial times (Reno 1999). Without any overarching authority and the privatization of public goods such as the provision of national security, elite conflict for control of the spoils of the state and various parts of the country thus can easily spiral out of control. This “violent breakdown of patrimonial systems” (De Waal 2009) may lead to civil war between competing patrimonial networks in a context in which “political life can be described as an auction of loyalties in which provincial elites seek to extract from one or other metropolitan centre the best price for their allegiance” (De Waal 2009, 103). In this “marketplace” (De Waal 2009; 2015) of loyalties, violent local actors may have a leg up against their more peaceful rivals in forming alliances with central elites seeking to gain power. In this view, formal state institutions have ceased to exert any structuring influence on social and political relationships. Under the condition of state “failure” and “collapse” (Rotberg 2002), the means of violence are privatized and warlords may run

their own fiefdoms within the borders of or even reaching far across borders of formal states (Reno 1999, 2005).

Although the patrimonialism school has a wide following, since it seems to match many media accounts of “new wars” (Kaldor 1999) in which states seem to play a minimal role and private, apparently criminal agendas seem to predominate, it has been criticized for being ahistorical and downplaying political agendas that represent certain population groups and their interests (Kalyvas 2001). Individual actors’ agendas have always been present in civil wars but are rarely their main cause (Kalyvas 2003) and a focus on individual actors’ interests often leaves out important dynamics of how violence spreads and escalates to broader war. Most *violent patrimonialism* explanations of civil war still focus heavily on economic motivations and assume that armed actors can be purchased to fight rebellions for assorted big men. This assumption, which its proponents share with most opportunity school proponents, remains unproven in most instances and neglects the more complex dynamics of mobilizing individuals to join rebellions or support incumbent governments. In addition, patrimonialism is highly prevalent across the developing world, particularly on the African continent and there are numerous states in which patrimonial practices are widespread and yet they have never experienced large-scale internal war.<sup>4</sup>

In addition to the weaknesses within each of these broader approaches, all of them suffer from underspecified or flawed conceptualizations of the state and unclear links between state capacity and conflict escalation. They rely too much on unchangeable systemic external forces – such as a large territory, large population size, or certain topographies such as mountainous terrain (opportunity school) – or overemphasize agency. They assume that, as a colonial imposition, the state has always

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<sup>4</sup> De Waal himself cites Senegal and Tanzania as two highly patrimonial states that have succeeded in remaining relatively stable and peaceful (De Waal 2009, 104).

been irrelevant and exercises limited structuring influence on elite or group conflict (violent patrimonialism school) as the main drivers of their explanations. Grievance scholars focus more on temporary power constellations between ethnic groups in or out of government rather than on deeper structures of access to state power and thus miss underlying patterns of how power and authority are constructed within states.

As a result, what is presented as current theoretical explanations of how the state relates to civil war onset analyzes all kinds of questions – how national income per capita is correlated with civil war (opportunity school), how changes in ethnic groups' access to government correlate with various forms of violent conflict (grievance school), and how elites struggle for power and at times resort to violent means to do so (violent patrimonialism school). They do provide some good pointers about where to start, such as with the administrative control of rural areas or with the ethnic power constellations within states, but none of them has specified clear causal mechanisms to explain what dimensions of the state contribute to conflict escalation to civil war in some cases but not in others. Neither do they explain which dimensions of the state matter most in regulating elite and social conflict, or why institutions that are supposed to regulate social conflict break down and how this process occurs. None of them make clear why and at what stage states are so weak that they cannot govern rural areas to regulate social conflict.

### **A synthetic, historically grounded, and mobilizational approach: The argument in brief**

This study sets out to make some headway toward answering these questions by using a comparative, historically informed, largely institutionalist approach that draws on insights from political science, sociology, economics, and anthropology. I will offer a conceptualization of state capacity that helps to elucidate the causal mechanisms that link state capacity to the outbreak or

prevention of civil war and that shows that the same historical variables influence both grievance and opportunity accounts. The argument also presents a counterpoint to scholars favoring violent patrimonialism who assume that the private interests prevail and states have little structuring influence on the outbreak of contemporary civil wars.

To achieve this, I take the criticisms of the methodological shortcomings of the current literature on state capacity as a causal factor in civil wars seriously and seek to improve them in a number of ways. First, I combine within-case process-tracing and cross-case comparison to identify the causal mechanisms that are present in the two civil war cases and absent in the two non-civil war states. Second, I distinguish clearly between civil war and lower levels of violence. Rather than analyzing the factors that contribute to the outbreak of any kind of conflict, I specifically investigate the causes and dynamics of escalation of lower-level violent challenges to the state to broader civil war. Third, I will control for various variables seen as relevant by opportunity school proponents in my case selection. I use four states as case studies – two that experienced civil war, Côte d’Ivoire and Senegal, and two that experienced armed challenges to the state but averted civil war, Guinea and Senegal. All four are located in the same West African sub-region and are of roughly similar size. In the four states, GDP per capita and civil war do not correlate in the way the opportunity approach would predict. Fourth, I will reconceptualize state capacity by focusing on dimensions that matter most for how states respond to armed challenge. Drawing on the sociological literature on mobilization for contentious action, my study views civil war as a contest for the mobilization of support between insurgents and the state. This view allows me to focus on the tools state representatives have at their disposal to persuade, compel, emotionally rouse, and entice state officials and citizens to support the state in its fight against armed challengers. Fifth, I will investigate the historical origins of the various dimensions of a state’s mobilizational capacity to

establish a complete causal chain comprising historical determinants, causal mechanisms that link historical variables to contemporary state capacity and ultimately to the state's ability to respond to armed conflict. The historical analysis will focus on the founding moments of modern African states in the colonial period and explore what forces and dynamics shaped critical state institutions and practices that left contemporary states with more, or less, mobilizational capacity.

Based on this analysis, the study suggests that the key difference between civil war and non-civil war states lies in their ability to mobilize populations and state institutions in situations of armed challenge. State capacity needs to be understood as states' mobilizational capacity, which is the central causal mechanism that links state capacity to the avoidance or outbreak of civil war.

Mobilizational capacity is here defined as a repertoire of mobilizational capabilities along three dimensions: organizational, symbolic, and material. As illustrated in the table below, the four cases studied here demonstrate that state responses in the face of armed challenges differed significantly depending on the mobilizational capacity of each state.

**Table 1:** Mobilizational capacity scores broken down by the three dimensions: organizational, symbolic, and material capacity.

	<b>Organizational</b>	<b>Symbolic</b>	<b>Material<sup>5</sup></b>	<b>Mobilizational</b>
Côte d’Ivoire (civil war)	Lower	Lower	Higher	Lower
Sierra Leone (civil war)	Lower	Lower	Lower	Lower
Guinea (no civil war)	Higher	Higher	Lower	Higher
Senegal (no civil war)	Higher	Higher	Higher	Higher

Those differences between the civil war and non-civil war cases was particularly obvious with respect to the organizational and symbolic capacity, while material capacity generally does not directly affect mobilizational capacity, but interacts with and reinforces the other dimensions. This latter finding runs counter to the prominence that economic aspects of civil war have been given in the literature.

The study further contends that the fundamental features of post-colonial states’ mobilizational capacity were determined by power constellations and institutions established during a critical juncture in the late colonial and early independence period, from the mid-1940s to the middle of the 1960s. These political power constellations and institutions were the product of an encounter between colonial powers, traditional African institutions, and a new class of educated African leaders. Since they occurred at the time when the newly independent African states were formed, they shaped African state development for decades to come. Two variables among the various forces that influenced post-colonial states had the greatest impact on states’ mobilizational capacity:

- First, whether new African leaders were able to mobilize a large, multi-ethnic and multi-regional coalition of actors and constituents in critical elections during the late colonial period determined whether post-independence states had a broader or narrower popular

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<sup>5</sup> As discussed below, the material dimension of mobilizational capacity did not play a direct role in the outbreak of civil war, and it is difficult to assign a score to the material capacity variables. There is not much reliable data available on the resources African states and their leaders’ have available at any given time. This is in part due to poor account keeping and data collection, and in part due to the importance of private, off-the-books transactions and resource flows. These scores reflect a county’s general wealth and means as measured by GDP/GNP per capita. In 1990, Sierra Leone’s Gross National Income per capita was \$200 and Guinea’s was \$430, while Senegal’s was \$710 and Côte d’Ivoire’s \$760 (African Development Indicators). Both Guinea and Leone had below average GNP/per capita while Côte d’Ivoire and Senegal were above the African average.

base and became more, or less, inclusive. State leaders who managed to mobilize a broad coalition of rural supporters were able to build a stronger national identity and more inclusive national institutions that later helped to again mobilize institutions and rural populations when needed.

- Second, whether states established effective structures of territorial control either via direct control of rural areas by centralized state institutions or via intermediaries who were tied to the state through mutual interests.

These processes were path dependent, although in more subtle ways than often assumed in the literature on strongly path-dependent processes driven by “increasing returns” to early institutional choices and the “lock-in” of those choices (Pierson 2000a, 253). I suggest that even though post-colonial states were weakly institutionalized and ineffective, certain critical state practices were reproduced in leaders’ and state officials’ minds, in public state imagery, and in the heads of regular citizens who interacted with state institutions. Even though other state institutions and those mobilizational practices themselves may have weakened over time, they could be resurrected by state officials when needed. It might thus be appropriate to speak of a residual mobilizational capacity that was activated in times of crisis such as an armed challenge to the state.

This study improves on existing theoretical scholarship that seeks to explain how states are linked to the outbreak of civil war in a number of ways. I offer a more specific, complete, and historically grounded causal theory that links the historical determinants of state capacity to the state’s ability to respond to armed challenges and avert civil war than previous research does. I show that the opposition between the *opportunity* and *grievance schools* is due to imprecisions in defining key concepts, incomplete causal models, and scholarly preferences rather than any real-life differences. The same

historically determined variables have shaped post-colonial state formation in ways that rendered the state both less effective and increased grievances. The inclusiveness or exclusiveness of the state is not a temporary condition, but was determined at independence and is deeply rooted in the institutional DNA of states. I also offer a counterpoint to research favoring the *violent patrimonialism* view since I suggest that fundamental power relationships between groups within early institutions set in place at independence influenced decision-makers' options to rally support within the state and had an impact of the state's ability to administer rural areas in subtle ways. This shaped state officials' ability to mobilize support in times of crisis even decades after independence and even beyond the networks of power they may have used to control certain aspects of state.

The remainder of this chapter explains the research design of the study, offers a detailed justification for the cases selected, and identifies the data sources used. It concludes with an overview of the structure of the study and a brief summary of each chapter to come.

## Research design

### Small-N comparison and theory building

Recent research on the causes of civil wars has been dominated by large-N studies. Quantitative studies are best suited to test competing existing theories. They need to be complemented, however, by other approaches that improve on the causal theories to be tested (Sambanis 2003). Single case studies of specific instances of civil war have been widely used to offer detailed and nuanced accounts of the causes and dynamics of specific civil wars. However, while rich in historical detail, single case studies do not immediately contribute to systematic theory building unless they are part of a larger research program (George and Bennett 2005). Small-N comparative studies occupy a methodological middle ground in that the systematic comparison of a few cases allows us to

combine the rich detail and historical accuracy of single case studies with a more rigorous, theoretically informed analysis of cross-case similarities and differences.

There are surprisingly few small-N comparative case analyses of the causes of civil wars, and even fewer that specifically focus on African civil wars.<sup>6</sup> Most studies focus on one case in all its historical complexity or attempt to test a particular theoretical approach (Ellis 1999; Johnson 2003; Keen 2005a). They do not explicitly contribute to theory building and often do not explicitly explore the linkages between state capacity and civil war. As a consequence, research on the state capacity–civil war relationship suffers from a “black box” syndrome, where the correlation between various measures of state weakness and civil war outbreak is well established, but the mechanisms that connect the two, as well as the conditions under which they operate, remain under-theorized and under-explored (Sambanis 2003, 4-5). This leaves a significant niche for small-N comparative research to contribute to theory building. Small-N comparisons are able to be specific about concepts, definitions, and the scope conditions<sup>7</sup> of the key variables in question – state capacity and civil war – and are well suited for a detailed examination of causal processes.

The research design chosen here is a four-case comparative study of four “hard” (Young 1982) test cases, i.e., cases in which the outbreak of civil war was a distinct possibility: Sierra Leone, Côte d’Ivoire, Guinea, and Senegal. All four states have exhibited ineffectiveness in many areas of state regulation – expressed in terms of low levels of per capita income and development as well as political instability – and all faced armed challenges in the period from the mid-1980s to the early 2000s. However, as shown in greater detail below, despite similarities between these nations in terms

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<sup>6</sup> Reno (1999) is the author of one of the few such studies. There are more cursory, article-length comparative review essays (Young 2000, Berdal 2005) or analyses of civil wars within a sub-region (Sawyer 2004, Young 2006).

<sup>7</sup> The conditions under which relationships between variables apply.

of widespread underdevelopment and generally poor state performance, there was significant variation in their ability to deal with armed challenges, and civil war occurrence did not follow common assumptions. Both the richest state, Côte d'Ivoire, and the poorest, Sierra Leone, experienced civil war, while extremely poor Guinea and relatively better-off Senegal both faced armed challenges, but managed to defeat or contain them. This four-case comparison will seek to find out the true and deeper determinants that allowed two states to avoid civil war while the other two succumbed to it.

### Establishing causality

To properly identify the causal mechanisms<sup>8</sup> and the interplay between historical institutions and individual decisions in the cases in question, the study draws causal leverage from two sources. The first source is a detailed within-case analysis of the micro-dynamics of the interaction between insurgents and state actors which can explain why some insurgencies escalated to full-blown civil war while others failed or remained at the level of relatively contained low-level armed struggles. I will adopt process tracing, the identification of all the intermediate steps that lead from cause to the outcome variable, as the research method most suited to identifying causal mechanisms (George and Bennett 2005; Checkel 2006) to elucidate the specific causal chains and processes that link all relevant variables. Process tracing will be conducted in two stages. First, detailed historical process analysis will illuminate the sequence of events and actions in the years, months, and weeks leading up to rebel attacks and the escalatory or de-escalatory dynamics that led to the outbreak of war in two cases, Côte d'Ivoire and Sierra Leone, and to war avoidance in Guinea and Senegal. I will be

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<sup>8</sup> Causal mechanisms are more than just the causal pathways that link an independent variable to an outcome one (Goertz and Mahoney 2010). Causal mechanisms are relational. They “describe[s] the process by which one variable influences the other” (Kiser and Hechter 1991, 5) and “transmit[s] force, information, or meaning” between actors and variables (Waldner 2010, 33). They are critical in linking independent and dependent variables when analyzing social and political processes (Hedström and Swedberg 1998).

able to single out the mechanisms that determined a strong or weak state response to insurgency. In a second step, I will closely examine the longer-term historical processes that shaped the mechanisms identified and led to relatively stronger or weaker state capacity to respond to insurgency, going back to the critical juncture from the mid-1940s to early 1960s at the founding moments of modern African states. Tracing both processes allows for the establishment of internal validity for the key causal mechanisms proposed that link long-term state formation dynamics to states' contemporary ability to respond to insurgencies.

The second source of causal inference then draws on a structured, focused cross-case comparison (George and Bennett 2005, 67-72) of the four cases, both in terms of the states' more-or-less successful responses to armed challenges and in terms of the historical state formation dynamics that have shaped states' mobilizational capacity. This comparison will help to pinpoint the historical conditions and determinants that made Côte d'Ivoire and Sierra Leone more prone, and Guinea and Senegal less prone, to civil war. The four case countries do not “resemble each other in every respect but one” (George and Bennett 2005, 151), the ideal condition for a controlled case comparison. As shown in the following section, there are enough similarities in fundamental characteristics between the four states – colonial origins, relatively similar geography and topography within the same sub-region of West Africa, and the experience of insurgency long after independence – that valuable theoretical conclusions from a cross-case comparison can be drawn.

### **Case selection**

In order for the comparative analysis to investigate exactly the variables and causal mechanisms of interest, cases were selected to meet two criteria. First, the selected cases had to display significant variance in the dependent variable, the occurrence or non-occurrence of civil war. Second, according to founding father of the comparative method John Stuart Mill's “indirect method of difference,”

which is considered to “approximate experimental design with nonexperimental data” (Ragin 1997, 38), negative cases need to be chosen according to a clear underlying theory. This approach requires to compare negative cases that represent “possible instances of the phenomenon of interest” (Ragin 1997, 41) with positive occurrences of the phenomenon studied. The negative cases selected must be as similar as possible to each other in terms of their underlying conditions while displaying a significant likelihood that civil war could have occurred.

Consequently, cases were selected according to two dimensions. First, following a “diverse” case study design whose “primary objective [is] the achievement of maximum variance along relevant dimensions...which are intended to represent the full range of values characterizing...some particular  $X_1/Y$  relationship” (Gerring 2008, 650), I selected four cases that show significant pairwise variance in the relationship between state capacity and civil war outbreak. This selection helps to control for the fact that there might indeed be an obvious causal relationship between states with what is commonly considered “greater capacity,” such as a higher GDP per capita and better development indicators, and the state’s ability to respond to insurgency, as illustrated by the simple matrix in the table below.

**Table 2:** Variation on the  $X_1/Y$  relationship between state weakness (as measured by GDP per capita) and civil war:

	<b>Weaker state</b>	<b>Stronger state</b>
<b>Civil war</b>	Sierra Leone	Côte d’Ivoire
<b>No civil war</b>	Guinea	Senegal

The four case countries were selected from a group of 33 relatively typical Sub-Saharan African states.<sup>9</sup> The four states chosen exhibit different degrees of state weakness as commonly

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<sup>9</sup> This group included all continental African states, excluding North African states, all island states, and states with a population size of less than 500,000.

understood:<sup>10</sup> two of them, Guinea and Sierra Leone, are extremely weak according to common measures while the other two states, Côte d'Ivoire and Senegal, are considered relatively stronger in an African context.

According to data from the African Development Bank, Côte d'Ivoire's GDP per capita in 1990 was more than five times that of Sierra Leone (\$862 vs. \$163) and Senegal's (\$789) was more than four times that of Sierra Leone. Guinea (\$463), the second-poorest country, had less than half the average GDP per capita of Côte d'Ivoire. Both Côte d'Ivoire and Senegal had average per capita incomes that were significantly above the Sub-Saharan African average of \$593, while Guinea and Sierra Leone were well below the average. See table below.

**Table 3:** GDP per capita in 1990 (in current USD (African Development Indicators)).

<b>Country</b>	<b>1990</b>
Côte d'Ivoire	\$862
Senegal	\$789
Sub-Saharan Africa average	\$593
Guinea	\$463
Sierra Leone	\$163

Similarly, Sierra Leone and Guinea were continuously at or near the bottom, while Senegal and Côte d'Ivoire were near the top of all African countries. Senegal was in the upper half among all African countries in the United Nations Development Program's Human Development Index from the 1970s and throughout the 1990s (UNDP 1991, 16, 97).<sup>11</sup>

All four case study states experienced insurgent challenges in the past 30 years, but only two

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<sup>10</sup> This includes two measures, which are highly correlated. First, GDP per capita and, second, scores according to the UNDP Human Development Index, which combines GDP per capita and the state's ability to provide health and education services by including life expectancy and literacy rates.

<sup>11</sup> The UNDP Human Development Index was only created in 1990, but in 1991 provided index rankings based on historical data dating back to 1975. The rankings between the four case countries converged somewhat in the 2000s due to deteriorations in conditions in Côte d'Ivoire after the outbreak of the civil war in 2002 and poor economic performances in Senegal in the 2000s (see for example UNDP 2007, 229-232).

succumbed to all-out civil war. One relatively better-off state, Côte d'Ivoire, and one extremely poor state, Sierra Leone, both experienced civil war in the past two decades, while both extremely poor and weak Guinea and relatively better-off Senegal have managed to effectively respond to or contain armed challenges in the past 30 years.

The four cases are thus good matches for a theoretically informed comparison, since the initial hurdles for insurgency had been overcome and actual armed attacks against the institutions representing the state had already occurred. In two cases, the states were strong enough to repulse the armed attack and manage the challenge to state authority, while in the other two cases the initial insurgency triggered dynamics that led to all-out civil war. As a result, a detailed analysis of how the four states were able to respond to initial insurgencies will give us greater insights into why insurgencies escalated to wider war in Côte d'Ivoire and Sierra Leone but not in Guinea and Senegal.

The four states are well suited for a further causal investigation of the mechanisms that link state capacity to the onset of civil wars, since they are reasonably similar with respect to other variables that are commonly associated with higher civil war risk, such as a dependency on natural resource exports, high levels of ethnic diversity, geographical and demographic variables such as territorial size, rough terrain, and population size, the prevalence of patrimonial relationships between state leaders and local, sometimes violent, networks of influence, and whether regimes were authoritarian, democratic, or mixed.

The four case countries are all heavily dependent on natural resource exports. Both Guinea and Sierra Leone rely largely on mineral resource exports, with significant alluvial diamond deposits in both countries, while Côte d'Ivoire's economy is dominated by cocoa and coffee exports and

Senegal relies heavily on groundnuts, fisheries, and other agricultural exports. The four states are highly ethnically diverse, with Côte d'Ivoire being the most diverse. Guinea and Sierra Leone are also quite diverse, although both countries are dominated by two large ethnic groups. As a result, they both have similar ethnic fractionalization scores. The four countries are all relatively small in terms of their territories and population sizes compared to other African states. This runs counter to robust findings in large-N studies that consider large population size to be positively correlated with the outbreak of civil war (Hegre and Sambanis 2006). In addition, the four countries and the incidence of civil war also do not easily follow the suggested correlation between “difficult” terrain and large-scale conflict. According to Herbst’s (2000) classification of African countries according to how their geographical conditions influence prospects for state consolidation, Sierra Leone is considered to have a “favorable” and Côte d'Ivoire a “neutral” geography with respect to their prospects for state consolidation. Despite these apparently promising geographical pre-conditions, no stable state developed in Sierra Leone and even Côte d'Ivoire, after more than 30 years of apparent stability, disintegrated into warfare. In contrast, Senegal, which developed a relatively more functional state, is classified as having a “difficult” geography, mainly due to its large hinterland and the division of the national territory by the Gambia (Herbst 2000, 145-172). The fact that the attacks against Guinea and Sierra Leone both occurred in the same geographical area in fairly dense and hilly rainforest with very different outcomes adds an additional control to arguments that favor geography and topography as critical variables in civil war onset.

Violent conflict often seems to “spill” across international borders and being located in proximity to other conflict states increases states’ risk of experiencing civil war (Hegre and Sambanis 2006, 529). Although all four countries are located in an extremely unstable “neighborhood” of the African continent, civil war has “spilled” only across some borders, notably from Liberia to Sierra Leone and

to a less significant extent from Liberia to Côte d'Ivoire, but not from those three countries to Guinea. This suggests that large-scale violent conflict does not automatically “spill” from one country to another, but that there are conditions within each country, notably differential capacities of states to deal with violent challenges, that make states more or less vulnerable to conflict spillover.

In particular the selection of Sierra Leone, Côte d'Ivoire, and Guinea also controls for the involvement of certain individuals, notably Liberian rebel leader-turned-president Charles Taylor and his alleged sponsor, Burkina Faso's longtime president Blaise Compaoré. Taylor and Compaoré were probably heavily involved in launching the insurgencies in Sierra Leone and Côte d'Ivoire, and at least Taylor and his troops were critical in organizing the attacks against Guinea in 2000 (ICG 2002; Banégas and Otayek 2003). However, while their external sponsorship triggered full-fledged rebellions in Sierra Leone and Côte d'Ivoire, Guinea withstood the destabilization attempt. It seems unlikely, then, that the mere foreign sponsorship by certain individuals such as Taylor and Compaoré offers a sufficient explanation for the onset of civil war.

All four states also have young populations with significantly more than half of the populations being under 19 years of age. Senegal, a non-civil war state, has the largest share of young people among its adult population (over 15 years), thus going against the “youth bulge” hypothesis, which suggests that poor countries with a large share of youth face higher risks of civil war (Urdal 2006).

All four states' rulers and leaders relied heavily on patron-client relationships in their distribution of resources and control of the country. While Senegal has been the most advanced democracy of the lot, and seems to confirm the hypothesis that established democracies are more resilient to civil war,

Sierra Leone was a single-party authoritarian regime at the time of the outbreak of civil war, Guinea was ruled by a president who had seized power under a military regime, but had allowed limited elections a decade before, and the Ivorian regime had emerged from a heavily contested election in which the most popular candidate had been barred from participating.

## Data sources

Process-tracing requires the collection of fine-grained historical data that facilitates the drawing of conclusions about the origins of insurgency and rebellion and about the multiple processes – political, social, and economic – that contribute to state formation. The detailed analyses of the origins of insurgency and the dynamics of escalation or de-escalation in each case rely on varied accounts from newspapers, magazines, international human rights and advocacy organizations, and the few detailed studies that have been published on those events. In the case of the Sierra Leone war and the September 2000 attack against Guinea, testimony from former combatants in front of the Special Court for Sierra Leone provided an additional source of data, complemented by interviews with eye witnesses of the conflicts. The Sierra Leone Truth and Reconciliation Commission's (SLTRC) final report also provides an excellent source of primary statements and quotes by witnesses and secondary source material. Since “in Truth Commissions, the truth is rarely told,” as Kelsall (2005, 363) reminds us, this information has to be triangulated with other sources of information.

Information and data on historical state formation and the evolution of political competition, rule, and governance as well as political, social, and economic dynamics in the four case countries come from a wide range of sources, mainly published secondary literature, but in some instances also first-hand accounts of actors involved in those processes or interviews with key actors. Historical sources are rich for Senegal and Côte d'Ivoire and for Sierra Leone during the early post-independence

period. They are scarcer for Guinea and for Sierra Leone during the 1970s and 1980s, due to the authoritarian nature of the regimes then in power. Field trips to both Guinea (July and August 2008) and Sierra Leone (July and August 2007) and the largely “grey” literature, i.e., published or unpublished reports and documents by local researchers, students, or national and international organizations, collected during those trips complement the existing published accounts. I also conducted interviews with several dozen academics, political observers, representatives of international and local organizations, and a small number of local authorities and former government officials to explore and confirm some of my hypotheses and pieces of historical information, and to explore certain key themes.

## Overview

The dissertation is structured as follows. Chapter 2 derives all elements of the theoretical framework step by step, starting with the definitions of civil war and the conceptualization of state capacity with a focus on how states mobilize institutions and populations. It proposes an innovative analytical framework inspired by the sociological and political science literature on the mobilization for contentious action. It then explores the colonial period and the founding moments of post-colonial states, with a specific focus on the power constellations between ethno-regional or social groups at the center of the state and institutions of territorial control that might have influenced the evolution of states’ mobilizational capacity. The chapter concludes with the presentation of the complete theoretical framework and the derivation of four testable hypotheses whose predictions will be juxtaposed against the predictions that alternative explanations of the opportunity, grievance, and violent patrimonialism schools would yield.

Chapter 3 provides a brief overview of each case country's history and summarizes the main events of each country's conflict as background to the analysis in subsequent chapters. Chapters 4 and 5 test the proposed analytical framework in detail against each of the four cases.

Chapter 4 analyzes the moments of escalation or non-escalation from smaller insurgency to civil war for each of the four cases. It examines the motivations of insurgents and traces in detail how both sides, state actors and insurgents, sought to rally support among institutions and the broader population to expand or defend the areas under their control. For Sierra Leone, the period before and after March 21, 1991 is closely analyzed, when insurgents from the then-unknown Revolutionary United Front (RUF), with the help of Liberian rebel groups, attacked Sierra Leonean territory from bases in Liberia. It provides a detailed analysis of the weeks and months after the initial invasion, during which the RUF, despite being a small force and facing many challenges, managed to mobilize sufficient support due to its anti-government message to quickly gain ground and occupy key parts of southern and eastern Sierra Leone. The quick expansion of the rebellion was also a function of the Sierra Leonean state's inability to muster a coherent and effective response with neither its security forces being strong enough to halt the rebel advance nor its local agents, Paramount Chiefs and their networks lower level chiefs, being reliable or organized enough to mobilize coherent resistance.

In Côte d'Ivoire, the state was deeply divided along ethno-regional lines when a coup attempt by former military officers in September 2002 turned into an insurgency and ultimately a full-fledged civil war that split the country in two with the northern half more or less continuously controlled by the rebels of the Patriotic Movement of Côte d'Ivoire (MPCI) from late 2002 to 2011. The insurgents were able to mobilize significant support among northern elements in the security forces

and seized military facilities and weapons in the north of the countries and could count on support the local population in much of the north as well as northern migrants in the south.

Guinea faced attacks in early September 2000 by rebel groups made up of Guinean dissidents as well as Sierra Leonean and Liberian fighters. The attacks bore an eerie resemblance to the attack nine years earlier in Sierra Leone, due to the composition of the attacking insurgents. However, unlike Sierra Leone, where the 1991 attacks triggered an 11-year large-scale civil war, the attacks in Guinea led to localized fighting during a seven-month period, but were ultimately beaten back by April 2001. The Guinean government mobilized a large coalition of actors – local administrators, the security forces, informal popular militias, and the broader population – to take on the invaders and defeated them soundly, despite the fact that the insurgents attempted to recruit among their co-ethnics in the Guinean forest region. This ethnic group had their own grievances against the Guinean government, which was seen as dominated by President Conté's minority Soussou ethnic group.

Senegal faced a separationist uprising in the southern Casamance region after demonstrations for greater rights for the region were violently suppressed by the Senegalese state, and many leaders of the incipient Movement of Democratic Forces of Casamance (MFDC) were arrested in 1983. In subsequent years, the MFDC formed an armed wing and started to attack government installations and military positions and take control of small parts of Casamance territory and engage in a now three-decade old guerilla warfare against the Senegalese state. Although the feeling of being disadvantaged was shared by many Casamançais, notably from the Diola ethnic group, the insurgency never turned into a mass movement, and the Senegalese state was able to respond to the insurgency with a panoply of tools, from coercion to accommodation and political negotiations,

which after a hot phase in the early to mid-1990s limited the conflict to a low-grade guerilla war, led by a few hundred MFDC fighters split in various factions, conducted through ambushes and occasional hit-and-run attacks against military or police posts.

Chapter 5 seeks to uncover the origins of the case countries' mobilizational capacity in the late colonial period. In Sierra Leone, rural elites came to dominate central politics in the 1950s, and the Sierra Leone People's Party (SLPP) won the 1957 elections with an overwhelming majority due to its close alliance with the traditional chiefs who ruled the countryside. The SLPP was rooted in the south of the country, which prompted the formation of a northern-based opposition party, the All People's Congress (APC) before independence. The north-south divide subsequently became the dominant political divide and, once the APC won power in 1968, led to a consolidation of power among northern minority groups and increasing authoritarianism under President Siaka Stevens. Narrow, ethno-regionally defined rule never produced a strong, unified identity in Sierra Leone, and the enduring power of relatively autonomous Paramount Chiefs in rural areas led to divided institutions and a fragmented, highly conflictual system of rule in which the central state had little ability to mobilize institutions and the population beyond core constituencies.

In Côte d'Ivoire, the period of 1945 to 1960 produced a single-party regime of the Democratic Party of Côte d'Ivoire (PDCI) that was characterized by concentrated decision-making at the center and ethno-regional integration at the elite level. However, the state had few organic links with local communities beyond the regime's core constituencies, the Baoulé of central Côte d'Ivoire, the ethnic community of President Houphouët-Boigny, and the large number of northern and foreign migrants who were the backbone of the country's booming cocoa export economy. In terms of symbolic mobilization, The Ivorian state's imagery was built around the person of Houphouët-Boigny and

economic prosperity, and it never developed a discourse and a set of symbols that all Ivoirians could identify with. The state's organizational capacity was focused on the elite level, while the state and party apparatus lacked rural roots. State intervention in favor of the core regime clients of Baoulé and northern migrant and immigrant communities increased local grievances among many southwestern ethnic groups. With the onset of multi-party elections, mobilization occurred largely along ethnic lines. After Houphouët-Boigny's death in 1993, the state fractured into increasingly narrow ethnic communities and coalitions.

Guinea had been the first French African colony to win independence, in 1958, after an independence struggle that mobilized large parts of the population and created a broad-based coalition in favor of independence. Even though pro-independence leader and first president Sekou Touré established a socialist dictatorship right after independence, the large-scale mobilizational efforts that were required to rise to power in the mid-1950s led to the development of a strong, unified national identity. Touré and the PDG (Parti Démocratique de Guinée – Guinean Democratic Party) had developed party cells in most towns and villages across the country in their effort to win the 1957 elections. This party apparatus was expanded and formalized after independence and served as a main tool of rural control and mobilization. Although the party apparatus was dismantled after Touré's death and with the arrival of military rule under Lansana Conté, Touré's successor, residual mobilizational capacity remained in the form of a strong sense of national unity in times of crisis and centralized, top-down rule. This sense of unity could be activated by Conté when the state came under attack in 2000.

In Senegal, pre- and post-independence leader Léopold Senghor forged alliances with powerful Muslim brotherhood leaders in the economically important central, groundnut-producing region.

Around this alliance, a strong central state was built at independence in which economic and political interests tied central politicians to the rural elites, and a sense of national identity developed around a Muslim and Wolof identity. State formation around this strong core national identity generated resistance and opposition in some peripheral areas, which had been at the margins of the cultural hegemony and clientelist networks of the central state. At the center of the state, however, the state apparatus was open to members from all regions and groups and developed unified central institutions, including security forces. The insurgency in the religiously more diverse and ethnically different Casamance region was a reaction by Casamançais elites against perceived domination by a northern-dominated state.

A final concluding chapter draws out the findings in a comparative perspective and discusses their relevance for theoretical discussions on state formation and civil war onset as well as their implications for policy and practice with respect to international attempts to build peace and strengthen states in post-colonial states.

## 2. A theoretical framework of states' mobilizational capacity

In this chapter, I develop a new, theoretically and historically grounded approach to state capacity and its origins in post-colonial states. To do so I proceed in three steps. After a brief summary of the core argument in the first section, sections two and three construct each component of the theoretical framework that ultimately links deep historical variables to state capacity and to the occurrence or non-occurrence of civil war. Sections two and three derive their own sets of variables and mechanisms that are combined in section four to form a complete causal chain from historical causes to mechanisms that link those variables to the evolution of state capacity and ultimately the state's ability to prevent civil war.

### 1. The core argument

The two important, closely related dimensions of the argument presented here are how state capacity is conceptualized and the historical determinants of higher or lower mobilizational capacity in post-colonial states.

The first dimension relates to conceptualizing state capacity in the context of the outbreak of civil war by focusing specifically on the aspects of state capacity that cause states to either succumb to or prevent civil war. I propose that state capacity is most usefully conceptualized as the state's ability to mobilize institutions and populations against armed insurgents. States and their leaders have three fundamental ways of mobilizing support – through appeals to commonly understood symbols of a unified state or national identity, through existing state institutions, or through material incentives. I call these three dimensions of state mobilizational capacity symbolic, organizational, and material capacity. The analysis presented here suggests that not all three dimensions carry equal weight in government's and leaders' efforts to rally support against armed insurgents. Organizational and

symbolic capacity play a more important role, while material incentives are not as important in the immediate response to an armed challenge. States might have several tools at their disposal within each of the three dimensions of mobilization. Those states that have a broader repertoire of mobilizational tools are better equipped to fend off armed challenges than states with few tools and a narrow mobilizational repertoire.

The second part of the core argument focuses on the historical determinants of higher or lower mobilizational capacity in post-colonial states. I argue that the roots of contemporary African states' mobilizational capacity can be found in the late colonial period. Specifically, whether early rulers could rely on broad or narrow ruling coalitions and what type of intermediaries and institutions of rural control they put in place to govern the countryside had, over time, a subtle but significant influence on post-independence states' mobilizational repertoires. Rulers who were able to mobilize a broad rural coalition developed more inclusionary states with a greater sense of national unity. Similarly, state leaders who either eliminated rural intermediaries entirely and established centralized control or relied on intermediaries who were dependent on the central state had greater mobilizational capacity when faced with an armed challenge than those who relied on alliances with autonomous rural actors.

## **2. Variables and mechanisms**

### **Mechanism I: States' mobilizational capacity**

This section develops the elements and causal relationships of the core argument, which links state capacity to the outbreak of civil war. I first propose that it is critical to focus on the specific dynamics that lead to escalation of lower-grade conflict to full-on civil war rather than to concentrate on the motivations for various kinds of violent conflict, as many studies are prone to do. I zero in on which aspects of state capacity are activated in a state's response to an armed

challenge. To develop this theory of state capacity and its link to civil war, I first offer a precise definition of the concept of “civil war” that delineates it clearly from other forms of violent conflict. I then develop a more complete conceptualization of “state capacity” based on the insight that civil war is the result of the escalation of lower-level armed challenges. I will introduce the notion of a state’s “mobilizational capacity,” which allows us to account for various aspects of a state’s response to armed insurgency, notably the mobilization of institutions and populations to come to the defense of the state. A discussion of three different dimensions of mobilization – symbolic, organizational, and material – helps to develop qualitative criteria to assess a state’s mobilizational capacity as a composite of its abilities in those dimensions.

### **Civil war vs. other forms of violent conflict**

Different types of violent conflict have different causes (Sambanis 2001; Kalyvas 2007), and many forms of violent conflict never escalate to the threshold of civil war. According to Marshall, out of 108 cases of “major episodes of political violence” within a state in Sub-Saharan Africa between 1946 and 2011, only 19 were full-fledged civil wars.<sup>12</sup> If one adds the category of “ethnic” intrastate war,<sup>13</sup> 35 out of 108 cases of major civil violence in Sub-Saharan Africa since 1946 were civil wars. Similarly, of the 546 armed conflict observations in the PRIO-Uppsala<sup>14</sup> dataset, only 172 surpassed the “war” threshold (at least 1,000 battle deaths per year), while the vast majority, 374, were considered “minor” armed conflicts (Themner and Wallensteen 2012). Consequently, studies of the causes of violent conflict that do not distinguish between civil war and other forms of collective

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<sup>12</sup> Unfortunately, definitions of types of conflict vary from researcher to researcher, but Marshall’s category of a “major episode of political violence” within a state comes close to the definition of civil war adopted here: “Major episodes of political violence’ involve at least 500 ‘directly-related’ fatalities and reach a level of intensity in which political violence is both systematic and sustained (a base rate of 100 ‘directly-related deaths per annum’)” (Marshall 2011).

<sup>13</sup> Criteria are identical to “major episodes of political violence” but with the specification that they are “involving the state agent and a distinct ethnic group” (Marshall 2011).

<sup>14</sup> The dataset compiled by the Peace Research Institute Oslo (PRIO) and the Programme on Peace and Conflict Research at Uppsala University is the one used by Wimmer, Cederman, and colleagues (Wimmer et al. 2009; Cederman et al. 2010).

violence make it impossible to separate the causes of civil wars from those of other forms of violence (Davenport et al. 2008). Therefore, many quantitative studies that purport to identify causal variables responsible for the outbreak of civil war merely explain the outbreak of the much fuzzier notion of “civil conflicts” or “internal armed conflicts” (for example, Fjelde and DeSoysa 2009). Therefore, it is important to first clearly define civil war as opposed to other forms of violent conflict.

The central features of civil wars are that they take place within the territory of a recognized state, are fought over control of the state, and that at least one party to the violent conflict is tied to, and fights on behalf of, the state. At least one other party represents opposition agendas and has a local recruitment base. This definition clearly distinguishes civil war from other forms of armed conflict that are not fought over control of the central state, such as separatist uprisings fought over regional autonomy or secession, as well as forms of armed conflict of a more limited nature, such as localized communal conflicts or cattle raiding between nomadic tribes (Gleditsch et al. 2002).

Conflicts also have to be somewhat sustained and need to reach a certain level of intensity to be classified as civil wars rather than as other forms of collective violence. The question of which measures to use to indicate intensity – battle death thresholds, general casualty figures, the number of battles, or other measures of the degree of physical destruction or combat intensity – is highly contested. However, it seems clear that a good definition of civil war needs to include some kind of casualty threshold to distinguish different levels of violence, as well as more qualitative measures of the quality and sustained nature of the conflict (Sambanis 2004). Unlike some authors (Sambanis 2001), I do not distinguish between ethnic and non-ethnic civil wars here, since most civil wars and other forms of violent group conflict on the African continent have an ethnic aspect.

Consequently, this study understands civil war as *large-scale violent conflict over control of the state, which takes place within the boundaries of a recognized sovereign state and is fought between organized armed groups, at least one of which represents the state, while at least another one is opposed to the state and is made up of local recruits. Violent conflict needs to be sustained in one of two ways. It needs to reach at least 100 battle deaths during the first year and 1,000 cumulative deaths over a three-year period,<sup>15</sup> or rebels need to effectively control and rule part of the state territory through their own administrative and military forces while maintaining their ambition to capture the state.*

In contrast to civil war, I consider “insurgency” to be a form of lower-level conflict, which may or may not lead to civil war. Insurgency can be defined as “military conflict characterized by small, lightly armed bands practicing guerrilla warfare from rural base areas” which may “be harnessed to diverse political agendas, motivations, and grievances” (Fearon and Laitin 2003, 75). Insurgency is a common precursor to civil war. It can have diverse origins; for example, it can be supported and even instigated from foreign territory, or from within the state by armed opposition groups. Military coup attempts and other attempts at forceful regime changes might at times lead to insurgencies.

This study uses the terms “civil war,” “large-scale violent conflict,” “intrastate” or “internal war,” and “rebellion” interchangeably,<sup>16</sup> while it considers “insurgency” and other forms of collective violence below the threshold of civil war as analytically distinct from civil war. Similarly, the term “insurgent” is used in the context of those participating in violent conflict below the threshold of civil war, while the term “rebel” is used to designate participants in civil wars. Having thus defined

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<sup>15</sup> See a similar suggestion in Sambanis 2004, 820-821, particularly FN38.

<sup>16</sup> This seems to be common practice. Fearon and Laitin (2003) seem to use the terms civil war, internal war, and rebellion interchangeably.

civil war, the first central concept, I turn to a more complete conceptualization of the notion of state capacity in the context of civil war.

### **State capacity, civil war, and mobilization**

The second key concept studied here – state capacity – means many things to many people and is a convenient catch-all concept that has mostly escaped precise definition so far. Despite a rich literature on various aspects of state “capacity” or state “strength/weakness” in the context of civil war, there is no generally accepted definition of the concept (Fjelde and deSoysa 2009; Hendrix 2010). Nor is there a “normative consensus on what constitutes a ‘good state’” (Moore 2004, 313). Hence there is a rather dizzying number of conceptualizations. State capacity “remains a concept in search of precise definition and measurement” (Hendrix 2010, 273), and there are multiple potential causal pathways between the many features of the state used in the literature – from GDP per capita to tax collection data to measures of democratic participation (Hendrix 2010) – and state capacity and large-scale intrastate conflict. As Kalyvas suggests, “the fact that there is a civil war in a given country signals (in a tautological sense) that the incumbent state is *somehow* weak or lacks state capacity. But what does state weakness or insufficient state capacity mean exactly?” (Kalyvas 2008a, 425).

To answer this question credibly, we have to conceptualize state capacity in a way that relates it to how states respond to armed challenges. Matthew Kocher has rightly pointed out that state capacity is “subject-specific” (Kocher 2010, 138) – the state has to be good at some specific functions or activities to be considered a “strong” state, and the researchers’ duty is to identify what those functions are. Once they are identified, these functions define its strength. To be useful analytically, the state capacity concept has to be broken down into the different components that are at the root of a state’s strength or weakness with respect to the relevant functions (Kocher 2010, 138-139).

It follows that a meaningful definition of state capacity must be relevant to the outcome to be explained, in this case the outbreak of civil war, and it has to contain within its definition a credible causal proposition as to why specific aspects of state capacity relate to the state's ability or inability to respond to insurgency. This necessity leads us to an analysis of how lower-level violence escalates to civil war and to mobilization as a central mechanism to understand the dynamic between states and armed challengers.

To understand how lower-level violence like a rebellion escalates to civil war, it is necessary to consider both the motivation of the rebels and the mobilizational efforts required to mount a successful rebellion. Based on two insights from the recent civil war literature, I argue that too much attention has been paid to rebel's motivation and not enough to the considerable mobilizational efforts it requires to mount a successful rebellion. The first insight builds on empirical evidence that civil wars generally start small and grow out of lower-level conflict. Insurgencies on the African continent have mostly been initiated by small numbers of combatants. For example, the initial incursion by the NPFL (National Patriotic Front of Liberia) into Liberia on Christmas Eve 1989, which triggered 14 years of civil war, was conducted by roughly 100 trained fighters (Ellis 1999, 75). Uganda's National Resistance Movement's military wing, the National Resistance Army, that brought Yoweri Museveni to power in 1986, started out with 27 fighters in 1981, and Mozambique's FRELIMO (Frente de Libertação de Moçambique or Mozambique Liberation Front) began its insurgent campaign with 250 armed men (Herbst 2004, 361). To conquer and control territory and, if successful, to be a serious challenger to the state, insurgencies need to mobilize sufficient fighters and support. Small insurgencies do not automatically lead to civil war, and many are short-lived and fail or continue to simmer at low levels of violence. Certain conditions need to

be in place for small insurgencies to grow, and it is necessary to pay greater attention to the moments and processes that lead to the escalation from lower-level violent conflict to civil war.<sup>17</sup>

The second insight relates to the fact that much social science research on the causes of civil wars has spent too much time and energy on rebels' motivation and not enough on the organizational and mobilizational aspects of civil wars (Weinstein 2007). There is a long causal chain from being motivated to rise up against the state to the ability to organize a full-fledged rebellion. Numerous studies over the past decades have shown that rebel mobilization is a complex process and that individuals are motivated by a host of reasons to take up arms against a government. Researchers have shown "that different logics of participation may coexist in a single civil war" (Humphreys and Weinstein 2008, 437) and that multiple paths exist to join armed groups (Viterba 2006, Wood 2003). Kalyvas argues that it is a futile endeavor to attempt to reduce participation in armed rebellion to one or a few main motivations. Instead, he suggests that civilians' collaboration with insurgent groups is "qualified, cautious, and ambivalent" for the majority of civilians and that it is best to conceptualize it as the consequence of "varying combinations of persuasion and coercion" (Kalyvas 2006, 101-102) that are brought to bear by rebel groups or states and affiliated militias.

As a result, I start out with two assumptions. First, in order to grow their uprisings from small beginnings, insurgent groups "expand or consolidate their control over the population through active political organizing and mass mobilizing" (Duyvesteyn 2007, 9). In this, they are in a "contest with the state for political and psychological control over the population" (Duyvesteyn 2007, 9).

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<sup>17</sup> This is old news for scholars of revolutions and other forms of contentious collective action. Charles Tilly long ago noted that potential revolutionaries "are almost always with us in the form of millenarian cults, radical cells, or rejects from positions of power." Rarely, though, do would-be revolutionaries have the capacity to mobilize larger numbers of supporters to realize their grandiose ideas. As a consequence, "The real question is when such contenders proliferate and/or mobilize" (Tilly 1978, 202).

Second, since individual motives for joining insurgencies are multi-faceted, both armed groups and states have to deploy a range of strategies to try to win over the population and attract supporters and recruits. Therefore, similar to what Goldstone (2001, 152) has found to be true for revolutions,<sup>18</sup> I conceptualize insurgency as a contest over control of territories and people between insurgent groups and the state in which both parties compete for popular and institutional support. Civil war occurs in situations in which insurgents have an edge in this contest and manage to successfully grow their uprising into a larger rebellion. Civil war is averted if those representing the state are more successful in mobilizing state institutions and the broader population to resist and fight the insurgents. In order to hone in on what aspects of state capacity matter most for states to prevent an escalation of lower-level insurgency, I now turn to a more detailed investigation of the determinants of mobilization.

### *The determinants of mobilization*

Although states should have an advantage in the contest with armed challengers for the mobilization<sup>19</sup> of individuals as fighters and supporters to extend territorial control, this is not necessarily the case. States have to mobilize existing institutions, individual state agents, and the broader population to resist and fight insurgents. Depending on the nature of state institutions and the history of the state in the contested area, those efforts might face significant obstacles. To capture the multiple motivations that individuals may have and to overcome hesitancy by most civilians to engaging in risky violent action, state actors, just like insurgents, have to deploy a whole

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<sup>18</sup> As suggested by Goldstone, revolutionaries compete with the state in their mobilization efforts: “mobilization is usually competitive, with...revolutionary and counterrevolutionary organizations seeking to rally supporters at the same time” whereby, in the end, “a triumphant revolutionary mobilization emerge[s] from a contest for supporters” (Goldstone 2001, 152).

<sup>19</sup> According to the Oxford Dictionary definition, to “mobilize” means to “organize and encourage (a group of people) to take collective action in pursuit of a particular objective” (<http://www.oxforddictionaries.com/definition/english/mobilize>, accessed April 25, 2015).

range of strategies to successfully compete in this contest for mobilization. Drawing on the large social science literature on mobilization for contentious action, social movements, revolutions, and rebel groups, these mobilization strategies can be divided into three broad categories: social-psychological, material, and coercive approaches.

### *Social-psychological approaches*

The contest between states and armed challengers for support has an important social-psychological and symbolic dimension. Both sides aim to attract supporters through legitimizing discourses and appeals to identities or grievances that speak to deeper emotions.

Individuals go through complex internal deliberations when weighing the benefits of joining an uprising against the costs of participation, and against the costs and benefits of inaction. Those leading a mobilization effort, whether they are insurgent or state leaders, have to be able to influence individuals' willingness to join and must create broader legitimizing discourses that "Construct meaning for action" (Tarrow 1998, 110). Persuasion and the emphasis on the benefits of action or the justness and legitimacy of a cause are crucial strategies in this context (McAdam 1982). Purely rational arguments are rarely sufficient to attract a large following, however. Leaders of collective action appeal to past injustices or conflict, often exploring commonly held beliefs or myths that stir deeper emotions – for example, humiliation from discrimination, or anger born out of a feeling of disempowerment – to powerfully reinforce rational arguments. These interpretive frames need to build on existing realities or perceptions and have to be widely publicized to move large groups of people to act (Tarrow 1998, 111-112).

Existing collective identities, in particular if they have been shaped by long-standing conflict

between groups and are rich in symbols and collective memories, can be exploited by both sides of a conflict. Those representing the states counter insurgents' efforts with their own justifying discourse. They delegitimize armed challengers and their causes and appeal to existing pro-state identities and sentiments. Strong national or otherwise unifying identities based on a long history of suffering and survival as a nation provide a deep source of material (Goodwin and Skocpol 1989, 493) that both states and challengers may try to appeal to. A strong sense of overarching nationalist sentiment and numerous symbolic resources available within a state makes any armed challenge to state authority more daunting.

#### *Coercive and organizational approaches*

Appeals to identity or deep-seated grievances to mobilize populations have their limits. To back up the rhetorical justification for their actions, armed movements take concrete actions on the ground to signal that they are serious about realizing their professed cause and exert pressure on populations under their control to resist governments' counter-insurgency efforts. Similarly, governments try to fight insurgents not only by military means, but also by organizing resistance to insurgents locally and by rallying populations to the defense of the state.

Direct access to people is critical in the attempt to organize resistance. Territorial control is critical in this respect. Once armed groups gain in strength and start controlling more territory, their following automatically grows, and control begets collaboration rather than the other way around (Kalyvas 2006, 124-132). The majority of any given population will have only weak preferences for armed group agendas and can be influenced through various forms of persuasion or coercion. Coercive strategies significantly limit individuals' choice to collaborate or resist, while they increase the cost of not collaborating. Local presence helps state or armed group actors to communicate directly with

people in the contested territories and to use a range of organizational or coercive tools to affect individuals' cost-benefit calculations and win their support. Coercion does not need to be the use or threat of violence, as the mere presence of armed actors and the implied threat of violence are often sufficient to induce support from local populations. Similarly, if the state has a regular and reliable organizational presence in rural areas through administrative agents, military or security forces, or through informal allies and their social networks, rallying support and organizing resistance to an armed uprising should be much easier (Kalyvas 2006, 87-145).

### *Material approaches*

“Selective” or material incentives have played an important role in much recent research on the motivations for rebellion and civil war (most prominently Collier and Hoeffler 2000; 2004).

Economic motivations play at least some role in why individuals join armed groups, although it may not be as prominent in many civil wars as scholarship has suggested (for an overview, see Blattman and Miguel 2010, 32-35). The role of economic incentives may vary significantly depending on the context (Weinstein 2005, 599).

Insurgent groups' attempts to lure potential recruits and supporters might include direct payments or handouts of material goods as well as access to opportunities to loot, seize, or extract natural resources. Making credible promises about material rewards requires a degree of access to potential recruits and populations, as well as access to resources to redistribute. Insurgents' access to so-called “lootable” (Ross 2004) natural resources such as alluvial diamond or gold deposits might increase their chances of attracting further recruits (Humphreys 2005, 511); access to such resources appears to prolong civil wars (Fearon 2004). Whether rents from natural resources are among the main motivations for individual recruits and supporters is questionable, however. Studies of insurgent

motivation have shown that the material incentives promised to or received by young recruits are much more basic and include food and simple looted goods such as household items, while rents from natural resources almost exclusively benefit the rebel leadership (Humphreys and Weinstein 2004, 26).

Material incentives are also one of the tools states may deploy to counter armed challenges.

Governments have to first mobilize significant resources to motivate those within state institutions, specifically in the security apparatus, to take added risks in fighting an insurgency. African security forces and civil servants are often poorly and irregularly paid, which hampers their fighting prowess and motivation (Herbst 2004, 359-360). Similarly, states can secure the support among the population in contested territories through material rewards or promises of material benefits.

Whether these promises are credible depends largely on whether the state has historically delivered material benefits to the contested area.

### ***State capacity and repertoires of mobilization***

In light of the above discussion, I suggest that it is most fruitful for the investigation here to conceptualize state capacity as the state's capacity to mobilize institutions and individuals in defense of the state. State actors have to deploy a range of tools to win over individuals or the wider population in order to tap into individuals' wide range of motivations for joining and supporting either the state over armed groups. Borrowing from sociology, a state's mobilizational capacity can be conceptualized as a repertoire<sup>20</sup> of tools and actions along three dimensions: a symbolic, an organizational,<sup>21</sup> and a material dimension.

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<sup>20</sup> The concept of repertoires of social and political action has been used by sociologists and some political scientists. It suggests that political and social actors, including regular citizens, rely on existing "repertoires" (Traugott 1995) of conceivable options for social action. Repertoires of action refer to "A limited set of routines that are learned, shared, and acted out" and that "Emerge from struggle" (Tilly 1995, 26). They define the possibilities for collective action of

Ideally, clear indicators and quantitative scores could be developed to measure a state's capabilities along each of these three dimensions. However, given most African states' inability to gather reliable data on basic measures of their economic or administrative performance (Jerven 2013), most of the data needed to compile such scores do not exist. It is possible, however, to develop a few qualitative markers that can help determine whether states have high or low mobilizational capacity.

*Symbolic Capacity:* A state's symbolic capacity refers to the existence of widely recognized symbols and a vocabulary that refers to a unified national identity and does not resonate only with a specific ethnic or regional group. Symbolic capacity can be considered high when there are a large number of symbols and a terminology that expresses a sentiment of national unity that the vast majority of the population can identify with. It is not sufficient for symbols to exist – they must also be in common usage. Hence, an important indication of high symbolic capacity is when state leaders and representatives frequently refer to those symbols in speeches and public communications.<sup>22</sup> A state's symbolic capacity is low when there are no or few symbols of national unity and when state leaders frequently refer to particular group interests, rather than to national interests, in their public discourse.

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ordinary citizens as well as the political responses to conflict situations: "officials have repertoires of responses, just as those in ethnic movements have repertoires of political action" (Gurr 2000, 158). Repertoires are not immutable. They change gradually on the margins as social actors copy, innovate, and apply certain types of actions to different contexts (Tarrow 1998, 29-42).

<sup>21</sup> For simplicity's sake when I refer to "organizational capacity" in what follows it comprises coercive capacity as well.

<sup>22</sup> A good measure of high symbolic capacity is if a large majority of the population express strong feelings for their nation in opinion polls. Although such polls have been conducted in an increasing number of developing countries, they still only cover a fraction of African countries, mostly the more developed ones. See, for example, research done by the World Values Survey project. WVS surveys were conducted in only nine Sub-Saharan African countries. See [http://www.worldvaluessurvey.org/index\\_findings](http://www.worldvaluessurvey.org/index_findings). The Afrobarometer (<http://www.afrobarometer.org/>) project has probed into citizens' identity and data are now available for a significant number of Sub-Saharan African countries; however, all these data are very recent and do not reach back in time to be relevant for the case countries here.

*Organizational Capacity:* The organizational capacity of the state refers to the ability to mobilize both security forces and administrative agents to organize counter-mobilization and prevent individuals from joining armed challengers. Military expenditures and the number of troops per capita are common but incomplete and, in a developing country or African context, highly unreliable measures for the strength of a state's military (Herbst 2004). What matters more than sheer size in post-colonial states is whether the forces are reasonably trained and equipped, are relatively unified, and able to execute central state commands. African security forces are often divided by political or ethno-regional loyalties, which significantly limits their effectiveness (Enloe 1978, Herbst 2004). The first element of measuring states' coercive capacity is thus whether states have well-equipped and trained security forces to draw on, whether they can act as a unified force, and whether they are politically or ethnically divided or not. The second critical element of organizational capacity relates to Fearon and Laitin's insight about the importance of rural areas being "penetrated by central administration" (Fearon and Laitin 2003, 80). The central state has to have a certain presence on the ground, either through its own agents or reliable local allies to, at a minimum, be able to effectively gather information, interact and communicate with citizens, and deliver basic services. States with high or low organizational capacity can thus be distinguished not only by the quantity or density of state offices and agents on the ground, but especially by the reliability and effectiveness with which the agents execute orders and enforce state laws and rules.

*Material Capacity:* A state's material capacity is defined by its ability to control resource extraction and its ability to capture a significant part of the revenue from resources in the state's territory. A state can be considered to have high material capacity when it largely controls resource extraction and is able to get regular revenue streams from those resources. This includes states that are able to

effectively tax the surplus produced by their population. It has low material capacity when this revenue is not regular and reliable or is captured by other actors and when it is not able to collect significant revenue from the taxation of the population.

The above analysis leads us to the first testable hypothesis to be assessed in this study:

- States with greater mobilizational capacity are better able to prevent or respond to insurgency and less likely to experience civil war than states with low mobilizational capacity. Mobilizational capacity is defined as a repertoire of mobilizational tools along three dimensions: a symbolic, an organizational, and a material dimension. The wider repertoire a state has, i.e., the more mobilizational tools a state has at its disposal, the better able it is to respond to armed challenges and to avert civil war.

The following summary table can help us assess whether states have a larger or more restricted mobilizational repertoire.

**Table 4:** Qualitative markers to assess states’ symbolic, organizational, and material capacity.

<b>Dimension of state capacity</b>	<b>High</b>	<b>Low</b>
<b>Symbolic</b>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• There is a clearly identifiable national identity</li> <li>• A large number of symbols and terms exist that represent this unified identity</li> <li>• State leaders refer to national symbols regularly in public pronouncements</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• There is a weak or absent sense of national unity</li> <li>• Few or no symbols that represent a unified identity exist</li> <li>• State leaders do not frequently use symbolism of national unity</li> <li>• State leader regularly refer to specific group interests</li> </ul>
<b>Organizational</b>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• State has well-organized (trained and equipped) security forces that are loyal and execute central commands</li> <li>• Security forces are not politically divided</li> <li>• Significant numbers of state agents that directly depend on the central state are present in rural areas</li> <li>• State agents reliably execute</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• States have underequipped, poorly trained, and fragmented security forces</li> <li>• Security forces are politically divided</li> <li>• Few state agents are deployed in rural areas</li> <li>• State agents in rural areas do not reliably execute central state orders or instead pursue their own agendas</li> </ul>

	central state orders	
<b>Material</b>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• State captures a significant share of resource extraction</li> <li>• State has regular and reliable revenue streams, either from natural resource extraction or from successful taxation of the population</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• State does not capture a significant share of resource extraction</li> <li>• State does not have regular and reliable income from resource extraction or from taxation of the population</li> </ul>

Mobilizational capacity is a more theoretically satisfying mechanism that links state capacity and the outbreak of civil war than those proposed by the most prominent studies of the opportunity and grievance schools.

### 3. Mechanism II: Origins of mobilizational capacity in the late colonial period and path-dependent state formation

Having identified a theoretically cogent framework to analyze a state’s mobilizational capacity, I turn to the question of the historical origins of post-colonial states’ mobilizational capacity.

A study of the historical origins requires two connected but theoretically different conceptual frameworks. First, we need a theory of the origins of state institutions and power relationships within the state that influenced mobilizational capacity, including an identification of the salient variables that shaped those institutions and the distribution of power at the founding moments of modern post-colonial states. Second, to be able to explain the purported lasting impact of those early institutions, we have to develop a clear theory of the reproduction of institutions – through power constellations, rules, and practices – over time and their impact on leaders and their decisions in more recent times.

#### *The late colonial period as a critical juncture*

To construct a theory of the historical origins of post-colonial states’ mobilizational capacity, I suggest that the late colonial period represents a critical juncture during which modern African state

institutions were formed as a result of the encounter between colonial and African institutions and practices. Substantively, I propose that the size of the popular support base or ruling coalition and the type of rural intermediaries that the central state came to rely on mattered most in shaping states' future mobilizational capacity.

In thinking about which historical variables might have most influenced post-colonial states' mobilizational capacity and at what moment, the colonial period is a logical place to start. The origins of modern African states can be traced back to the colonial period, when important parameters of the state were set. In the beginning of the colonial conquest, the tracing of borders determined which groups were included in a given polity and laid the foundation for constructing a territorial state. The colonial period to a significant degree realigned political and social relations in the colonies. As Crawford Young has pointed out, "The colonial state in Africa lasted in most instances less than a century... Yet it totally reordered political space, societal hierarchies and cleavages, and modes of economic production" (Young 1994, 9). Colonial state-building integrated often-large numbers of previous kingdoms, city-states, statelets, and relatively autonomous towns or villages representing lineages into larger political units. Colonial administrations, which followed Western institutional models, were established where, in many instances, no centrally organized state had existed before. Laws and rules were enforced by a central bureaucracy, backed by the coercive power of colonial police forces. Resistance against the amalgamation of diverse peoples into larger political units and the disempowerment of traditional rulers was crushed with force by the colonizers. Willing local leaders were co-opted and often integrated into the new colonial state structures, while recalcitrant ones were replaced (Suret-Canale 1971). Colonial rulers re-shaped political economies to focus on resource extraction for the benefit of their metropolitan markets, and the colonized people were forced to provide free labor and grow new crops for export markets.

Internally, colonial powers established full control of the colonized territories through a more sophisticated administrative apparatus in the 1910s and 1920s and consolidated their hegemony by the 1930s (Young 1994). With the end of World War II, in which large numbers of Africans had been conscripted in Western militaries, and the greater emphasis on human rights and the self-determination of peoples in the post-war period, greater participation of Africans in their own administration soon led to a push for independence of the colonies by the mid-1950s. The “cauldron of politics of the 1950s and 1960s” (Cooper 1994, 1537) brought unprecedented change to the colonial institutions, with Africans organizing politically through labor unions, political parties, and other interest groups and ultimately with the election of new African leaders to manage their soon-to-be-independent states. Consequently, the late colonial and early independence period can be considered a critical juncture<sup>23</sup> during which political power relationships were fundamentally reconfigured and the institutional foundations for the post-independence state laid in most African states. This has been acknowledged by increasing numbers of scholars in recent years, who have traced critical dynamics and the evolution of political institutions in post-colonial states back to the late colonial period (Vu 2007; Willis and Gona 2013; Wantchékon and Garcia-Ponce 2013; Kenny 2015).

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<sup>23</sup> Sociologists and political scientists define “critical junctures” as moments during which otherwise relatively stable institutional practices change fundamentally, with lasting impact for the future state formation trajectory (Mahoney 2001; Capoccia and Kelemen 2007). They are times when contingent events create new dynamics and open up opportunities to change deeply rooted institutional practices. In Mahoney’s words, they are “moments of relative structural indeterminism” (Mahoney 2001, 7) when circumstances and actors shape the evolution of events and the make-up of institutions in decisive ways. These historical periods are “critical” in that they “are characterized by the adoption of a particular institutional arrangement from among two or more alternatives,” and “once a particular option is selected it becomes progressively more difficult to return to the initial point when multiple alternatives were still available” (Mahoney 2000, 513).

I go further by suggesting that power relationships and institutions that would shape subsequent state formation were determined largely by elections in the late colonial period. Elections provided the main impetus for mass mobilization and consecrated the selection of individual leaders who would lead their countries into independence and dominate politics in the newly independent states. Electoral mobilization and the choice of leaders determined which parties and groups came to dominate the state and shaped political cleavages for the future.

I side with those who argue that genuinely new, “hybrid”<sup>24</sup> institutions emerged from the encounter between the colonizer and the colonized in which formal Western institutions merged with local formal and informal institutions and practices to create something genuinely new (Firmin-Sellers 2000; Spear 2003). This argument occupies a middle ground between scholars who consider colonial institutions the main determinants of modern African states’ institutional development up to the present day (Mamdani 1996; Acemoglu and Robinson 2001; Lange 2009) and those who suggest that African institutions and practices prevailed over colonial influence and are able to explain most of the institutional and political dynamics in post-independence African states (Chabal and Daloz 1999; Boone 2003; Arias and Girod 2010).

### ***Ruling coalitions and rural intermediaries***

How did this restructuring of authority relations and the merger of colonial and African institutions affect the new African states’ mobilizational capacity?

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<sup>24</sup> The concept of “hybrid political orders” has most recently been used to analyze the impact of external interventions to rebuild war-torn states. Hybrid orders are defined as “an intermingling and an interpenetration of the norms and institutions of the formal state on the one hand and the norms and institutions of the informal (traditional, customary) sphere on the other” (Kraushaar and Lambach 2009, 5). It can easily apply to any attempted outside imposition of institutions, including during colonial times (Clements et al. 2007; Mukhopadhyay 2014, 12).

With an eye on the above derived dimensions of states' mobilizational capacity – specifically organizational and symbolic capacity – I argue that there are two variables that mattered in shaping post-colonial states' mobilizational capacity. First, the popular foundation of the state or the size of the ruling coalition at independence that underpinned the distribution of power within states significantly affected central state institutions and their ability to act as one unitary actor and to execute central state policies. Second, depending upon the kind of institutions and intermediaries in rural areas, states were able to establish more, or less, effective control of peripheral areas, with significant consequences for their organizational mobilizational capacity.

Neither variable has received significant attention in recent studies on African or post-colonial state formation, but both are generally well supported in the literature.

#### *Ruling coalitions and state formation*

A range of scholars have shown that the popular foundation of the state or the size and type of ruling coalition that controls the state has significant consequences for the type of regime that emerges (Moore 1966), the stability of authoritarian and single party regimes (Smith 2005, Brownlee 2007), and the kinds of social policies that regimes adopt (Hall and Thelen 2009). The broader a popular base a regime has, the more stable it is and the easier it is to develop a national project, including a discourse of inclusion (Slater 2005). Generally, broader coalitions facilitate the creation of political institutions that are inclusive and that assure a more equitable distribution of resources. Policies that benefit the broader public good are more likely when ruling coalitions are large (Bueno de Mesquita et al. 2002).

The range of possible coalitions between ethno-regional or social groups that could rule a given state is limited by deeper power structures locked in at crucial moments of state formation. Wimmer

suggests that the question of “who owns the state” (Wimmer 1997) and which ethnic or regional groups occupy the center of the state at founding moments is central to understanding state formation and potential future conflict over control of state power. He suggests that modern nation-state formation is fundamentally a process of “nationalising the principles of social inclusion and exclusion” (Wimmer 2002, 28). Whether identity groups felt they had a share of political power was key in determining whether groups felt they belonged to the emerging state or not. Similarly, Taylor and Botea found that “The existence of a core ethnic group that had served as the basis for a relatively long-standing political community in the past, and...the promulgation of a unifying national ideology” were key factors in explaining the emergence of more stable post-colonial states (Taylor and Botea 2008, 28). In contrast, if states are dominated by one or a few smaller groups or narrow elite interests, it is likely that state institutions only serve those narrower interests at the expense of the broader public good. Exclusionary political institutions usually lead to equally exclusionary economic institutions, with high degrees of social inequality and members of the ruling groups benefiting disproportionately. Over time, such exclusionary institutions generate opposition and invite contestation, which makes unequal political systems more unstable and poorer on average than more inclusionary polities (Acemoglu and Robinson 2012, 79-80). Revolutionary movements have been much less likely to emerge in more inclusionary polities, since these polities give more groups a stake in the existing system and limit their mobilizational capacity (Goodwin 2001, 47).

### *Institutions of rural control*

With respect to the second variable, the degree of central state control of rural areas, different models are possible. Generally, central states have to have sufficient numbers of state agents in rural areas, and those state agents, whether they report directly to the central state or have decentralized authority, have to be able to reliably execute central state orders. To be able to fulfill their mandates, central state actors in peripheral areas have to be invested with sufficient authority. They also need

to have access to regular and reliable information on conditions, interests, and political dynamics in rural areas as well as have direct contact with the populations to communicate with them regularly and enforce state policies.

While colonial rule significantly shaped institutions of local rule as a function of colonial power's prerogatives and constraints and the strength of local chiefs and traditional authority structures (Berry 1992; Boone 1995, 2003), the way those structures were integrated into the new states after independence could change significantly depending on the outcome of late-colonial elections and the priorities of the new African leadership. Even though colonial rule considerably strengthened certain local authorities over others and thus put them in a stronger position to negotiate a more significant role in the independent state's governance structure, leaders also had their own preferences of privileged collaborators depending on the leaders' need to mobilize rural support during elections and their political ambitions and vision to rule the country (Szeftel 2000, 433). Ethno-regional preferences often played a role in the selection of central rulers' preferred rural allies (Allen 1995, 304-305).

After independence, local powerbrokers with autonomous sources of authority and income were often able to remain more independent from the state and make central-rural alliances work in their favor through patronage redistribution from the center (Boone 2003). While they were less closely controlled by the center, local chiefs or intermediaries whose authority was more deeply rooted in local societies had a greater local following and were better suited to implement government policies, if they saw fit to do so. In contrast, those local power brokers who depended on the state for material benefits and legitimation were more loyal allies to central state leaders but might have had limited sources of authority and less influence with local populations (Migdal 1988).

## Mechanisms of reproduction

To complete the theoretical framework, we have to identify clear mechanisms of how broad or narrow ruling coalitions and the types of rural institutions and intermediaries exerted continuing influence on the trajectories of state formation of the newly independent states. I suggest that both variables, in their own ways, introduced logics and dynamics that were path dependent and constrained central state decision-makers' options for action. These logics relate to whether state leaders redistributed resources and government jobs to broader and narrower groups, whether they developed official discourses that appealed to the whole nation or a narrower set of clients, and the degree of rural control the central state had.

The argument that a critical juncture during the late colonial period locked in certain dynamics and set African states on a new track implies that states' subsequent formation was path dependent. While critical junctures are moments of fundamental change, path dependence connotes longer periods of stability in institutional arrangements. The central idea of path dependence is that events or decisions that occur early in a sequence can have disproportionate influence on later social and political structures, due to the notion of increasing returns. "Increasing returns" is the idea that the benefits that accrue to actors from certain practices or institutions increase over time and make them more impervious to change (Pierson 2000a, 253). Path-dependent explanations assume that the logic for institutional creation is different from the logic that sustains institutions over time (Mahoney 2000, 512). Path dependence is not absolute. It is rather a heuristic tool to understand institutional "stickiness" (Pierson 2000b, 490). It gives the "overall direction" (North 1990, 104) of institutional evolution and can be stronger or weaker. Competing formal or informal institutions or shifts in broader social forces that have sustained institutions can weaken path-dependent dynamics and make change possible over time (Thelen 2004, 31).

How does path dependence manifest itself for the variables in question and what were the micro-processes that sustained these dynamics?

Institutions, understood as the “humanly devised constraints that shape human interaction” (North 1991, 3) order social, political, and economic relationships within states. Institutions can be formal or informal (Helmke and Levitsky 2004). The institutions of the state shape configurations of authority and create “institutionally embedded rationalities of action” (Skowronek 1995, 94). They act on individuals in two ways. First, over time, institutions shape the cumulative means available for rulers as well as for collective action within society, since they structure access to information and resources and how those resources can be used (Tilly 2006). Second, institutions shape cognitive processes among decision-makers and individual citizens. They provide mental models that guide social interaction and shape how individuals navigate political and social relationships, which in turn helps to reproduce certain orders within the state (Denzau and North 1994, 4). Mental models provide an ordering influence on decisions by leaders as well as on expectations by citizens and populations, even though they are not immutable. If leaders and public officials regularly rely on the same discourses and actions to respond to political and social issues, those mental models of action become widely accepted. Actual and repeated state practice becomes part of the “collective memory” and may continue to live on in officials’ and citizens’ thinking and acts even if the larger order becomes ineffective and breaks down (Foerster 2012, 5).

Taking these insights into account, I suggest that the institutional dynamics and practices that were set in motion at the critical juncture emerged from the practices future state leaders honed during election campaigns in the 1950s and through their continued interaction with key allies within their

ruling coalition and among rural intermediaries. Depending on their circumstances and the competitiveness of the pre-dependence elections, emerging African leaders had to mobilize larger or more limited coalitions to win elections. To do so, they developed a certain political rhetoric that appealed either to broader or more limited groups. Similarly, depending on those circumstances, they had to seek more, or less, extensive alliances with rural power brokers. Forming those alliances required promises of patronage distribution to the new allies and to core constituencies, which shaped expectations for the future. Once the elections were won, leaders' [main focus was on consolidating their rule, first under the last years of colonial rule, then as rulers of their newly independent countries. Those early patterns of rule were carried over into the independent states.<sup>25</sup> They shaped public discourse, formal and informal institutions and practices and public expectations.

Leaders who could rely on the support of a majority group or large ruling coalition were more secure in their rule. They developed an inclusionary official state identity that appealed to a larger share of the population, recruited state personnel from a larger set of candidates and groups, and distributed resources more widely. In states that started out with a narrow popular base, the state then came to be seen to be the property of a minority group or a limited number of ethno-regional or social groups. Rulers heading narrow coalitions used a more limited rhetoric to appeal to their constituents; they staffed their often bloated state apparatus with individuals from constituent groups and distributed resources to those groups or the regions they lived in. State institutions and practices became increasingly exclusionary.

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<sup>25</sup> As Crawford Young has said about the early independence period on the African continent, "...the state also reflects and embodies class structure and ethnic (or religious) configurations. Its public doctrine tends to incorporate the values that prevail among dominant social strata, and its agents are likely to be disproportionately recruited from these groups. In its self-definition...the state projects an identity that often incorporates the cultural symbols of its most numerous or dominant ethnolinguistic or religious communities" (Young 1982, 73).

With respect to the control of peripheral areas, depending on the nature of the mobilization of rural support in late colonial elections, new leaders either established direct centralized control and disempowered traditional power brokers or entered into alliances with dependent or more autonomous intermediaries. If the central state was relatively effective, direct control of rural areas made for more effective rural control and the implementation of the writ of the state. Similarly, if local intermediaries depended on the central state for their resources or legitimation, they could be relied on to impose central rule if needed. In contrast, if local brokers were autonomous, they were unreliable allies for the central state at best.

Once this set of main actors and constituencies came to be identified with the state, they became entrenched, and leaders relied on them for continued legitimation. Although many African leaders soon declared one-party rule and established authoritarian systems, they still needed the support of these constituencies and actors for peaceful governance, to keep potential internal challengers at bay, to attract international investors, and to project a semblance of democratic legitimacy through intraparty elections to appease internal and external audiences. Leaders had incentives to continue the same practices, and these practices became part of repertoires of leaders and expectations by regime constituents and clients. These practices established patterns that continued over time and that leaders and regular citizens resorted to in times of challenges and crisis.

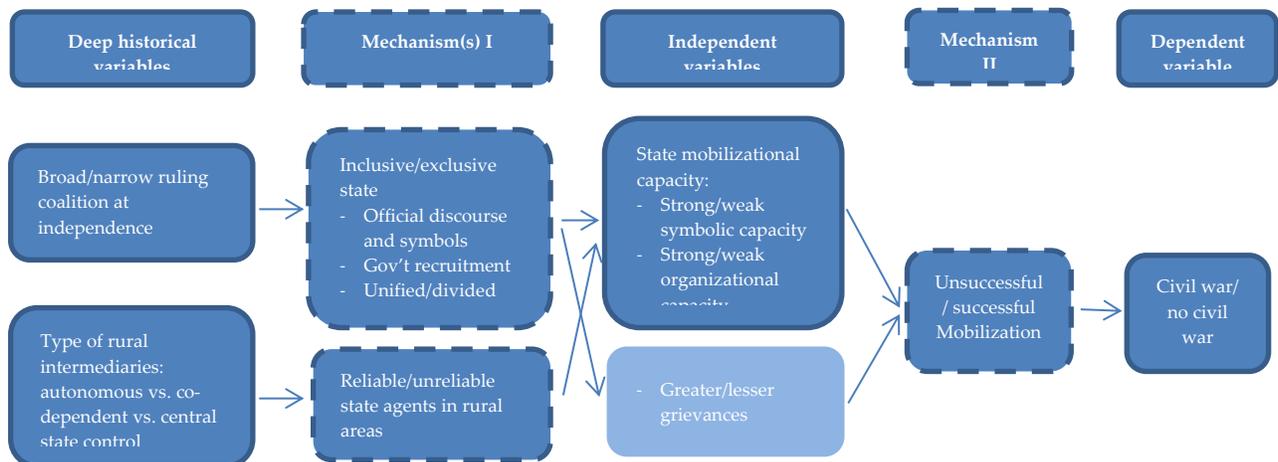
When facing economic strain or political pressure, rulers of broader coalitions had a wider repertoire to rely on. They had a broader coalition to work with to begin with and might have been more easily able to lose support from a smaller sub-group of their coalition, which did not threaten the overall support base. They also usually had developed a strong unified identity and could rely on appeals to

this common identity in times of crisis. In contrast, leaders of state with a narrower support base were caught in the logic of minority rule. While in normal times they already recruited from a smaller base or constituent groups, they generally consolidated their rule further in times of crisis, and their circle of trusted officials, and loyal groups grew narrower and narrower. They often doubled down on their exclusionary rhetoric to shore up their core constituencies and did not have the same symbolic tools available to rally the nation behind them. Grievances was generated among excluded groups, and state capacity was weakened, since recruits for the regime came from more and more restricted groups of people and loyalty trumps any other consideration such as skill levels. Institutions became ineffective and paralyzed by ethnic divisions. In times of armed challenges, minority regimes thus had a very limited ability to mobilize institutions or the broader population to come to their defense.

### Causal framework and predictions

The chart below lays out the complete causal chain from the deep historical determinants, the mechanisms that link it to state capacity, and the dimensions of mobilization that determine the occurrence or non-occurrence of civil war:

**Chart 1:** Complete causal framework tested here (mechanisms are depicted by boxes with dashed outline).



This multi-layered analytical framework allows me to formulate three additional predictions in addition to the one on page 46:

- States that had a broad-based ruling coalition at independence developed more inclusionary institutions and a wider mobilizational repertoire, which made them better equipped to fight armed challenges and prevent the escalation of armed challenges to civil war.
- States that had direct central control of rural areas or relied on rural intermediaries that were tied to the central state by mutual interests were better able to mobilize resistance against the insurgency and thus prevent the escalation of lower-level violence to civil war.
- States' mobilizational capacity can be traced back to the late colonial period through path-dependent processes that exercised influence even many decades later by creating memories and mental models that leaders and the broader population drew on when facing armed challenges even several decades after independence.

How do these predictions stack up against what other main theories of civil war and the state would suggest? Not all of the three main schools of thought – the opportunity, grievance, and violent patrimonialism schools – have clearly specified mechanisms that would allow formulating counter-predictions against which to measure the theoretical argument proposed here. It is obvious that these predictions go against the *violent patrimonialism* school, which suggests that civil war is mainly the product of intra-elite conflict, and the more structurally deterministic version of the opportunity school, which considers most African states to be invariably and unchangeably ineffective due to structural conditions such as geography or topography. It is compatible with and adds to the institutionalist aspect of the opportunity school, which suggests that the effectiveness of key central state institutions such as the military and police forces and the territorial administration are

important elements in fighting insurgents. It is also compatible with the suggestion by the grievance school that ethnic competition over control of the state is a factor in the genesis of civil war. It complements those schools of thought by offering different and much more specific causal mechanisms. The following table lays out how the predictions of the theory offered here, which could be described as historical-institutionalist, contrast with the main existing theoretical approaches.

**Table 5:** Comparison of main hypotheses between different theoretical frameworks that link state capacity to civil war onset.

	<b>My research</b>	<b>Opportunity</b>	<b>Grievance</b>	<b>Violent patrimonialism</b>
Main hypotheses	<ol style="list-style-type: none"> <li>States that are able to successfully mobilize institutions and populations manage to avert civil war.</li> <li>States' mobilizational capacity was determined by the size of the ruling coalition and the type of territorial administration at independence.</li> </ol>	States with insufficient control of rural areas, poor infrastructure, ineffective security institutions, large populations, and rough terrain are less capable of fighting insurgency and more likely to experience civil war.	States in which state power is claimed by ethnic groups and which have recently experienced a change in power in which a larger ethnic group lost control of the state are more likely to experience civil war.	Formal states have been taken over by private interests and their networks. Civil war is the outcome of the breakdown of patrimonial systems and elite conflict.
Causal mechanism(s)	<ol style="list-style-type: none"> <li>A state's capacity to mobilize institutions and populations: symbolic, organizational, material capacity.</li> <li>Path-dependent processes: narrow popular base at independence leads over time to exclusionary rule, which creates divided central</li> </ol>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Insurgencies will emerge whenever there is an opportunity and when the cost of organizing an insurgency is low.</li> <li>Specific mechanism of escalation unspecified.</li> </ul>	Escalating grievances lead to violent conflict: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>After recent loss of power</li> <li>When a large group is ruled by a minority group.</li> </ul>	Elite conflict escalates to civil war due to absence of effective state institutions to regulate conflict.

	institutions and increases grievances; unreliable local state agents at independence lead to ineffective control of rural areas.			
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### 3. Background to the cases

West Africa between the mid-1980s and mid-2000s was a zone of political and turbulence and at times seemed at risk of generating a violent conflagration across the western half of the region (Marc et al. 2015, 18-21), from Côte d'Ivoire in the south to Senegal in the far west. However, at times the emphasis on the regional and cross-border dynamics of the numerous armed conflicts in the region seemed to obscure the reality that individual states reacted quite differently to armed challenges. Not all states, or even those commonly considered weak and ineffective, easily succumbed to armed insurgencies or cross-border attempts at destabilization. The West Africa region is thus a fertile territory to compare what distinguishes civil war states from those that managed to avert an escalation of violent conflict to all-out civil war.

To set the stage for subsequent analyses, this chapter introduces the case countries and gives a brief overview of their history and the political background to the armed challenges that occurred in each of them. It then describes in broad outlines each conflict and its main dynamics and actors. The analyses in the following chapter will focus on the dynamics of successful and unsuccessful mobilization and escalation from armed challenge to civil war.

#### **Brief history of Sierra Leone and the civil war**

Sierra Leone is a small West African state<sup>26</sup> a little larger than the U.S. state of West Virginia. It had a population of roughly six million in 2010. The foundations of Sierra Leone go back to 1787, when British anti-slavery activists brought between 300 and 400 freed Africans from the UK and established a settlement on a piece of land given by a local Temne king on the site of today's Freetown. Over time, more freed slaves from Nova Scotia, Jamaica, and from slave ships

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<sup>26</sup> See a map of contemporary Sierra Leone in Annex I.

intercepted on the Atlantic Ocean were brought to the settlement to grow the population. The descendants of freed slaves came to be known as Creoles or Krio in the local vernacular of the same name. The language is based on simplified English mixed with terms from other languages (including Portuguese and various African languages). In 1792, the settlement was named Freetown. It became an official British Crown Colony in 1808. From the 1820s on, the British colonial administration in Freetown concluded a number of what they considered trade and “friendship” treaties with local kings and chiefs to gradually expand their zone of influence. In the wake of the scramble for Africa, the race between the different European powers to carve up the African continent into territories under their control, they signed agreements with France and Liberia to settle on the borders between the three countries in the 1890s. In 1896, the British unilaterally declared the Freetown hinterland a British Protectorate, against the will of the chiefs and kings who had signed trade agreements with the colonial powers. The imposition of the protectorate and of a tax on every building led to an anti-colonial uprising in 1898 led by chiefs opposed to their forced inclusion in a new British-run state. The revolt was violently crushed by the British Frontier Force with support from British naval forces, and from then on the British administrators offered incentives, stipends, and a share of the tax revenue they raised to chiefs to ensure their cooperation. These chiefs, who came to be known as Paramount Chiefs, had their legal status as official agents of the British colonial administration confirmed by a 1937 law, which made the 148 chiefdoms the main local administrative unit that governed the Protectorate.

The late colonial period (1945 to 1960) was marked by the increasing empowerment of Protectorate elites and a rivalry between the better-educated and better-off Krio elites in Freetown and the emerging African leaders from the Protectorate, most of whom were chiefs or members of chiefly families. This rivalry was quickly decided in favor of the representatives from the Protectorate.

Milton Margai, the first foreign-educated doctor from the Protectorate, emerged as the leader of the Protectorate elites. He was named Chief Minister to shadow the governor in 1954. Competitive elections with a broad franchise were not held before 1957, when Margai's party, the Sierra Leone People's Party (SLPP), won an overwhelming majority in the newly constituted House of Representatives, thanks to its strong ties with Protectorate chiefs who mobilized voters for the SLPP.

Sierra Leone gained independence in April 1961 in a negotiated and peaceful process. Since the SLPP was seen as dominated by ethnic groups and interests from the south and east of the country, an opposition party, the All People's Congress (APC) was formed by former trade union leader and government minister Siaka Stevens. The APC represented communities and interests from the north of the country, and political competition for control of the state and government came to be marked by north-south and APC-SLPP rivalry.<sup>27</sup> Sir Milton Margai became the country's first Prime Minister. The SLPP won the first post-independence elections in 1962. Upon Margai's death in 1964, his half-brother Albert Margai took over the Premiership. Albert was seen as divisive and favoring his co-ethnics from the Mende and affiliated groups. He and the SLPP narrowly lost the 1967 parliamentary elections, which prompted a military takeover by the head of the armed forces, a close Margai ally. A countercoup ensued, and after a one-year hiatus of military rule, a second

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<sup>27</sup> Sierra Leone is divided into two larger ethnic blocks, constituted around the two large ethnic communities in the country, the southern Mende and northern Temne. Each of them make up roughly 30 percent of the population. There are nine smaller but numerically significant groups comprising between 2 and 10 percent of the population (Krio, Limba, Kono, Loko, Kissi, Sherbro, Fula, Koranko, Mandingo), and five very small groups with less than 1 percent each (Gola, Vai, Yalunka, Krim, Kru). For political purposes, the smaller groups are almost all firmly aligned with one of the two main groups, forming a Mende-led southeastern coalition of Mende, Kissi, Sherbro, Vai, Gola, Kru, Fula, and Mandingo and a Temne-led coalition of Temne, Limba, and Loko. The Krio, and to some extent Kono and Koranko, were not as firmly aligned with either group and more flexible in their allegiance depending on the political constellation of the day.

countercoup by junior officers from the north handed over power to opposition leader Siaka Stevens in 1968.

As Prime Minister, Stevens quickly replaced many of the southerners within the government and security apparatuses with northerners. He further consolidated his rule by having the APC-dominated parliament adopt a new republican constitution, which made him president with wide-ranging powers. At the same time, Stevens reacted to a challenge by senior Temne government and military leaders with violent purges of prominent Temne from the government and security apparatus. Subsequently, he relied largely on members of northern minority ethnic groups in key positions and within the security forces. Stevens made his APC the only legal party in 1978 and ruled the country through a mix of patronage and force, although elections continued to be held, and intra-party competition remained fierce and often violent, in particular at the local level. The south and east of the country was largely excluded from political power, however. Rent-seeking and private accumulation combined with underinvestment in the country's productive capacity, in particular in diamond production, had impoverished the country and drained government coffers. When Stevens handed over power to General Joseph Momoh, the military chief of staff in 1985, the country was basically bankrupt. Momoh continued Stevens' authoritarian one-party rule, but relied on even more narrow ethnic and regional patronage networks and was less astute a politician than was his predecessor. Due to the country's dire financial situation, Momoh had to submit to conditions by the International Financial Institutions (IFIs) and in the late 1980s faced increasing popular protest and demands to return to multi-partyism and elections.

An armed attack<sup>28</sup> on the Sierra Leonean state in 1991 laid bare all the fault lines that had accumulated within the state for decades and seriously challenged President Momoh's regime. When several hundred troops from the Revolutionary United Front (RUF), together with Liberian fighters supported by mercenaries from other West African nations, attacked Sierra Leone on three fronts in late March 1991, the Sierra Leonean military seemed caught off guard. The insurgents took control of key border towns with little resistance and quickly advanced across the two eastern districts of Kailahun (east) and Pujehun (southeast). Within one month they were closing in on the country's second largest town, Bo, and other units were making their way toward Kono district with its diamond mines, which they seized by November 1991. President Joseph Momoh and his government were slow to respond. First they considered the incursion a mere spillover of the Liberian civil war and singled out Charles Taylor and his NPFL for criticism and calls for international sanction. After it became clear that the RUF was serious about its avowed claim to want to put an end to the 23-year rule of the APC party and was a threat to be reckoned with, the Momoh government ordered the military to go on a recruitment drive to beef up the 3,000 strong military forces of the Republic of Sierra Leone Armed Forces (RSLAF). In the months following the incursion, the size of the force was more than doubled as thousands of new recruits were added to the armed forces and sent to the front lines. However, the widespread neglect, underinvestment, nepotism, and corruption had undermined the Sierra Leone military's ability to defend the nation, and the rebel advances could not be contained without external support. With the help of Nigerian and Guinean troops from the ECOWAS (Economic Community of West African States) Monitoring Group (ECOMOG), the West African peacekeeping troops based in neighboring Liberia, Liberian anti-Taylor forces recruited from among Liberian refugees in Sierra Leone, and some local civil defense initiatives, the rebel advance was stemmed by mid-1992 and reversed by

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<sup>28</sup> The summary below relies on information from three main sources: SLTRC 2004; Keen 2005a; and Hoffman 2011.

early 1993. Significant disagreements between the Sierra Leonean and Liberian elements within the RUF over the goals and tactics of the insurgency and a withdrawal of the Liberian troops during the second half of 1992 helped in the reversal of the rebel advance.

Meanwhile, unhappiness with the little support that frontline soldiers received from the military hierarchy and the APC government led to a military coup by junior officers mainly from southern ethnic groups, which ushered in four years of military rule under the National Provisional Ruling Council (NPRC). The NPRC appointed Valentine Strasser, a 26-year-old captain and the most senior ranking officer of the group, as president. The NPRC was popular at first since, despite the relative youth of most of its members, it seemed to instill some discipline into the government and rekindled the war effort through additional recruitments and the hiring of foreign mercenaries to bolster the war effort. There was an immediate impact on the war front; the RUF was pushed back into the far eastern borderlands by the Liberian border and was close to being defeated. A unilateral ceasefire declared by the NPRC in late 1993 helped give the RUF some respite. The RUF subsequently regrouped in its forest hideouts near the Liberian border and changed its tactics. Instead of trying to hold and control territory, it adopted a guerilla strategy by operating from remote forest camps and attacking towns and villages, as well as military bases, across the country without permanently occupying them. This way they managed to destabilize much wider parts of the country with fewer troops and without needing heavy weaponry and other sophisticated equipment. At the same time, they relied to a larger extent on looted goods and materials, since their resupply lines through Liberia and Guinea were not as reliable as before. The RUF managed to expand its campaign across the country significantly throughout 1994 and 1995, and they were able to come threateningly close to the capital, Freetown, in early 1995. Only the recruitment of South African mercenary firm Executive Outcomes (EO) by the Strasser government in 1995 allowed the

Freetown government to significantly push back the RUF. After a palace coup in early 1996 by the NPRC second in command, Brigadier Julius Maada Bio, the NPRC agreed to a return to constitutional government. Elections were held in March 1996, which brought the Sierra Leone People's Party (SLPP) under President Ahmed Tejan Kabbah back to power after 28 years.

Under pressure from EO and a push by the Kabbah government to institutionalize and strengthen Civil Defence Forces (CDF), the most prominent of which were the so-called Kamajors, and to rely less on the military in its fight against the rebellion, the RUF was forced into peace negotiations. A first peace agreement was signed in Abidjan in November 1996, which provided for the disarmament of the RUF and reintegration of RUF fighters into the military, the transformation of the movement into a political party, and the deployment of a small UN peacekeeping mission. There was little trust, however, between the RUF and the Kabbah government as well as internal dissensions within the RUF. After RUF leader Foday Sankoh was arrested in Nigeria in March 1997, the RUF split into hardline field commanders, who were loyal to Sankoh, and a breakaway faction of moderates who wanted the implementation of the Abidjan accord. The RUF hardliners ultimately prevailed and soon got involved in a different kind of political dynamic.

In May 1997, Sierra Leone Army soldiers seized power again and established the Armed Forces Revolutionary Council (AFRC). They freed Major Johnny-Paul Koroma from prison to lead the junta government. There had been a growing rift between the RSLAF and the Kabbah government with the soldiers feeling sidelined by Kabbah's preference for the CDF and his desire to significantly reduce the number of SLA troops from 12,000 to 3-4,000. The Kabbah government went into exile in Guinea as the AFRC under Koroma suspended the constitution and outlawed the Kamajors while at the same time inviting the RUF to join the government. A chaotic and lawless nine months of

rebel rule by the AFRC/RUF government ensued and to some of the most intensive fighting due to fierce military resistance by the CDF forces in the hinterland and from coalition Nigerian and Guinean ECOMOG troops with intelligence and material support from another private military outfit, Sandline International.

The elected government of President Kabbah returned in February 1998, disbanded the army, and reconstituted a much smaller force, but continued to mainly rely on ECOMOG and CDF forces. The RUF/AFRC forces retreated, split in several factions, and vowed to take revenge. RUF leader Foday Sankoh was returned from Nigerian custody to Freetown in July 1998 and was sentenced to death for treason in October 1998. The various RUF and scattered AFRC forces vowed to return to power and, for the RUF, to free Sankoh. Increased support from Charles Taylor, by now the elected president of Liberia, had greatly strengthened the military capacity of the RUF. A coalition of AFRC and RUF fighters marched on Freetown in late 1998, which led to a devastating attack against the capital on January 6, 1999, and some of the worst human rights atrocities, including mass mutilations and rape, recorded during the conflict. The rebel forces were again pushed back by Nigerian ECOMOG troops, but the January 1999 attack demonstrated the continued weakness of the Kabbah government. International pressure increased for Kabbah to negotiate with the RUF, and a peace deal was signed in Lomé, Togo in July 1999. The agreement made great concessions to the RUF, notably the granting of key government positions including making Foday Sankoh the head of a Strategic Minerals and Reconstruction Commission. RUF was granted amnesty for atrocities in exchange for their entering a disarmament, demobilization, and reintegration (DDR) process.

Despite much outrage at the concessions made to the RUF in the Lomé agreement, the agreement finally led to the establishment of a larger UN peacekeeping mission in late 1999, and international

resources were mobilized for a more serious DDR process. However, factions within the RUF balked at demobilization and were encouraged by Charles Taylor to continue their armed struggle, which led to the taking of 500 UN peacekeepers as hostages in May 2000. This hostage-taking triggered an armed intervention by 1,200 British Special Forces to rid Freetown and surrounding areas of the rebels, notably the notorious “West Side Boys,” an AFRC splinter group, and restore the credibility of the UN force. Foday Sankoh was arrested again as were other RUF leaders. While hardline RUF factions in the east of the country continued the war, many RUF rank-and-file were war-weary and agreed to disarm. Meanwhile, international sanctions against Liberia put a squeeze on the weapons supply from Liberia, which weakened the position of the RUF holdouts. Taylor commandeered RUF troops to open a new war front in Guinea and to pre-empt the emergence of new Liberian anti-Taylor rebel groups supported by the Guinean government, which drew Guinea into the fight against the RUF and led to the serious decimation of RUF positions in northern Sierra Leone (see Guinea section). The UN mission in Sierra Leone was also strengthened after the embarrassing hostage episode. RUF units, as well as former AFRC and CDF units, were slowly disarmed and demobilized. President Kabbah declared the end of all combat operations in January 2002. The first post-war elections were held in May 2002, in which the RUFP (RUF Party) presidential candidate garnered a mere 1.7 percent of the votes. The party did not win a single seat in parliament. This was the ultimate end of the RUF as a military and revolutionary movement.

### **Brief history of Côte d’Ivoire and the civil war**

Côte d’Ivoire (see map in Annex II) was under French colonial rule from 1893 to 1960. As in its other territories, the French established a centralized administration with different degrees of direct and indirect rule depending on the region of the country (Boone 2003). They also supported a cocoa and coffee cash crop economy in the south of the colony based on large plantations owned by French settlers, indigenous smallholder production, and significant labor migration from the north

of the country and neighboring Upper Volta.<sup>29</sup> Félix Houphouët-Boigny, a large plantation owner, medical officer in the colonial service, and head of the Ivorian cocoa growers union emerged as the most influential Ivorian politician. He was elected to the French National Assembly in 1945 and became the most popular political leader thanks to his sponsorship of the bill that abolished forced labor across French West Africa.

Thanks to his early electoral success, Houphouët and the party he founded, the Party Démocratique de Côte d'Ivoire (PDCI), dominated Ivorian politics in the late colonial period and won all elections despite attempts by the colonial administration to circumscribe the PDCI and repress its mobilization efforts in the late 1940s and early 1950s. As a combination of Houphouët's overwhelming popularity and colonial encouragement of other ethnic groups to form political parties, the PDCI party organization relied on northern Dioula traders, migrants from the north of the country, and immigrants as their party representatives in many parts of the country. At the same time, after certain defections from the party during the years of French repression, Houphouët-Boigny concentrated all party decision-making in his own hands, assisted by a small group of trusted advisors.

Once independence was achieved in 1960, Houphouët pursued a strategy of elite integration, relying on the rapid expansion of the cocoa and coffee export agriculture and the rents it generated for generous redistribution among elites from most ethnic communities and regions of the country. He kept a tight grip on the state with all decision-making dominated by the president and his close

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<sup>29</sup> Today's Burkina Faso. The French even administered Côte d'Ivoire and Upper Volta together under one authority from 1933 to 1947, in large part due to the desire to use the less-fertile savannah zone of the Sahel as a labor reservoir for the emerging southern plantation economy (Schachter Morgenthau 1964, 7).

historical associates. Elections were mere referenda on pre-approved party lists, and political appointments and competition were tightly controlled by the presidency.

The country experienced strong economic growth during the boom years of the 1960s and 1970s. The cocoa and coffee plantation economy expanded rapidly, and world market prices were high. The redistribution of rents from the tree crop economy was at the heart of the PDCI's political strategy. At the top of the state, a dense network of parastatals and business interests with close ties to the state and the presidency generated significant rents and served as a significant patronage resource to integrate elites and regional interests. Higher education was heavily subsidized, and state employment was guaranteed for young secondary school and university graduates. In rural areas the continuous expansion of cocoa and coffee plantations from the east into the center, and ultimately the southwest and west of the country, generated significant cash flow for local farmers, meaning that the fruits from economic growth were widely shared during the boom years. However, once world market prices collapsed in the late 1970s, this whole system of economic redistribution started to sputter and ultimately led to increasing rural grievances as well as discontent among the state-supported elite, who suddenly saw their wealth shrink. It increased local conflict between northerners and immigrants and local communities who resented having ceded land to the migrants early on and demanded that it be returned. Among the state elite and in particular young university graduates, it led to growing contestation of PDCI rule. The state apparatus did not have the resources it once had and was not able to keep all its clients happy through redistribution. As a consequence, after thirty years of single party rule, Houphouët felt compelled to allow for multi-party competition and elections to ease the pressure on the regime in 1990.

Throughout its rule, the PDCI regime was seen as favoring the Baoulé and northern migrant communities over other groups and regions of the country.<sup>30</sup> With the onset of multi-party elections, mobilization occurred largely along ethnic lines. After Houphouët's death in 1993, fierce political competition ensued over control of the state between parties representing increasingly narrow ethnic communities. Houphouët's successor, Henri Konan Bédié, managed to win the 1995 elections thanks to manipulations and a boycott by other parties. Bédié's government was overthrown in a coup by northern and northwestern military officers who called on former military chief of staff General Robert Gueï to lead a military junta regime. Gueï organized presidential elections in October 2000. They were won by opposition leader Laurent Gbagbo, who represented southwestern interests, only after a tense stand-off between supporters of Gueï and Gbagbo and after Alassane Ouattara, the opposition candidate from the north of the country, was barred from the elections. Gbagbo subsequently consolidated his rule, giving greater weight to people from the southwest and further alienated northerners.

Against this backdrop, former military officers, most of whom were from northern ethnic groups, and had been dismissed from the military in 2000, attempted to overthrow the government in September 2002. The insurgents had received training and support in neighboring Burkina Faso. While they failed to topple the government and take control of the commercial capital of Abidjan, the insurgents attacked several major towns and military installations in the north of the country and

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<sup>30</sup> Côte d'Ivoire is highly ethnically diverse, and ethnic identities are complex. See an ethnic map of Côte d'Ivoire in Annex III. Researchers generally divide the country's 60+ ethnic groups into five larger ethno-linguistic, regional communities, as follows: Akan (Baoulé, Agni, Abon...) 41.2 percent; Krou (Bété, Guéré, Wobé, Kru, Dida) 12.7 percent in the center-west of the country; Southern Mandé (Dan/Yacouba, Gouro, Gagu) 10 percent; Northern Mandé (Dioula, Malinké, Bambara) 16.5 percent; and Voltaic (Senoufou, Lobi) 17.6 percent (Langer 2005, 165). These figures do not include the immigrant populations, which has made up roughly one-quarter of the population since the 1990s. The problem with this regional categorization is it is based on linguistic criteria rather than actual felt identity. Many of the ethnic groups that make up these broader communities in reality do not feel closely allied to their supposed ethnic cousins. The Baoulé are the largest single ethnic group in Côte d'Ivoire, with roughly 19 percent of the population in 1940 (Chauveau 1987, 124) and around 20 percent in the 2000s (Vogt 2007, 51).

subsequently took control of the north. They were able to benefit from widespread support in the north due to long-standing grievances by northerners and more recent attempts by the regime to exclude northerners from political power and to strip the large number of Muslim immigrants of many of the rights they had enjoyed thus far. The Muslim immigrants, mainly from Burkina Faso, Mali, and Guinea, made up approximately one-quarter of the Ivorian population and were from ethnic groups that were related to those in northern Côte d'Ivoire. The insurgents' stated objective was to restore the rights of northern and immigrant populations in Côte d'Ivoire. Two additional rebel groups with more specific agendas emerged in the west two months later and joined forces with the original northern group to form the so-called Forces Nouvelles ("New Forces"). Actual combat between the various forces and government troops was short and ended by May 2003. Several peace agreements were signed by all parties as early as January 2003, but sporadic lower-level violence continued in particular in and around Abidjan and in the west of the country until 2010 (Chelapi-den Hamer 2011,89-91; HRW 2008; 2010). Côte d'Ivoire remained divided into three parts, a government-controlled south and rebel-controlled and administered north and west, until a new escalation of fighting in early 2011.

French-sponsored peace talks near Paris led to a first peace and power-sharing agreement, the so-called Linas-Marcoussis Accord (LMA) in late January 2003. In it the parties agreed to: the setting up of a Government of National Reconciliation comprising ministers of the rebel movements and major political parties; disarmament of the rebel army and government militias; revision of the status of foreigners in the country; and the holding of general elections in 2005. French and West African peacekeeping troops were mandated by the UN Security Council to police the buffer zone between north and south in February 2003 (United Nations Security Council 2003).

After several years of fits and starts, during which rebel representatives sometimes participated and sometimes boycotted the Government of National Reconciliation, President Gbagbo's presidential term expired in October 2005 without elections and without a stable government. The LMA and additional peace agreements that supplemented it had remained largely unimplemented due to deep mistrust between the warring parties. A new accord signed in Ouagadougou in March 2007 marked a renewed commitment by both sides to a power-sharing deal. The New Forces joined a unity government with their political leader, Guillaume Soro, becoming Prime Minister in April 2007. After another three years of political maneuvering and necessary legal reforms with respect to citizenship laws and electoral administration, the parties finally agreed to hold elections in October 2010.

After the presidential elections (the first in ten years) in October and November 2010, incumbent president Laurent Gbagbo declared himself the winner and had his election results validated by the loyalist President of the Supreme Court, although opposition candidate Alassane Ouattara had come out ahead in the polls based on results validated by the United Nations. After a tense period, during which the country had two self-declared presidents, severe combat resumed in February 2011 between New Forces rebels siding with Ouattara and the government military loyal to Gbagbo. The fighting ended in April 2011 with the New Forces taking over Abidjan. Former President Laurent Gbagbo was arrested and ultimately handed over into the custody of the International Criminal Court for suspected war crimes, while Alassane Ouattara was sworn in as new President of Côte d'Ivoire in May 2011.

## **Brief overview and political history of Guinea**

Guinea<sup>31</sup> is a mid-size African state with a territory approximately the size of the U.S. state of Minnesota and a population of approximately 8 to 10 million. It is on the coast of West Africa, wedged between Guinea-Bissau and Senegal to the north and Sierra Leone, Liberia, and Côte d'Ivoire to the south and southeast. The country is geographically structured into four regions: the fertile and tropical coastal region or Lower Guinea (Basse Guinée in French); the mountainous center of the country known as Middle Guinea (Moyenne Guinée) or Fouta Djallon; the flat and drier savannah in the east and northeast known as Upper Guinea (Haute Guinée); and the southeastern Forest Region (Région Forestière). Each region also roughly corresponds to the main ethnic groups in the country: Lower Guinea is inhabited mainly by Soussou and smaller affiliated ethnic groups (21 percent of the population); Middle Guinea is largely home to the Peulh (35 percent); Upper Guinea is largely populated by the Malinké (28 percent); and a number of smaller ethnic groups (Guérzé, Toma, Kissi, Kono, Mano) that together are known as the Forestier groups (12 percent) make up the Forest Region (Stat View International 2013, 52). Guinea was part of the former French West Africa and made headlines as the first French colony in Sub-Saharan Africa to vote in a referendum against being a member in the new French African community and to subsequently gain independence on October 2, 1958. France rapidly withdrew all personnel and any French assets from the country, and the two countries only resumed diplomatic relations in 1976. Led by Sekou Touré, a young former trade unionist and gifted orator, Guinea turned toward socialism and support from the Soviet Union and Soviet Bloc countries. Touré ruled Guinea with an iron fist through the unitary socialist party, the Parti Démocratique de Guinée. The Guinean state was highly centralized, and society was structured by the PDG party institutions across the country, through central, regional, and local party committees as well as women and youth committees. Touré and his allies tolerated little dissent and turned increasingly authoritarian, persecuting

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<sup>31</sup> See a map of Guinea in Annex V.

dissenters and opponents. From the mid-1960s to the early 1980s thousands were imprisoned and tortured. Many were killed in Camp Boiro, Conakry's military prison. Touré used the occasion of several alleged or real attempts at overthrowing his regime as excuses to purge the state bureaucracy, the party, and the security apparatus of individuals suspected to be in opposition to his rule. The centralized and planned economy was highly inefficient, and much of what Guinea produced was smuggled to neighboring countries. The Guinean government was mainly kept afloat on revenue from its large bauxite mines.

Shortly after Touré's death in April 1984, senior military officers staged a coup d'état and selected Colonel Lansana Conté to head the junta of the Military Committee for National Recovery (Comité Militaire de Redressement National (CMRN)). Conté declared himself president, and the country lived under military rule until a new constitution was adopted in 1990. Conté opened up the country's economy to private capital, and political life was gradually liberalized with the creation of political parties and the organization of municipal (1992), presidential (1993), and parliamentary elections (1995). Nonetheless, Conté continued many of the authoritarian tactics of his predecessor with occasional purges of the military and government and the arrest and harassment of opposition parties and politicians whenever his rule was challenged. Conté's rule was marked by significant electoral manipulations to ensure his longevity in office and frequent public protests, which at times turned violent and were generally put down by security forces. After Conté's death in 2008, another military coup and two years of tumultuous military rule under Dadis Camara followed. After Camara was shot and severely injured by a close collaborator, his second-in-command, Sekouba Konaté, became interim president and oversaw a transition to a new, democratically elected government. Longtime opposition leader Alpha Condé was sworn in as Guinean president in December 2010.

During the internal political upheavals of the 2000s, there were also attacks against Guinea by a collection of defectors from the Guinean military, heavily supported by seasoned irregular fighters from Liberia and Sierra Leone, which started in September 2000 and continued into early 2001. The Guinean government and military seemed surprised by the vehemence of the attacks, although occasional border skirmishes had occurred along the Guineo-Liberian border since 1998 due to the Guinean government's support to Liberian anti-government armed groups. During two weeks in September 2000, the insurgents, together with Charles Taylor's Liberian and Sierra Leonean RUF forces, attacked and briefly took control of various Guinean towns near the Guineo-Liberian and Guineo-Sierra Leonean border. The Guinean military seemed overwhelmed by the attacks at first, but then regrouped, rearmed, and pushed the insurgents back to Liberia and Sierra Leone. Guinean President Lansana Conté on September 9 assembled the entire political establishment in Conakry and in a televised speech gave orders to the whole nation to resist the invaders and to round up Liberian and Sierra Leonean refugees suspected of supporting the insurgents. Civil self-defense groups were formed in the Forest Region, and government officials handed out weapons and organized volunteers to support the military in its efforts. Insurgent attacks from Sierra Leonean territory continued until March 2001 with a further major push in the southwestern part of the Forest Region in late 2000, which led to protracted fighting until March 2001. Supported by additional irregular forces – traditional hunter militias and Sierra Leonean Civil Defence Forces – the Guinean government finally managed to push the insurgents out of the country and fully quell the insurgency by April 2001.

The attempt to destabilize Guinea briefly made international headlines, since it triggered significant population displacement and had analysts and policymakers concerned that Guinea would be the next piece to drop in a domino theory of conflict spillover between West African countries from

Liberia to Sierra Leone and ultimately to Guinea and Côte d'Ivoire (Blunt 2000; Farah 2000; Africa Confidential 2001; Gberie 2001). The common narrative found in Western media and among some regional analysts at the time focused on a greed-based analysis, specifically on Liberian warlord-turned-president Charles Taylor's and his Sierra Leonean RUF allies' desire to expand their sphere of influence with an eye on diamond deposits in southeastern Guinea (Onishi 2001; Gberie 2001). That Guinea was successful in defeating the insurgency and that the West African domino theory did not come to pass went largely unnoticed at the time, although a few later studies (Bangoura 2001; McGovern 2002) analyzed the surprising fact that Guinea was "still standing" despite the 2000 insurgency and significant internal political turmoil throughout the 2000s (Arieff 2009). Despite its many problems and a poor performance in many areas, the Guinean state showed remarkable resilience in fighting off the September 2000 insurgency and in holding the country together.

## **History of the Casamance conflict in Senegal**

Senegal had a longer French presence than any of the other French West African colonies. The four French towns ("Communes" in French) of Dakar, Gorée, Rufisque, and Saint-Louis were directly administered by France with full citizenship rights for their inhabitants, including a small number of educated Africans, briefly from 1848 to 1952 and since 1871 continuously. Senegal was thus the first French colony to have an African deputy in the French General Assembly starting in 1914. The French conquered the hinterland from the various Wolof kings during the second half of the nineteenth century and consolidated their control of today's territory of Senegal by the turn of the century. Dakar became the seat of the administration of all of French West Africa. The French presence in Senegal was more significant than in its other West African possessions, except Côte d'Ivoire. Political organizing among Africans had been an almost exclusively urban phenomenon and dominated by communist and socialist-leaning parties. With the onset of electoral politics, Léopold Sedar Senghor, a French-trained poet and university professor, broke ranks with his former

mentor Lamine Guèye, the head of the socialist SFIO, and founded his own party, which won subsequent elections due to its wide alliances and following in rural areas. Senghor stood for moderate and pragmatic politics and became the dominant political figure in Senegal. He consolidated his rule by co-opting more radical leftist parties and by sidelining his close ally, Prime Minister Mamadou Dia, in a standoff over control of policies and political institutions in 1962. Subsequently, Senghor ruled through mild authoritarianism and his UDS party became the only legal political force in the country between 1966 and 1978. He gradually opened up the political system to multi-party competition in 1978 and handed over power to his hand-picked successor, Abdou Diouf in 1980. Diouf won subsequent elections. The country gradually liberalized, and the political opposition gained strength, which led to Diouf's electoral defeat to longtime opposition leader Abdoulaye Wade in 2000. Senegal does not have major natural resources and its economy is largely agricultural and rural, built around groundnut production, which dominates the central region of the country. Fisheries and tourism are also important foreign exchange earners. Senegal's population of roughly 14 million (in 2013) is ethnically diverse, although dominated by the Wolof, who make up 43 percent of the country and occupy the center and center-west of the country and the coastal area around Dakar. Other important groups are the various Pulaar speaking groups (Pular, Peulhs, Toucouleurs) with roughly 25 percent and the Serer, close relatives of the Wolof, with 14 percent. Smaller groups include the Diola of Casamance with roughly 5 percent and the Manding with 3 percent (Direction de la Prévision et de la Statistique 2004).

The Movement of the Democratic Forces of Casamance (MFDC – Mouvement des Forces Démocratiques de Casamance) had existed since colonial times as an association that represented the interests of the southern Casamance region in Senegalese politics (Dykman 2000, 2). It was revived in the early 1980s, first as a non-violent movement striving for independence and greater rights for

Casamançais. Casamance is distinct from much of Senegal in several ways. The state of The Gambia cuts into Southern Senegal and divides Senegal in two, with Casamance being a southern enclave largely cut off from the rest of Senegal. Casamance's enclave status is reinforced by its being more humid and more forested than the rest of the country, which is semi-arid. It has fertile soils and is rich in fish stocks and forest resources. An armed uprising broke out in Casamance in December 1982 after peaceful protests for greater regional rights organized by the MFDC were violently crushed by Senegalese security forces. Most MFDC leaders and members were subsequently arrested and jailed. The movement radicalized afterwards and resorted to armed attacks against Senegalese security forces and government installations from 1983 on, with the most intense fighting occurring in the early to mid-1990s.

As far as African conflicts go, the Casamance insurgency has been a curious phenomenon. It is one of the few (Englebert 2007) sustained separatist movements on the African continent. Even though it has been taking on a relatively capable state, it has been fighting a low-grade guerilla that it was always unlikely to win. Despite its long duration, it was always confined to a small part of Senegalese territory<sup>32</sup> and produced many fewer casualties than most other armed conflicts on the African continent (Marut 2010, 26). Although it had serious consequences for the Casamance region by producing significant numbers of internally displaced persons<sup>33</sup> and refugees in neighboring Guinea-Bissau and the Gambia and at times crippled the important tourist industry, its death toll has been limited to between 100 and 200 deaths per year on average<sup>34</sup> over its 30-year duration. It has had

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<sup>32</sup> Casamance has a surface of 30,000 square kilometers, which is roughly 18 percent of the Senegalese territory. Only a small part of Casamance was directly affected by the conflict, notably its western third, the area around Ziguinchor and the Casamance river estuary (Marut 2010, 27).

<sup>33</sup> Non-governmental organizations estimated that the conflict caused up to 63,000 internally displaced persons and 10,000 refugees abroad in the 1990s (Evans 2003, 5).

<sup>34</sup> There is no clear record of the death toll in the Casamance conflict. Estimates range from 1,000 to 5,000 deaths, which includes a significant number of killed by land mines (Evans 2003, 5; 2004, 7).

little impact on Senegal as a whole. Although the feeling of being disadvantaged was shared by many Casamançais, notably by those from the Diola ethnic group, the insurgency was never a mass movement, and the Senegalese state was able to respond to the insurgency with a panoply of tools, from severe repression to accommodation and political negotiations, which, after a hot phase in the early to mid-1990s, contained the conflict at the level of a low-grade guerilla war.

## Conclusion

This chapter has shown that there were significant armed challenges to the government in each of the four case countries, yet there was a significant qualitative difference in terms of scale and duration of fighting and strength of the armed groups between Côte d'Ivoire and Senegal on the one hand and Guinea and Senegal on the other. All four regimes had their weaknesses, and the insurgencies had the potential to significantly destabilize each state. Because this only occurred in two cases we can zero in on the aspects and dynamics that distinguish the civil war from the non-civil war cases. The two “almost-civil war” cases, Guinea and Senegal, add significant insights regarding the specific aspects of state capacity that matter most when it comes to governments’ responses to insurgency and the sources of greater or lesser state capacity needed to avert civil war.

Having set the scene with the basic country context and a brief summary of each conflict, the next chapter will explore in greater detail how armed challenges in Sierra Leone and Côte d’Ivoire escalated quickly to broader rebellions and how governments managed to defeat or contain the insurgencies in Guinea and Senegal.

## 4. Mobilization and conflict escalation or non-escalation

As outlined in Chapter 2, insurgencies manage to grow their movements from a limited group around core organizers to full-fledged rebellions if they are more successful in attracting supporters and recruits than the government they are fighting against is. This chapter analyzes the early interaction between insurgents and governments and focuses on the contest between insurgents and the government to mobilize support and populations.

The sources of successful mobilization by insurgents and governments can be multifold. As shown, the tools of mobilization available to rebels include symbolic mobilization through appeals to the interests of specific ethnic, regional, or social groups. They can rely on existing networks of solidarity for recruitment as well as offer material incentives for new fighters to join the movement. Governments can appeal to higher-order national sentiment and interests, use its organizational infrastructure to fight back or organize local resistance to insurgents' advances, and offer material payoffs to groups targeted for recruitment.

This chapter will explore the mobilizational dynamics of conflict escalation in Sierra Leone and Côte d'Ivoire to determine which mobilizational strategies insurgents and the state used most successfully. It will show that the insurgents' ability to appeal to anti-regime and specific ethno-regional sentiments in both contexts explains the initial success of the insurgencies and their growth to full-fledged rebellions in both countries. While material incentives were present, they did not play a primary role in successful mobilization in the early phase of the insurgencies in both countries. Mobilization by insurgents was greatly facilitated by an ineffective state response due to deeply

divided, underresourced, and anemic state institutions in Côte d'Ivoire, and unreliable state agents in rural areas in Sierra Leone.

In contrast, the Guinean government was able to rely on a range of responses by mobilizing institutions and the broader population in the areas under attack to counter insurgent advances. The Guinean government also recruited existing networks of informal forces and reorganized its military while the insurgents' anti-regime message and appeals to ethno-regional identities did not resonate with local populations. The Guinean regime to counter the insurgent attacks and to prevent an escalation of the armed uprising. In Senegal, the central state was never under attack but faced a separatist insurgency that appealed to Casamançais ethnic identities and grievances. The regime was able to deploy a wide repertoire of responses, from the successful mobilization of security forces to offering selective benefits to insurgent factions to divide the separatist movement. The central regime was thus able to contain the attack and limit its impact on the whole state.

### **Sierra Leone: From small-scale, foreign-backed insurgency to civil war**

Despite an emphasis by some observers on the role of external factors, specifically the role of Liberian warlord-turned-president Charles Taylor, and natural resources, in Sierra Leone, the country's 11-year civil war was much more than just an extension (Gberie 2006) or mere "spillover" (Noble 1991) of the Liberian civil war. The comprehensive analysis by the Sierra Leonean Truth and Reconciliation (SLTRC) information from witnesses or expert testimony before the Special Court for Sierra Leone (SCSL), which tried and convicted those rebel commanders seen as bearing the greatest responsibility for war crimes in Sierra Leone,<sup>35</sup> has since provided a much more nuanced

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<sup>35</sup> Taylor was found guilty in 2013 of 11 counts of war crimes and crimes against humanity because of his support for the RUF. See Ambos and Njikam 2003 for details. Three senior RUF commanders were sentenced to prison sentences of between 25 and 52 years. Summaries of the trials can be found at

analysis of the RUF (Revolutionary United Front), its nature, organization, ideology, organizational structure, and battlefield strategies and tactics. Taylor was certainly instrumental in supporting the founding of the RUF, played a role in directing RUF strategy at times and in supplying the rebels with arms and other war materials in exchange for diamonds and other looted minerals and goods from Sierra Leone (SLTRC 2004, 95-151; Ellis 2006). However, while those aspects played a role in planning and launching the original invasion and contributed to the longevity of the conflict, the RUF invasion was not only successful because of its external sponsor. There were critical aspects internal to the Sierra Leonean state that made large-scale violent conflict possible, notably the political marginalization of the southeast by a narrow, northern-dominated regime, the underinvestment in security forces and institutions of territorial control, and the replication of a deeply unequal system of governance that only served elite interests at all levels of the state. The RUF succeeded in destabilizing Sierra Leone because the initial invasion resonated with parts of the population in the areas under attack and attracted some support and a following that was sufficient to grow the insurgency quickly. The insurgency triggered dynamics within the Sierra Leonean state that revealed how fragile and dysfunctional the state apparatus was, and it led to the almost complete disintegration of government and administration in Sierra Leone from 1991 through 2000.

### **Attacks, beginnings, and growth of the RUF insurgency**

Analysts commonly identify three different phases in the 11-year Sierra Leone war, each one with its own dynamics, set of actors, and shifting alliances: a first phase of relatively “conventional” civil war from the initial invasion of March 1991 to late 1993, during which the RUF initially expanded rapidly but then was seriously decimated by late 1993; a second phase marked by renewed expansion of the rebellion across most of Sierra Leone thanks to the adoption of guerilla warfare by the RUF

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<http://www.haguejusticeportal.net/index.php?id=10305> (accessed May 25, 2015). RUF leader Foday Sankoh passed away in prison while awaiting his trial in July 2003.

from late 1993 to March 1997; and a final phase from March 1997 to 2002, which saw the joining of forces between the RUF and the military junta of renegade military officers of the Armed Forces Revolutionary Council (AFRC) and ultimately significant international interventions by the United Nations, British Special Forces, and other West African forces that led to an end of all combat in January 2002 (SLTRC 2004, 88-91). One common fixture throughout all these years was the RUF, the group that started the war and whose armed struggle to capture power was at the heart of the conflict. Since our main interest is to explain how a relatively small insurgency grew into a full-fledged rebellion that produced an 11-year civil war, the following analysis focuses on the growth of the RUF during the first phase of the war from 1991 to late 1993.

Although the RUF has been at times portrayed as a group of bloodthirsty thugs with no ideology, “a bandit organization solely driven by the survivalist needs of its predominantly uneducated...battle group commanders” (Abdullah and Muana 1998, 191-192), this portrayal is only partly true and does not necessarily describe the insurgency in its early days. There is little doubt that the RUF’s tactics were extremely brutal, and its initial invasion produced an 11-year war that killed approximately 50,000 (Leitenberg 2006, 78), maimed more than 25,000 (IRIN 2011), traumatized at least 7,000 underage combatants,<sup>36</sup> subjected more than 50,000 women to sexual violence (Physicians for Human Rights 2002, 3), displaced millions of Sierra Leoneans, and brought misery and destruction onto the very same people the RUF claimed to want to liberate.

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<sup>36</sup> 6,787 children took part in the official Disarmament, Demobilization, and Reintegration process in Sierra Leone (Tsfamichael 2004, 44), but many young combatants may never have been able to join the DDR process, in particular those who fought for the Civil Defence Forces, who were often lightly armed or armed with traditional weapons. Eligibility for DDR required individuals to present themselves with a modern firearm. This means that the DDR figures might be significantly lower than the number of actual members of armed groups (Richards et al 2003, 11-12).

However, a few core leaders, and a significant number of those who joined the group more or less voluntarily before or early during the invasion in 1991, saw themselves as a genuine revolutionary movement with the aim of freeing Sierra Leoneans from decades of oppression, dictatorship, corruption, and injustice (Richards 1996). Those who founded the RUF, rebel leader Foday Sankoh and close associates, had been inspired by the protest culture, which had developed on the campuses of the country's main university and elite urban high schools and increasingly merged with what scholars have called "lumpen"<sup>37</sup> youth culture of the marginalized urban youth of Freetown (Abdullah 1998). This generated an urban protest movement that took a distinctly anti-regime tone and, in response to the state repression, became more prone to using violence (Rashid 2004, SLTRC 2004).

Without any room to channel their protests in the context of violent state repression and a calcified regime, a small group<sup>38</sup> of student radicals left Sierra Leone and ended up in Libya, where in 1987 they were instructed in revolutionary ideology and guerilla warfare under the Libyan regime of Muammar Gadhafi. Future RUF leader Sankoh had met future Liberian rebel leader Charles Taylor through the Libyan connection, and Taylor agreed to help in setting up an armed group to topple the regime in Freetown in exchange for Sankoh's and his colleagues' help in launching the National Patriotic Front of Liberia (NPFL) insurgency in Liberia. Sankoh and associates Kanu and Mansaray fought with the NPFL in 1989 and 1990 before they devoted themselves fully to recruiting Sierra

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<sup>37</sup> Abdullah (1998, 207-208) defines Sierra Leone's urban lumpen youth as "the largely unemployed and unemployable youths, mostly male, who live by their wits or who have one foot in what is generally referred to as the informal or underground economy. They are prone to criminal behavior, petty theft, drugs, drunkenness and gross indiscipline."

<sup>38</sup> This group included future RUF leaders Foday Sankoh, Abu Kanu, and Rashid Mansaray. Kanu and Mansaray had a history of opposition activities in Sierra Leone, while Sankoh only operated at the margins of this group. Sankoh's grievances against the Sierra Leonean APC regime were as much personal as ideological, since he had been accused of being involved in a coup attempt against former president Siaka Stevens in 1971 and spent four years in prison (SLTRC 2004, 115).

Leoneans to prepare for their armed struggle against the APC (All People's Congress) regime in Freetown. They convinced or coerced many exiled Sierra Leoneans in Liberia to join their fledgling revolutionary army. In this way, Sankoh and colleagues assembled a group of up to 370 Sierra Leoneans who received ideological instruction and military training in NPFL facilities in Liberia in late 1990 and early 1991 (SLTRC 2004, 91-109).

The group around Sankoh and the most loyal Sierra Leonean fighters constituted the so-called "vanguard" group early in the insurgency, which was made up of the most committed cadres (around 20) and fighters (300+). The remainder of the invading force included so-called "Special Forces," composed largely of Liberians and small numbers of other West African NPFL fighters. The original Libyan-trained leadership group was ideologically the most committed to building a genuine revolutionary movement, although they disagreed on the tactics, which later led to a falling out, from which Sankoh emerged as the sole leader.<sup>39</sup> The second group shared the desire to rid Sierra Leone of the oppressive APC regime but was less concerned about the methods employed. This second group included many the senior commanders and leaders of the RUF in the later years of the war, including the now convicted war criminals Issa Sesay, Maurice Kallon, and Augustine Gbao as well as the notorious battle group commander Sam Bockarie aka "Mosquito/Maskita" (Abdullah 1998, 224-227; SLTRC 2004, 105-107).

After a small cross-border incident between Sierra Leonean troops and future RUF fighters on March 23, 1991, Taylor and Sankoh were forced to move up the launch of the RUF insurgency, which had been planned to occur only later that year (Hazen 2004, 80-81). On March 27, 1991, RUF and Liberian NPFL troops attacked Sierra Leonean territory on two fronts: a northern front near the

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<sup>39</sup> Kanu and Mansaray were opposed to the brutal tactics of the NPFL elements within the RUF. Since they were popular with the Sierra Leonean RUF troops, Sankoh had both killed in 1992 to consolidate control of the rebellion (Abdullah 1998, 226-227).

village of Boidu in eastern Kailahun district aiming to capture Koidu, a major market town in the triangle where the Sierra Leonean, Guinean, and Liberian borders meet; and a southern front across the main bridge that links Sierra Leone's southeastern Pujehun district with Liberia at Bo Watertown (see map in Annex II). A third front was opened four days later on March 31, 1991, when a larger contingent attacked the town of Bomaru in southern Kailahun district (SLTRC 2004, 128).

While the initial attacks were conducted by no more than a few hundred fighters, once towns or villages were captured – and usually they were taken without facing much resistance – additional troops (up to 2,000 altogether (SLTRC 2004, 120)) were brought in to reinforce the positions and to set up a basic rebel administration. During the first phase from March 1991 to late 1992, there was a clear division of labor in the strategy pursued by the invaders: RUF/NPFL “Special Forces” entered first and did most of the active fighting, while they were reinforced by the two Sierra Leonean RUF battalions (one each for the southern and northern front, each made up of approximately 180 fighters), whose duties ranged from combat support to spreading their revolutionary message among the local population, setting up local administrations, and mobilizing new recruits (SLTRC 2004, 123-133).

After the initial attacks, the insurgents quickly gained ground and occupied significant parts of southeastern and eastern Sierra Leone. Within one month they had taken control of most of Pujehun district, parts of Kenema and Bonthe districts, and were close to the country's second largest town, Bo, in neighboring Bo district in the south (BBC World Service 1991c). They had also started to make inroads toward the diamond fields of Kono district in the northeast (Zack-Williams and Riley 1993, 94), which they fully controlled later in 1992. By July 1991, the insurgents controlled approximately one-fifth of Sierra Leone's territory (Leboeuf 2008, 3), which helped them to attract

an initial following, gain in notoriety, and grow rapidly from a few hundred fighters to several thousand within a year and a half. The force was significantly diminished by the end of 1993, but changed tactics to guerrilla warfare and came back in strength in 1994. In the end, approximately 28,000<sup>40</sup> RUF combatants entered the disarmament, demobilization, and reintegration (DDR) process, which indicates that the RUF, from its modest beginnings, grew into a formidable fighting force. It is critical to understand how the RUF was able to gain ground and grow so quickly to determine what distinguishes it from less successful insurgencies.

## **From insurgency to civil war: How the RUF insurgency grew**

### ***The insurgents' goal: Overthrow of the government***

The RUF's ideology was not particularly sophisticated by historical revolutionary standards, but it had a consistent goal and message, namely to end more than two decades of oppression and exclusion of large parts of the country by the APC regime. While the insurgents' main programmatic document "Footpaths to Democracy: Toward a new Sierra Leone" (Revolutionary United Front of Sierra Leone 1996) was only released in 1996 and was more a post-hoc justification than a revolutionary manifesto, the RUF leadership was consistent in its messaging toward its fighters, the communities they invaded, and the outside world.

RUF leader Sankoh was a former army corporal who had his personal beef with the regime in power due to his imprisonment in 1971. In his first interview to the BBC News Service two weeks into the insurgency, Sankoh called for the overthrow of the APC government. He said, "We are tired of

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<sup>40</sup> Altogether, 24,350 individuals who claimed to have fought for the RUF participated in the DDR process. This figure does not include child combatants, since they entered a different process. The DDR process registered another 3,735 children who claimed they had fought for the RUF (Tsfamichael et al. 2004, 90), which would put the total at 28,000 RUF fighters throughout the course of the war. The DDR process had many problems, and these figures are far from reliable. Some view them as exaggerated, while others believe they only capture a fraction of those who were in one way or another associated with the fighting forces as porters, cooks, cleaners, partners, family, or sexual slaves (Richards et al. 2003).

electing thieves into office and we will fight till the old ugly head of the APC rears no more” (BBC World Service 1991). In subsequent statements, the RUF claimed to fight against injustice and the corruption of established politicians in Freetown. It continued to call for an overthrow of the regime and the establishment of democracy (Richards 1996). Whenever the first RUF units entered villages in the early phase of the insurgency, they introduced themselves to the local populations as “freedom fighters” and reiterated their goal of overthrowing of the APC regime in Freetown (SLTRC 2004, 120). The RUF rhetoric was also backed up by concrete action on the ground. RUF fighters who entered towns and villages specifically singled out individuals with connections to the APC regime – chiefs, government officials, policemen, or soldiers – and arrested, mistreated, or killed those with links to state power (SLTRC 2004, 135). Foday Sankoh visited himself many of the freshly captured villages and addressed the population in each location in an effort “to sensitise and mobilise particular groups in support of his averred revolutionary objectives” (SLTRC 2004, 130). Ideological education with an emphasis on how the RUF was fighting a “people’s war” and how its fighters should treat the local population was an explicit part of the training of new recruits.

Although some analysts suggest that the RUF never aimed to capture power in Freetown since it spent considerable energy on the control of the eastern diamond mines (Gberie 2006), it is clear from the RUF’s communications that their ultimate aim was to take over the state. In the early days they pursued a “conquer and hold” military strategy, setting up rudimentary civilian administrations in the towns and villages captured in the east of the country, clearly indicating that they had plans to stay (Abdullah and Muana 1998, 191; Richards 1999, 439). After their retreat in late 1993, they switched to guerilla tactics, having RUF units operate out of forest hideouts without fully controlling any territory, which helped them to expand across the country. The six main forest bases were strategically spread across the country so that the RUF could launch hit-and-run attacks even in

parts of the country so far untouched by the war, force the military to spread their forces thin, and come closer to Freetown to put pressure on the government to negotiate or to invade the capital (Abdullah and Muana 1998, 189-190; Keen 2005a, 40-41).

### ***A message that resonated***

Sierra Leone had been a narrow, ethnically defined state for most of its post-independence period, which generated many fault lines across the country and society that a fledgling insurgent movement could exploit. Although Sierra Leonean elites at the time dismissed the RUF's crude anti-regime and anti-establishment messages as irrelevant and portrayed the rebels as "nothing more than a rag-tag politically-confused band of...marginalised drop-outs" (Fithen 1999, ii), they underestimated how much these messages resonated with rural populations in Kailahun and Pujehun districts, the two districts targeted first. During the first few weeks and months, the RUF successfully rallied a significant number of new fighters and supporters, which allowed it to turn the heavily NPFL-supported insurgency into "a homegrown uprising whose dimensions are steadily growing" (Noble 1991).

Although only 12 percent of all RUF combatants throughout the years said they joined voluntarily (Humphreys and Weinstein 2008, 445), and 9 percent of RUF fighters surveyed in 2003 said they joined the rebellion due to their political goals, qualitative accounts suggest that those percentages were higher at the beginning.<sup>41</sup> According to the Sierra Leonean Truth and Reconciliation Commission, the significant numbers of "willing revolutionaries" who joined the RUF early on were "symbols of an overriding will to change the system" (SLTRC 2004, 137). Large numbers of the

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<sup>41</sup> Only 11 out of 1,044 respondents in the only systematic survey of former Sierra Leonean combatants that probes motivations for joining armed groups by Humphreys and Weinstein (2004; 2008) joined during the first phase of the war between 1991 and 1993. Their analysis is thus of limited relevance to the argument here. Qualitative accounts suggest that voluntary recruitment was more common in the early days of the insurgency.

RUF rank-and-file, even those who were forced to join, espoused the group's political platform and "saw themselves fighting corruption, expressing dissatisfaction with the government, and seeking an end to autocratic rule" (Humphreys and Weinstein 2004, 25-26). Even though the RUF soon started resorting to terror tactics and forced recruitment and abduction of school-age children, the early members remained a committed core group that produced most of the command-level cadres and fighters who were instrumental in keeping the rebellion going (SLTRC 2004, 137-140).

Although the RUF did not rely on ethnic appeals as such – in fact, a number of the senior leaders were from northern ethnic groups such as Foday Sankoh himself (an ethnic Temne) or had roots in Freetown – they were able to rely on grievances stemming from decades of ethno-regional exclusion. Their decidedly anti-APC and anti-regime stance afforded them a popular following among the Mende and other southern and eastern groups (Vai, Kissi, Gola) who had felt shut out from central state decision-making since the late 1960s. Many of the initial followers and new recruits from Kailahun and Pujehun district were from southern and eastern ethnic groups, which turned the RUF in the eyes of the ruling elite in Freetown into a Mende insurgency. However, generally ethnicity was not explicitly used as a criterion for RUF recruitment, since it welcomed anyone willing to fight and abducted individuals indiscriminately of their ethnic membership.<sup>42</sup> Dissatisfaction with the Freetown government ran high among large parts of the rural population (Kandeh 1999, 360), and a sense of alienation from the country's political system was equally shared by other underclass youth across Sierra Leone's fighting factions (Humphreys and Weinstein 2008, 447; Hoffman 2011, 102-103). It certainly helped the insurgents' early mobilizational efforts that grievances were most acute in the southeast and that Mende and other southern groups felt the RUF could help them return to power.

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<sup>42</sup> Both the RUF and government-allied Civil Defence Forces had a similar ethnic make-up, although the CDF was much more clearly rooted among the southeastern Mende (Humphreys and Weinstein 2004, 18).

The RUF's message resonated with different groups of recruits and supporters, including some southeastern political and traditional elites as well as various socially marginalized groups. First, a number of southern and eastern elites and politicians at the time harbored sympathies for the RUF and quietly supported its cause, hoping to overturn the existing order and for the southeast to come back to power (Reno 1995, 173; Keen 2005a, 70). The RUF early on made some attempts to exploit these feelings by adopting a green palm frond as a symbol, which was also the party coat of arms of the opposition SLPP (Sierra Leone People's Party) (SLTRC 2004, 140).

In some locations, the RUF benefited from support by individuals who had lost out in early local succession conflicts for chieftaincy offices or in local land disputes and who hoped that adherence to the RUF would offer them access to chieftaincy positions, land, and resources (Amnesty International 1992, 2; SLTRC 2004, 28). An informant in Kailahun district told David Keen: "When the rebels came from Liberia, the main chiefly families in Kailahun were in a position to stand by the soldiers...For the rebels to overtake them tells you a lot. Each [opposing family] saw it as an opportunity to gain ascendancy...They stood by the rebels to destroy the houses of other factions..." (Keen 2005a, 70). Anti-APC sentiments among local elites were particularly strong in Pujehun district (SLTRC 2004, 132). The violent response by the Freetown government to a local uprising in 1982 led to the so-called Ndogboyosoi War. The former deputy commander of the civil militia (the so-called Joso group) formed in 1982 to fight the government troops joined the RUF with 27 of his fighters who were feared for their skill in traditional bush warfare and the use of mystical elements. They helped the RUF advance in Pujehun district in the first few months of the war (SLTRC 2004, 132-133).

Second, the anti-corruption, anti-exploitation and anti-establishment message of the RUF struck a chord with the broader population in the districts targeted (Keen 2005a, 39-40). According to the Sierra Leone Truth and Reconciliation Commission, rural populations in the southeast “had received an especially rough deal under the APC because they were never properly paid for their agricultural produce and forced to labour long and hard to support their families” (SLTRC 2004 3A, 140). Sankoh’s “tirade against the APC regime effectively convinced most recruits to embrace the RUF motto ‘arms to the people, power to the people, and wealth to the people’” (Abdullah and Muana 1998, 191). The RUF’s promise for free education for all resonated with those who had suffered from a breakdown of the educational system and the lack of access to jobs and social mobility (Richards 1999, 437-438). Those young people who had access to some education but then had no options for employment or social advancement due to a lack of connections to urban or rural patronage networks seem to have felt the greatest outrage at existing conditions and were among the more numerous early joiners (SLTRC 2004 3A, 137).

Third, the RUF insurgency seemed to promise a potential path for social mobility for various groups of marginalized people. Richards et al. report that inhabitants of small and remote former slave villages in Kailahun district were particularly eager to join the RUF in 1991 and even after ten years of violence and devastation “remain proud of their membership of the movement” (Richards et al. 2003, 40). Another significant pool of recruits was the poor and uprooted urban and rural youths who had felt rejected by hierarchical rural society. The prospect of overturning long-existing power structures “coupled with the reversal of social hierarchy through the possession of the means of violence” made the RUF an attractive option for underprivileged young men and women<sup>43</sup> in Sierra Leone (Abdullah and Muana 1998, 178). Rural society in Sierra Leone had been long functioning

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<sup>43</sup> A former female RUF member interviewed by Denov reported that “I felt powerful when I had a gun. As long as you are holding a gun, you have power over those who don’t. It gave me more status and power” (Denov 2010, 131).

according to social hierarchies between chiefly elite lineages and subordinate lineages of underprivileged farmers who lived in quasi-dependent relationships to elite patrons. Rural chiefs and elders used their authority over the distribution of land and the interpretation and adjudication of customary law to keep subordinate young men in check through forced labor, high fines in customary courts against minor violations, and by controlling access to marriage (Richards et al. 2004). These abusive practices prompted many young men to leave their rural communities for urban agglomerations or to try their luck in diamond mining. Violent state action against unregulated diamond mining such as operation “clean slate,” which chased up to 15,000 miners from Kono’s alluvial diamond mines in 1990, further heightened the grievances felt by marginalized young men (Fithen 1999, 171; Lord 2000, 3) who represented “a reserve army of fighting men who were attracted by the simplistic ‘emancipatory’ rhetoric of the RUF” (Abdullah and Muana 1998, 178). A significant number of them joined the RUF in the early days and when the RUF first took over the diamond fields in Kono district in 1992 (Peters and Richards 1998, 184; Reno 2003).

This detailed analysis of the early phase of the RUF insurgency shows that the group’s early mobilization was critical to grow the insurgency and occupy parts of southeastern Sierra Leone within the first year. On the “supply” side of rebellion, disaffection by certain population groups and elites in the districts that came under attack was one critical ingredient for the RUF’s successful early mobilizational efforts. Other factors helped to launch the insurgency, notably the external support by Charles Taylor and Liberian NPFL fighters as well as promises of material benefits. Both of these factors had ambiguous effects, though, and cannot in and of themselves explain the rapid growth of the RUF insurgency to a larger rebellion. While the Liberian support helped to occupy larger parts of

the east relatively quickly,<sup>44</sup> at the same time, the NPFL troops in the ranks of the RUF undermined the RUF's political strategy. The Liberian troops were largely seen as responsible for introducing the brutal terror tactics that soon alienated local populations and prevented the group from having wider support. This ultimately led to the split between the NPFL and RUF units and to the withdrawal of the NPFL commandos at the urging of the RUF leadership by late 1992 (SLTRC 2004 3A, 131-132, 170-175), although most of the brutal tactics such as widespread looting, abductions, and forced recruitment were adopted wholesale by the RUF over time as they expanded their areas of influence.

Economic motivations played a role in that the promise of money and the prospect of access to looted goods and, later in the war, women and drugs, was a benefit that some fighters valued.

However, those promises were not the greatest selling point of the RUF in the early days of the conflict, when the insurgency was small, its resources limited, and its success as yet uncertain.

Humphreys and Weinstein also found that selective benefits were common among all armed groups and even stronger for the government-friendly CDF, so it was not a feature that distinguished the RUF – even 10 percent of the civilians who never joined armed groups were promised material benefits by RUF recruiters (Humphreys and Weinstein 2008).

While these factors provided sufficient ingredients for a powerful insurgency, they alone did not necessarily guarantee its success and the escalation to wider war. Another critical factor had to be present for the insurgency to grow into a full-fledged and lasting rebellion: the inability of the Sierra Leonean state to mobilize a strong and coherent institutional or popular response to the insurgency.

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<sup>44</sup> The initial RUF insurgency was hardly a highly efficient and organized fighting machine, and they were not heavily armed. When RUF troops faced significant local resistance, they at times quickly retreated (Richards 2005, 388).

## **Government response**

The response the Sierra Leonean government could muster against the RUF invasion was anemic and scattered, which made the rapid expansion of the RUF across significant parts of southeastern Sierra Leone possible. A narrow, ethno-regionally defined regime with little legitimacy in the southeast of the country and a local governance system that relied on shifting alliances with traditional chiefs made for a lack of control of rural areas, a concern with regime security over national defense, a fragmented and ineffective security apparatus, and an inability to mobilize significant popular support.

## **Institutional mobilization**

### ***Ineffective rural institutions and lack of rural control***

When the insurgents struck in March 1991, the Sierra Leonean government had neither any physical infrastructure nor the necessary structures of governance and control in place to effectively respond to the rebellion. As stated by the Sierra Leonean Truth and Reconciliation Commission, “By the late 1980s, Sierra Leone had become a fragmented country in which central government was almost totally irrelevant to people’s everyday lives” (SLTRC 2004, 27). Many rural areas were hard to reach due to lack of roads and decades of underinvestment in physical infrastructure. This was particularly true in the southeast of the country, seen as dominated by the opposition SLPP, and even in the mineral-rich districts such as Kono: “Despite the overwhelming riches attached to diamonds, they were mined amidst mass illiteracy, poverty and general underdevelopment. The APC government did not build a single paved road in the entire District. Chiefdoms like Toli, Mafindo, Gbane, Sando and Lei remain inaccessible by vehicle to the present day.” (SLTRC 2004, 31)

Political authority in Sierra Leone rested on an ethno-regionally defined regime in Freetown that had become increasingly narrow and exclusionary since the arrival in power by Siaka Stevens and the APC in 1968. By the early 1990s, the regime was primarily made up of members of northern minority groups dominated by Limba, while the interests of southeastern groups had been largely excluded. The APC regime had faced popular protests and pressure to democratize throughout the 1980s and was mainly concerned with regime survival. The central government had only a tenuous grip on the countryside and paid little attention to events in rural areas unless they were a direct challenge to the regime. Power in rural areas was very localized and fragmented, with Paramount Chiefs and their councils of elders and hierarchies of subordinate chiefs ruling the countryside largely autonomously. There were few other state agents in rural areas – a few police officers, health workers, and teachers – with other administrative staff confined to district headquarter towns. None of these actors could reliably enforce central state laws and authority.

Many chiefs operated relatively independently from central state influence, in particular those who had access to significant income from natural resources or export crops such as cocoa or palm oil. Most chiefs had ties directly with central government officials, and there was no government structure to coordinate Paramount Chiefs. The alliances between the central state and chiefs were thus highly unstable and could only be maintained through a mix of patronage distribution and repression as well as through the manipulation in chieftom political struggles. Due to the exclusion of the southeastern ethnic groups from power, the state's influence in the southeast was even more tenuous than in other parts of the country. Many southeastern communities and their chiefs felt no loyalty to the APC regime. In some instances, the APC had imposed chiefs from outside the region or opponents of incumbent Paramount Chiefs who had very limited popular support (Fanthorpe 2006, 42; Reed and Robinson 2013, 50).

Since they ruled their chiefdoms largely as absolute rulers, many chiefs had for a long time been abusive in the exercise of power, in particular by imposing heavy fines on the underprivileged – those with no relations with ruling families and descendants of former slave families. They had particularly alienated underprivileged young men by depriving them of access to land and other resources, which had led to significant rural flight by young men to urban and diamond mining areas or to neighboring countries in the decades prior to the war (Government of Sierra Leone 1986, 39). As a consequence, by the time the RUF invaded in 1991, the Freetown government’s representatives on the ground were either deeply conflicted about their loyalties to the center themselves or, if they were loyal, had limited elite and popular support locally.

The RUF took advantage of the extremely localized rural power structures by targeting chiefs specifically and subjecting them to public humiliation and mistreatment or killing them outright (SLTRC 2004, 510). Once rural populations were deprived of their leaders, they had little capacity for organized resistance. As a result of the RUF’s tactics, many chiefs fled to the safety of the larger towns Kenema and Bo or even to Freetown. Others, due to their opposition to the APC regime, even promised support to the insurgents and helped recruit young men for the RUF (Smith et al. 2004, 297).

Due to the fragmentation of central and local power structures, the significant mobilizational capacity of Paramount Chiefs and their networks of subordinate chiefs could not be harnessed to shore up the state’s defenses. This is illustrated by the evolution of local civil defense efforts. From the early days of the insurgency, there were reports of localized civil defense efforts in some southeastern chiefdoms, at times initiated by local chiefs alone, at other times in collaboration with

individual SLA commanders (Smith et al. 2004, 497). However, this local mobilization was uncoordinated by official state structures, not systematically associated with the military efforts, and not sufficient in scale to halt the advance of the RUF.

Only once the NPRC military junta had seized power did this change. The NPRC leadership set up an Eastern Regional Defence Council in late 1992 to coordinate the government's fragmented defense of the eastern provinces (Smith et al. 2004, 269). **Since** the NPRC leadership was dominated by members from southeastern groups and was more trusted by chiefs in the east and south, they also spearheaded the first systematic efforts to work through chiefs to mobilize traditional hunters and other civil defense militias and coordinate their efforts with the SLA and Special Forces of the SDD. Thanks to the local relationships of NPRC Deputy Minister of Defense, Komba Kambo, who was originally from Kono district, more systematic use chiefs' mobilizational networks emerged in mid-1992 in Kono and Koinadugu districts to mobilize traditional hunters (called "tamaboros" in Koinadugu district and "donsos" in Kono district) and use their knowledge of bush warfare (Smith 2004, 164). These more coordinated early civil defense efforts lasted only as long as the tamaboros and donsos were useful in pushing back the RUF from Kono district in 1993. After that, fearing their greater efficiency as compared to the SLA, the traditional hunters units were dismantled (Gberie 2006, 82-83).

Other spontaneous and scattered grassroots efforts by local chiefs and elders to mobilize civilians in the southeast of the country remained hampered by rivalries between key figures in the military regime (see more below). Civil defense efforts only became more systematic once the SLPP returned to power in 1996 and built a parallel military organization to the SLA around the Mende-dominated

“kamajors”<sup>45</sup> in southern Bo and eastern Kenema districts. These efforts were led by Samuel Hinga Norman, Deputy Defense Minister in the SLPP government and himself a member of a Mende chiefly family. His networks of influence among Mende chiefs were instrumental in organizing the kamajors, around whom a national civil defense forces coordination structure was built starting in 1996. The role of the kamajors was critical in keeping the RUF at bay in the south of the country, and the wider CDF forces played a role in ultimately defeating it in the late 1990s and early 2000s (Włodarczyk 2009, 64-67; Hoffman 2011, 73-76). It was thus only after several years and after a change in government to a regime that in its political and ethnic affiliation clearly represented the interests of the southeast that the local mobilizing power of traditional chiefs, elders, and traditional initiation societies could be harnessed in favor of the defense of the country, a feat that the APC regime, due to its affiliation with northern ethnic groups and interests, had been unable to accomplish.

The fragmentation of the central state apparatus and its lack of reliable and effective allies on the ground also manifested itself in an information disadvantage for the central government compared to the insurgents. The central government seemed to have little reliable warning of the impending attack or good intelligence from the warfront, despite numerous media reports and widespread rumors for months about an insurgency in the making in Liberia (BBC World Service 1991a) and public warnings by the then unknown Foday Sankoh (SLTRC 2004, 117). Mohammed Tarawallie, the commander of the SLA, admitted in a 1995 interview that “At the time the rebel war started in 1991, we were really caught with our pants down.” (Keen 2005a, 83). The Sierra Leonean TRC suggests that intelligence and reports from the warfront were either grossly erroneous or remained with local chiefs or military units in the field and never made it up the administrative or military

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<sup>45</sup> “Kamajors” is an anglicized version of the Mende “kamajo” (sing.) and “kamajoisia” (plural), the name for traditional hunters with mystical powers (Hoffman 2011, 37, 61-65).

chains of command to decision-makers in Freetown (SLTRC 2004, 113-114, 148). Time and again the Sierra Leonean government seemed to underestimate the strength of the rebel force and its capacity. So unconcerned were the leaders in Freetown about a potential armed challenge that they sent their best officers and more than one-tenth of its better-trained recruits to participate in the West African ECOMOG intervention force in neighboring Liberia in the months and weeks before the RUF attack occurred (SLTRC 2004, 146).

This lack of central government ability to anticipate and potentially pre-empt the original rebel attack, as well as their subsequent moves, contrasts with the RUF's capacity to gather advance intelligence before invading and attacking villages and towns. As Richards has noted, "It was a tactic of the RUF to place 'spies' in villages, long before attacks commenced, to assess levels of dissociation from the regime and identify potentially sympathetic groups or factions" (Richards 2005, 382). The RUF harnessed and used this reputation to its advantage as it became known. It claimed to make use of and dominate the forest "footpaths," signaling that it was supposedly in touch with long-neglected rural Sierra Leone (RUF 1995).

### ***Ineffective and unreliable security forces***

As Humphreys and Weinstein have argued, "The advance of the rebels in the countryside was as much a product of the Sierra Leone Army's (SLA) failings as it was of RUF capacity" (Humphreys and Weinstein 2008, 437). The Sierra Leonean military of the early 1990s was described by former SLA officers as "dysfunctional" and a purely 'ceremonial' force" (SLTRC 2004, 146). At the start of the insurgency, "The army didn't have moveable vehicles, communication facilities were non-existent, and most of the soldiers were not combat ready" (SLTRC 2004, 145). Its most capable officers were deployed on a peacekeeping mission in Liberia, many regular soldiers had been

recruited based on ethnic or patronage considerations, and troop morale was low: “Familial and tribal disharmonies had eaten away at the sense of common purpose that is supposed to be the very essence of a national army. At every level, right to the core of the institution, morale was pathetic” (SLTRC 2004, 146).

The Sierra Leonean security forces’ ineffective response to the insurgency was due to the fact that the security apparatus suffered from similar divisions and fragmentation as the political system overall. The ethnically-defined APC regime with its narrower and narrower base of small minority ethnic groups – Limba, Loko, Koranko – had created a security apparatus in its image. The leadership and the most effective fighting forces were made up of members and fighters from these minority ethnic groups. To prevent potential armed challenges from within the military, the regime kept the more ethnically diverse military small and poorly equipped and trained. Since the late 1960s, the APC had been mainly concerned with regime defense in Freetown rather than defense against any organized armed challenges from the rural areas, which led it to invest most resources into the Cuban-trained paramilitary Special Security Division (SSD), which was responsible for regime security and directly controlled by the President (SLTRC 2004, 26-27, 148-150). Just like in other government institutions, patron-client and ethno-regional considerations were rampant in the governance of the security sector and undermined its effectiveness.

Since the defense of the APC regime was its main purpose, the more effective and better equipped SSD troops were only used sporadically on the warfront and mainly to defend the diamond fields of Kenema and Kono districts. It was thus mainly left to the SLA to take on the insurgents. Although more numerous than the invading RUF force, with up to 2,000 troops stationed in the southeast, SLA soldiers were quickly beaten at their outposts along the Liberian border and in the border

districts of Kailahun and Pujehun as well as in Kenema and Bo districts during the first few months. Reports of SLA units abandoning their positions in the face of the advancing RUF were common in those districts.

At times, the insurgent forces seemed to move around freely and almost unhindered from village to village, in particular in the more rural and outlying chiefdoms (for Bo district, Smith et al. 2004, 383-384). They were only engaged by SLA forces if they advanced on strategic areas such as key bridges or the major provincial towns, notably in Kenema, Bo, and Bonthe districts (for Bonthe, Smith et al. 2004, 416). SLA units often arrived only after RUF attacks on villages or town had passed. For example, witness accounts described the SLA response to the RUF attacks in April 1991 as follows:

...similarly to what was happening in the southern part of the District, the SLA forces were quickly overpowered and did not put up strong resistance to the invading forces. Some of these SLA forces were reported to take off their uniforms, hide their weapons and flee to Guinea with the thousands of civilians who were on their way. Other SLA forces withdrew to the chiefdom headquarter of Buedu (south of Kissi Teng *Chiefdom*). (Smith et al. 2004, 257)

During the first phase of the war, the SLA was only able to put up significant resistance and take territory back from the RUF with support from external actors. Conscious of the SLA's weaknesses and not wanting to empower the SLA for fear of them turning against the regime, mobilizing support from external forces seemed to be the safest option to strengthen the country's defenses and the main priority of the Momoh regime. Within two weeks of the incursion, it received assistance from Guinean troops who were dispatched to eastern Sierra Leone thanks to a long-standing defense pact between Sierra Leone and the Guinean government dating back to the 1960s. The Sierra Leone government also got support from Nigerian troops who had been deployed to neighboring Liberia as part of the ECOWAS Ceasefire Monitoring Group (ECOMOG), based on a

bilateral decision by the Nigerian regime to assist the Momoh government (Nobles 1991; SLTRC 2004, 149).

During the first few months after the RUF attack, the RUF advanced across southern Pujehun district and deep into Bo and even Bonthe districts with relatively little resistance from the Sierra Leone military. Only by June 1992, once the Sierra Leonean government had been able to mobilize sufficient Liberian irregular forces opposed to Charles Taylor, was there a joint effort by ULIMO<sup>46</sup> fighters and the SLA that managed to reverse the RUF's territorial gains across the south. The joint ULIMO-SLA force dislodged the RUF from many of the chiefdoms the rebels held by August 1992 and by early 1993 from most parts of Pujehun district (Smith et al. 2004, 493-496; Hoffman 2011, 32-36).

Guinean troops were particularly instrumental in preventing a sweep by the RUF across all of southeastern Sierra Leone. They notably helped to ensure the defense of the strategic town of Daru in southern Kailahun district, which hosts the largest SLA military installation in the southeast and prevented an RUF advance toward Kenema, the country's third-largest town (Keen 2005a, 36; SLTRC 2004, 143). The Nigerian air force later provided critical air capabilities that the Sierra Leonean military lacked and bombed RUF positions in the east, helping government troops to reclaim many RUF positions in late 1993 (SLTRC 2004, 175).<sup>47</sup> At a later stage, as the RUF closed in on Freetown in 1995, only a joint force of South African mercenary outfit Executive Outcomes,

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<sup>46</sup> The United Liberation Movement of Liberia for Democracy was the main opponents of Charles Taylor in the armed struggle for power in Liberia, and many ULIMO fighters had been living in Sierra Leone as refugees since 1990.

<sup>47</sup> These troops formed the core of what would in 1997 become the ECOMOG mission in Sierra Leone, which, at its peak, had up to 14,000 personnel (Fithen 1999, 35) and was instrumental in wresting control of Freetown from the AFRC and RUF in 1998 and in January 1999.

hired by the Sierra Leonean government, and Liberian demobilized ULIMO fighters managed to drive back the RUF's steady gaining of territory toward the nation's capital (Smith et al. 2004, 55)

The SLA's ineffectiveness was not mainly due to a lack of resources. In fact, the Sierra Leonean government did invest in the military in the months after the outbreak of the insurgency. It significantly expanded the troop size by going on a recruitment drive that first doubled the number of available soldiers by 1992 and ultimately led to a fourfold increase of troop numbers by 1994. It also invested in new weapons and equipment. Reports indicated that SLA troops in Bonthe district as early as June 1991 were "armed with new weapons including AK47s, RPGs, LMGs,<sup>48</sup> mortar guns and grenades" (Smith et al. 2004, 417).

The military's incapacity in fighting back against the RUF insurgents was rather due to patterns of organization and governance in the security sector that had developed over the previous decades. The dominance of patronage networks, widespread nepotism, and diversion of resources within the senior ranks of the military and the politicians they were allied with, as well as ethno-regional differences, had produced a deeply fragmented force. By the time the RUF attacked southeastern Sierra Leone, the Sierra Leonean military was "A network of semi-independent operators rather than a highly structured and centralized fighting force" (Hoffman 2011, 33). Throughout the war, military units often acted independently from central command and from one another, pursuing their own interests and strategies. A visiting anthropologist described his interaction with an SLA officer near the warfront in 1992, "Who never knew which troops arriving from the factionalized army HQ in Freetown he could trust" and who was "Training and arming his own bodyguards" since he had little faith in the loyalty and fighting ability of the troops sent from Freetown (Richards 2005, 386).

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<sup>48</sup> Rocket propelled grenades (RPG) and light machine guns (LMGs).

Subsequently, the same researcher encountered the commanding SLA officer in Pujehun town, who had no control and command of the young irregulars who were guarding his compound and whose troops were limited to symbolic sorties to show off their most high-powered weapons (Richards 2005, 387).

This fragmentation was largely desired and kept alive by the political leadership in Freetown, even in the face of an attack on the whole country. APC leaders in Freetown and in the east continued to seem mainly concerned with preventing potential independent power centers from emerging within the military. Some of the early local self-defense efforts organized by military officers frustrated with the lack of support from Freetown were thwarted by more senior commanders or by political interests (SLTRC 2004, 149). One prominent example was the initiative by SLA captain Prince Ben-Hirsch, who early on mobilized local young men in Kenema and Kailahun districts to prevent the RUF and NPFL forces from advancing toward Kenema district (Hoffman 2011, 34; Keen 2005a, 91-93). Ben-Hirsch was subsequently killed by internal opponents within the military who felt threatened by his initiative. An SLA officer commented at the time, “Ben-Hirsch was killed between friendly troops...Politicians only look at brave soldiers as people who will overthrow them” (Keen 2005a, 93).

Ethnic divisions further weakened the already fragmented SLA. Although all ethnic groups were represented among the rank-and-file soldiers, distrust between officers from different ethnic groups impacted the cohesiveness of the efforts on the frontline. This became obvious during the April 1992 NPRC coup d'état by junior officers from the elite “Tiger” battalion. Although the coup was not planned far in advance but grew out of junior officers’ protests against poor living conditions on the front lines and demands for back-pay, it quickly turned into a southeastern dominated anti-APC

and anti-northern operation. Colonel Yaya Kanu, the only senior northern officer among the coup leaders, was arrested and executed by the NPRC leaders together with other influential Temne army officers and a number of senior APC politicians in December 1992 (Kamara Taylor 2014). These divisions would last throughout the conflict, lead to occasional in-fighting within the military, and break out in the open again in 1997 during the largely northern-led AFRC coup against the southeastern SLPP government.

The SLA's two recruitment drives, first in 1991 and then in late 1992 and 1993, created their own problems for the SLA and highlighted that simply increasing manpower in an otherwise dysfunctional force does not improve its prowess. One response to the RUF insurgency and the apparent inability of the RSLF to stop the growing rebellion in the east and south was to swell the ranks of the SLA with large numbers of new recruits throughout 1991. The first large intake of new recruits in 1991 led to a significant increase in SLA troop strength, from approximately 3,000 to up to 7,000 by the end of 1991 (Keen 2005a, 87). The second recruitment drive by the NPRC regime ultimately expanded the force to 12,000 by late 1993 (Smith et al. 2004, 23). Yet, increased numbers did little to turn the army into a more formidable fighting force. The new recruits were mainly from Freetown's urban underclasses (Kandeh 1996), had no experience in military discipline and tactics, and were most interested in finding ways to earn an income, be it through regular pay or getting their hands on a weapon to loot and extort money and properties from the populace. They were given little training and quickly dispatched to parts of the country with which they were not familiar (SLTRC 2004, 159-163). The largely untrained and ill-disciplined new recruits were no match for the RUF, who recruited its fighters locally, took advantage of their knowledge of local terrain, and relied on bush warfare tactics in which the SLA was untrained. As a result, "The RUF incursion initially met little resistance... Government soldiers of predominantly urban origin were reluctant to venture

off roads and engage their enemy in the bush” (Fithen 1999, 206). An NPRC official later described the new recruits as “ill-equipped...and taken from the streets...who ran away when fired upon” (Hazen 2004, 92, FN 168).

Instead of strengthening the SLA, the large intake of new recruits into an already dysfunctional force had two further effects. First, it contributed to the fragmentation of the counter-insurgency and to collusion with the insurgents. New recruits soon started to focus on personal enrichment rather than on fighting the RUF. Even during the first phase of the conflict, reports emerged of what came to be known as the soldier-rebel or “sobel” phenomenon. The term is a short form of “soldier by day, rebel by night” (Keen 2002, 8), referring to soldiers who secretly collaborated with the RUF while ostensibly fighting for the government. This led to numerous situations in which the SLA would only intervene after the RUF had attacked and already left villages, with the soldiers mainly concentrating on carrying away anything of value while demonstrating little interest in pursuing the rebels (Hazen 2004, 92). Second, due to their lack of familiarity with the local conditions and inability to speak the local languages of the east, many new SLA recruits developed a deep distrust of the population, and given their lack of discipline and strong command and control, SLA soldiers often did not treat the civilian population differently than did the RUF. SLA fighters showed disdain for civilians and engaged in brutal retaliatory acts against suspected rebel sympathizers, often without proof or formal procedure. For example, in Pujehun district, in early 1992,

SLA forces used underage children to carry arms and ammunition...[and] not only did the SLA forces take money and food items from the population..., they also took other property, including drums of palm oil, furniture and other household items. The killing of alleged collaborators was ongoing; the standard SLA practice was to tie up alleged RUF collaborators and to throw them off the Yonni Bridge (Kpaka Chiefdom) or to execute suspects at the Makibi Bridge in Pujehun Town. (Smith et al. 2004, 497)

Due to their incapacity to defend local towns and villages, their supposed collusion with the RUF, their looting of villages and indiscriminate violence against local populations in areas suspected to be friendly to the RUF, the SLA quickly became as unpopular as the rebels themselves, which explained the quick rise of locally recruited civil defense forces starting in 1991 and the continued ability of the RUF to style itself as the true protectors of the population against a corrupt and inept regime and an abusive military, despite the RUF's own ruthless tactics (SLTRC 2004, 196-197).

### ***Lack of popular mobilization***

The Sierra Leonean regime's weak and fragmented institutional response was matched by its inability to reach populations directly to rally in support of the state. Early statements by President Momoh or senior government officials were marked by denial of and by downplaying of the threat the RUF posed. Momoh and his government colleagues presented the invasion as a mere spillover from the Liberian war and refused to consider the RUF as a Sierra Leonean insurgent movement (BBC World Service April 2, 1991). There was genuine disbelief among government members in Freetown that the regime could truly face organized armed resistance by Sierra Leoneans<sup>49</sup> but also political calculus. Although it became quickly clear, after Foday Sankoh's statements on the BBC World Service in early April 1991, that there was a true Sierra Leonean dimension to the insurgency, the Momoh regime did not acknowledge the extent of the RUF mobilization, since it assumed the RUF was doing the opposition SLPP's bidding (Bundu 2001, 49).

President Momoh, on various occasions, appealed to the Sierra Leonean population to rally in support of the government and the Sierra Leonean troops, with little apparent impact. Although occasional solidarity rallies were held in April and May 1991 in Freetown in support of the war

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<sup>49</sup> A government minister at the time contends: "I did not believe that this could happen in Sierra Leone. I literally woke up one morning and there was shooting at the border." Interview with Sierra Leonean government minister under Joseph Momoh, Conakry, June 24, 2010.

effort, which were, according to press reports, attended by “Thousands of Sierra Leoneans of all walks of life” most of these events seemed to have been APC-orchestrated political events with the organized party sections such as its youth and women’s organization making up most of the speakers and participants (Freetown Domestic Service, April 9, 1991). APC party members at a rally in mid-April 1991 “asked government to take immediate steps to weed out rebel elements from among the Liberian refugees in Sierra Leone” and “called on all patriotic Sierra Leoneans to exercise greater vigilance and to report to the police any suspicious movement by any persons or groups of persons” (Freetown Domestic Service, April 9, 1991). However, these appeals for Sierra Leoneans to stand behind the regime seemed lackluster, lacked urgency, and dissipated quickly: there were no reports of Sierra Leoneans mobilizing en masse or proceeding to round up suspected rebel collaborators among the Liberian refugee population in Sierra Leone. Since the APC regime had a narrow political following in the north of the country, it had few allies in the southeast beyond the major towns of Bo and Kenema and its means of communication with local populations were limited. It was therefore unlikely that protests and rallies or politicians’ appeals in the capital would move the populations in the rural southeast.

## Conclusion

The RUF’s ability to grow its insurgency was by no means overwhelming. However, in the contest for mobilization of support with the Sierra Leonean state, it was successful in building and sustaining a formidable rebel force largely because of the significant deficiencies of the Sierra Leonean state. The Sierra Leonean government and security apparatus were in no state to respond effectively to the RUF invasion in March 1991 due to the long-standing neglect of the military in favor of the internal security forces, widespread ethnic favoritism, nepotism, and corruption that had left the SLA bereft of fighting capacity, motivation, and sufficient equipment and expertise within the force to fight an actual war.

Decades of political exclusion of people from the southern and eastern regions of Sierra Leone by a northern-dominated regime deprived the government of the ability to mobilize populations directly to oppose the insurgents. There were no reliable local government institutions that could have mobilized local support, since paramount and lower-level chiefs were often unreliable allies of the central government. They harbored sympathies for the political opposition or, if loyal to the APC, commanded a very limited local following. Chiefs were concerned with their own interests and fled when hearing of the RUF approaching their chiefdoms. They knew that the RUF targeted specifically authority structures affiliated with the APC state. Although the RUF quickly started to terrorize local populations, their anti-state and revolutionary rhetoric was enough to mobilize support among marginalized populations in the southeast.

Without any reliable local state presence and weak and fragmented military forces, the Sierra Leonean state did not have the means to counter the RUF's anti-regime message, its superior knowledge of local terrain gained through the use of local scouts, and its on-the-ground recruitment. Although thousands of young Sierra Leoneans were recruited into the SLA, they were untrained and entered the force not in a nationalist zeal to defend the nation; they were mainly looking for employment and opportunities for personal enrichment. Their lack of local knowledge, fighting discipline, and proclivity to indiscriminate violence against local populations eroded completely the already limited trust local populations had in the military. Instead of defending the state, the SLA became an important actor in the perpetuation of the war, first through collusion by military units with the various rebel forces for their own personal gain and later by renegade military officers and units officially joining with the RUF during the AFRC junta regime in 1997–1998. The only reason southeastern Sierra Leone was not completely overrun during the first few months after the RUF

invasion was due to the mobilization of an eclectic mix of irregular auxiliary forces – Liberian militias opposed to Charles Taylor, Guinean and Nigerian troops, and some localized community self-defense efforts initiated by communities or disenchanting SLA officers or local leaders.

### **Côte d'Ivoire: Insurgency and escalation to civil war**

Côte d'Ivoire was quite different from Sierra Leone in many respects – it had a much higher GDP per capita and relatively strong agricultural export economy and had known relative political stability for 30 years under the single party rule of the Parti Démocratique de Côte d'Ivoire and president Houphouët-Boigny. Yet, political conflict increased after Houphouët's death in the decade before the outbreak of its civil war. The conflict was as a result of a narrowly constructed regime and escalating struggles over control of the state, which had neglected parts of the country and certain population groups over the years. Houphouët's successor Henri Konan Bédié had consolidated power among the Baoulé and appealed to southern Ivoirians, explicitly excluding northerners and the large number of immigrants. The bloodless military coup by former military chief of staff General Robert Guéï brought an end to almost 40 years of PDCI rule in 1999 and raised hopes for more inclusive rule. However, Guéï quickly announced his own presidential ambitions, sacked many northerners in his government, and resorted to the same exclusionary practices as his predecessor. Guéï lost the highly contested presidential election of October 2000 to long-term opposition leader Laurent Gbagbo, whose Front Populaire Ivoirien (Ivorian Popular Front – FPI) represented the interests of the Krou-speaking southwestern groups. Many considered the election illegitimate, though, since it had been boycotted by the two largest parties in the country, the PDCI and the northern-dominated Rassemblement des Républicains (Rally of the Republicans – RDR). As president, Gbagbo continued some of the exclusionary policies and purged the state and security

apparatus of northerners to the benefit of FPI supporters. It was against this backdrop of fierce political competition for the control of the state that the Ivorian civil war occurred in late 2002.

### **Beginnings and growth of the MPCl insurgency**

In the early morning hours of September 19, 2002, armed units led by former military officers attacked military and government installations in Côte d'Ivoire's commercial capital of Abidjan in the south, and in Bouaké, the country's second largest town, in the center of the country. The insurgents also struck at various other towns in the north, notably the sub-regional center of Korhogo, the seat of the northern military command of the Armed Forces of Côte d'Ivoire (Forces Armées Nationales de la Côte d'Ivoire – FANCI).

The initial insurgency comprised an estimated 700 to 800 members (ICG 2003a, 1; Gramizzi 2003, 11). This included the leadership and a core group of fighters who had formerly been with FANCI. They were mostly from northern or northwestern ethnic groups and had played a role in the successful coup d'état in 1999. Several members of the insurgency leadership were close to the 1999 coup leader-turned-president Robert Gueï and had been released from the military or sidelined in early 2001 by the newly elected President Gbagbo. In an attempt to gain a tighter grip on the security apparatus, the president dismantled Gueï's structures and dismissed many of his loyalists and officers and troops of northern origin. Some of them subsequently went into exile to Burkina Faso, where the insurgency was planned with assistance from Burkina Faso's president Blaise Compaoré and his government and military (ICG 2003a, 9-13; Banégas and Otayek 2003, 74-75). Other members of the Côte d'Ivoire military, mostly of northern or western origin, were demobilized by the Gbagbo government throughout 2001; some of them joined the insurgents (Banégas and Marshall-Fratani 2007, 93).

Although the initial attacks on military and political installations in Abidjan on September 19 were repelled by the Ivorian presidential guard, gendarmerie, and military troops loyal to President Laurent Gbagbo, the insurgents were more successful in the center and northern parts of the country. After quickly occupying Bouaké in central Côte d'Ivoire, which subsequently became the main rebel headquarters, the rebel ranks were swelled by defectors from the Ivorian military troops stationed in the north as well as by significant numbers of young men recruited off the streets and freed prisoners from the northern prisons (Gramizzi 2003, 11).

In early October 2002, the insurgents announced that they had formed a political movement, the Patriotic Movement of Ivory Coast (Mouvement Patriotique de la Côte d'Ivoire – MPCCI) and that their stated objective was to overthrow President Gbagbo's regime, establishing a “true democracy” with more equitable access to political decision-making for all Ivoirians, including those from the north of the country (Tuquoi 2002b). The several thousand insurgent troops were under the command of seasoned former members of the Ivorian military. They were organized and had access to a significant arsenal of weaponry after having taken over FANCI installations in northern Côte d'Ivoire. This allowed them to quickly take control of all of northern Côte d'Ivoire and strengthen their hold on Bouaké, which became the headquarters of the rebellion, with sophisticated command, control, and training structures (Tuquoi 2002b; Thorin 2003a).

The rebels quickly established firm control of the north of the country. Only ten days after the outbreak of the insurgency, government forces tried to retake Bouaké, the country's second largest town. Despite heavy artillery attacks throughout the first week of October 2002, the government troops did not manage to dislocate the insurgents from Bouaké. Starting in mid-October, the rebels moved south from their new base in Bouaké in an attempt to gain ground in the main central-

western cocoa producing area, which would have given them access to the coast and to significant revenue streams from taxing cocoa and other commodities shipped through the port of San Pédro. It would also have allowed them to put more military pressure on the Gbagbo government and eventually prepare an attack on Abidjan. However, while the rebels briefly controlled the cocoa production center of Daloa in the center-west, this foray into the President Gbagbo's core political fiefdom showed the limitations of the rebellion. Government troops and the mobilization of local irregular forces in the center-west and southwest, after some of the fiercest fighting of the war and massacres of civilians by both sides, pushed the MPCCI back to the northern zone under their control (Smith 2002c).

A ceasefire was negotiated under Senegalese mediation on October 17, 2002. It froze the military positions held at the time and confirmed the north-south split of the country, with the north occupied by MPCCI and the south under government control. The truce led to an end of open combat between the MPCCI and the Gbagbo government along the north-south frontline, although it did not prevent further localized fighting, intercommunal violence, targeted killings, and other human rights abuses, which continued to be perpetrated by both sides long after the ceasefire (HRW 2010, 25-27).

Intense fighting erupted in the west of the country in late November 2002, when two new rebel movements emerged, the Ivorian Patriotic Movement of the Far West<sup>50</sup> (Mouvement Patriotique Ivoirien du Grand Ouest – MPIGO) and the Movement for Justice and Peace (Mouvement pour la Justice et la Paix – MJP). Both groups were largely made up of members of the ethnic groups that

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<sup>50</sup> Ivorians distinguish between what is generally considered the west of the country, which is more the southwestern region of the country inhabited largely by the Krou ethnic groups (Bété, Guéré, Wobé, Kru, Dida) and the “Far West,” the region in the northwest around Man that juts out geographically into Liberia and Guinea and is home to Southern Mande ethnic groups (Youcouba, Dan).

straddled the border between Liberia and Côte d'Ivoire, and many of the fighters were Liberian.<sup>51</sup>

The leaders of both new rebel movements were allies of former military junta leader Robert Gueï and ethnic Yacouba or from affiliated groups. While the emergence of MPIGO and MJP was partly tied to conflict dynamics in Liberia, the two groups and their leaders were motivated by local agendas and grievances – to avenge the death of their former leader Robert Gueï<sup>52</sup> – and a desire not to be left out in the struggle for control of parts of the state apparatus (Smith and Tuquoi 2002).

Hopes that coup leader and self-declared president Robert Gueï would rectify the long marginalization of the western regions and peoples after he came to power in 1999 had been dashed by his loss to Laurent Gbagbo in the November 2000 election (Chelpi-den Hamer 2011, 139). Due to the sense of political exclusion and economic marginalization among the peoples of the west and thanks to the presence of large numbers of Liberian refugees, the two new movements also had no difficulty recruiting significant numbers of young men locally (Banégas and Marshall-Fratani 2007, 96-99).

Fighting in the west of the country continued until mid-2003, after which the front lines remained largely unchanged until 2011. The country was split in three parts, with the north under control of the original MPCCI forces, the west under MPIGO and MJP rule, and the south controlled by forces loyal to President Gbagbo. The appearance of MPIGO and MJP had given a boost to the MPCCI, and there are indications that the MPCCI was involved in the creation of the two new groups.

MPIGO and MJP helped to strengthen MPCCI's position by expanding the rebel-controlled territory

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<sup>51</sup> The groups had significant support from Liberian president Charles Taylor and the troops under his control. Some observers concluded that the western conflict was in part an extension of the Liberian conflict on Ivorian territory, with President Gbagbo supporting rebel opponents to Taylor and Taylor's allies in turn supporting, staffing, and equipping MPIGO and MJP to fight Gbagbo's troops (ICG 2003a, 18-25).

<sup>52</sup> Gueï had been killed on September 19, 2002, the day when the initial insurgency broke out, and it was widely assumed that President Gbagbo and his associates were behind the killing. Despite claims to the contrary by the Gbagbo government, many observers believe that Robert Gueï was not significantly involved in organizing the September 19 rebellion (ICG 2003a, p. 16, FN 110).

to most of Western Côte d'Ivoire, and by controlling large parts of the Ivorian-Liberian border without being in violation of the October 17 ceasefire agreement (ICG 2003a, 1; Thorin February 25, 2003). The two western rebel groups officially joined forces with the northern rebels in February 2003 to form one movement, and from then on they operated politically under the label “New Forces” (Forces Nouvelles).

In the first few months of the rebellion, the MPCCI presented itself as a disciplined force with utmost respect for the civilian population. In areas that came under their control, MPCCI forces held meetings with the local population to explain their agenda and goals and generally respected the civilian population. In some locales they even distributed food or medicine as a goodwill gesture and to demonstrate their concern for the civilian population (HRW 2003, 24-25). Consequently, they were often greeted as a liberating force, which was an image they themselves liked to project, mainly among the populations of the north and west that saw them as representing their interests (Chelpi-den Hamer 2011, 101).

While they sought to gain the recognition of the civilian population, the advancing insurgents did target those they perceived as opposed to their cause. This included first and foremost government officials and those considered members or sympathizers of the ruling FPI as well as thieves and looters. Among government officials, the insurgents particularly targeted members of the security forces, specifically the para-military gendarmerie and the police, but also local administrators and even at times school principals or other lower-ranking government representatives. Members of the official security forces were at times summarily executed in apparent retaliation for all the harassment that northerners had been subjected to since 2000 by police and gendarmes. Members of all three rebel factions ransacked and destroyed government offices and buildings to physically

demonstrate that there was a new authority in town (HRW 2003, 25-28). In the more ethnically mixed areas of western Côte d'Ivoire and with the emergence of local defense committees and pro-government militias, the targeting of suspected opponents to the insurgency also quickly took on an ethnic tone. Members of groups seen as supporting the Gbagbo government, such as the Gueré around Toulepleu and Bangolo in western Côte d'Ivoire, were summarily targeted (HRW 2003, 25-27).

## **Mobilization strategies**

### ***Growth of the rebellion***

Although a political leadership of the MPCCI emerged only a few weeks after the outbreak of the insurgency, the insurgency grew rapidly in the early stages, largely since it spoke to the interests of disenchanted former or current members of the military and to various large population groups. This was made easier because the insurgency quickly came to occupy the north of the country, whose population was generally favorably predisposed toward it. Even some northerners who had lived in southern Côte d'Ivoire and were frustrated by the harassment they had faced there traveled north to join the insurgency. As a result, what had started out as a coup attempt and a minor insurgency of between 600 and 800 officers and soldiers on September 19, 2002, had grown by several thousand within weeks and up to 10,000 by mid-2003 (ICG 2003a, 14-15). This total included significant numbers<sup>53</sup> of so-called “dozo,” traditional hunters from the north who had been used across the country as private security guards since the 1990s due to the increasing insecurity (ICG 2003a, 14; Bassett 2003; Hellweg 2004). In conjunction with MPIGO and MJP in the west of

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<sup>53</sup> The information on how many dozo may have joined the insurgency in the early days varies significantly. Gramizzi mentions up to 1,500 (Gramizzi 2003, 11 FN33); other sources mention 800 dozo among the MPCCI and 50 among MPIGO (Hellweg 2011, 218); Hellweg (2005, 19-20) is skeptical about whether these figures are reliable.

the country, the combined rebel forces of the Forces Nouvelles (MPCI, MPIGO, and MJP combined) comprised up to 35,000<sup>54</sup> in 2005 (Banégas and Marshall-Fratani 2007, 93-94).

### ***Mixed motivations: Personal and political interests intertwined***

In the early phases of internal war, insurgencies often provide a rallying point for various agendas and motivations to converge (2003), and personal ambitions and interests are closely intertwined with political motivations related to control of the state among the instigators (Roessler 2011). This was no different in Côte d'Ivoire. Personal slights, combined with deeper feelings of belonging to groups that had been disadvantaged within the existing state, played an important role among the first group of ex-military officers and rank-and-file soldiers who planned and staged the September 19, 2002 coup attempt as well as among soldiers who defected in the early days of the insurgency. An estimated two-thirds of the core group of early insurgents had recently been dismissed from the military by Laurent Gbagbo due to their northern or northwestern origins and their assumed loyalty to former coup leader Robert Gueï or opposition leader Alassana Ouattara (ICG 2003a, 8-15).

These personal grievances among the initial group of insurgents explains why early demands by the insurgents included a reversal of the planned demobilization program, the release of members of the military who had been imprisoned since 2000, and an amnesty for those previously expelled or convicted of treason after the December 1999 coup d'état (Tuquoi 2002a; ICG 2003a, 2). It was around these personal grievances that the initial leadership group mobilized fighters from within the military or among recently demobilized ex-FANCI soldiers in the early weeks after the launch of the

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<sup>54</sup> Chelapi-den Hamer suggests approximately 38,000 rebels of all groups combined were expected to join the DDR process in Côte d'Ivoire in 2006/2007 (Chelapi-den Hamer 2009, 41, FN 4). Many were not full-time rebel fighters, but often joined at times of tension or escalated violence and returned to other occupations during times of lulls in the conflict (Chelapi-den Hamer 2011).

insurgency on September 19, 2002. They were mainly of northern and northwestern origin but also included Baoulé deserters from FANCI (ICG 2003a, 14-15).

### ***Successful symbolic mobilization***

While these personal grievances specific to members of the security forces were important in mobilizing the early group of insurgents, the MPCCI's support went far beyond that rather narrow group. The insurgency represented a clear political project related to equal chances for northerners with the ultimate aim of taking control of the state to realize those aims. In their composition, the rebels embodied regional and ethnic interests since they were composed largely of members of northern (MPCCI) or northwestern (MPIGO, MJP) groups and articulated the long-standing grievances of the northern and immigrant populations and the northwestern people of the southern Mande ethnic groups (Dan/Yacouba) (Gramizzi 2003, 11; ICG 2003a, 14-16; HRW 2003, 10). Chelphi-den Hamer's study of rebel and pro-government militia recruits in western Côte d'Ivoire found that, of more than 200 recruits interviewed, practically all rebel group members belonged to western and northern ethnic groups,<sup>55</sup> while almost all those who were active in pro-government armed groups were from ethnic groups affiliated with the Gbagbo government<sup>56</sup> (Chelphi-den Hamer 2011, 138).

Emancipation and equal rights for northerners across the country was a prominent theme among most public pronouncements by the insurgents. They thus tapped into the broader sentiment of political and economic marginalization faced by the more than 50 percent of the population with northern or immigrant roots. Koné Messamba, the MPCCI commander of the northern Korhogo

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<sup>55</sup> Mainly Yacouba among western groups and Malinké/Dioula, Sénoufou, and Mossi among northern groups.

<sup>56</sup> Bété, Guéré/Wê, Krou in this case. Also traditionally affiliated with Gbagbo and the FPI were Dida and Attié (ICG 2004, 16).

region in the early stages of the war, clearly expressed the convergence between his and his fellow officers' interests and those of the broader Ivorian population:

The objective of our movement remains clear. We want a certain legal status for all Ivorians, whether that is in the army, or related to broader "justice" in all sectors of life. We note that this does not exist for now. If we take the case of myself: I am in the military, but we are not all treated equally. There are many members of the military who are out of work and tossed out on the streets. There are many who are in prison. There are many who are in exile...There is thus no equality. The MPCCI came into existence to create these conditions. Good conditions, specifically...that everybody gets a change to run for election. (Afrique-Express 17 October 2002)

It is important to note that both rebels and government forces held deep-seated resentments grounded in the feeling of not having been full members of the state and society and not having received their fair share of the country's resources. For Laurent Gbagbo's supporters, his rise to power was the vindication and payback for almost four decades of perceived marginalization of the southwest and the Krou-speaking peoples throughout PDCI rule. For northerners, it was a mix of grievances related to the lack of investment in the north throughout Côte d'Ivoire's post-independence history and to the more recent political marginalization of northerners and immigrants and the growing harassment of, and institutional discrimination against, them under Presidents Bédié, Gueï, and Gbagbo.

Both sides thus saw themselves as fighting for "patriotic" causes<sup>57</sup> – they only had very different visions of who should belong to the fatherland based on their ethnic and regional origins (Banégas and Marshall-Fratani 2007). As a consequence, all sides in the Ivorian war appealed to emotions and feelings related to the main fault line that had openly dominated Ivorian political discourse since the

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<sup>57</sup> The "Young Patriots" or, more correctly, the "Alliance des Jeunes Patriotes pour le Sursaut National" (Alliance of Young Patriots for National Awakening) was the main pro-government youth militia made up of numerous youth groups from Abidjan and southern Côte d'Ivoire as members of the so-called "patriotic galaxy," the shock troops of President Gbagbo's FPI under the leadership of radical pro-Gbagbo firebrand and militia leader Charles Blé Goudé (Banégas 2010). At the same time, the two main rebel groups, the Mouvement Patriotique de la Côte d'Ivoire (MPCCI) and the Mouvement Patriotique du Grand Ouest (MPIGO) both claimed to be patriots.

early 1990s: the question of who was a “true Ivorian” and whether immigrants from the north and from neighboring countries had a legitimate place in the Ivorian state, society, and economy (Dozon 2000; Banégas and Marshall-Fratani 2007).

The insurgents first appealed to a general feeling of being disadvantaged among northern Ivorians but then specifically referred to recent events and the experience of most northerners of the past decade that had generated deep resentment toward the regime. Senior MPCCI commanders expressed this frequently and clearly in the early days: “Everybody knows that things are not going well in Côte d’Ivoire. We want to put her [the country] back on a straight track, to end the exclusion, tribalism, and impunity” (unnamed senior MPCCI commander, cited in *Afrique Express* October 17, 2002). MPCCI members and sympathizers specifically referred to the deep hurt and sentiment of exclusion due to the increasing denial of their belonging to the Ivorian state and nation. One member of the dozo traditional hunters association suggested that “I joined the rebellion because the Malinké have been here since the twelfth century, and soon they’ll be giving us a foreign resident’s card to be able to live here” (Marshall-Fratani 2006, 26). Chérif Ousmane, a rebel spokesman in the town of Bouaké, told the French newspaper *Le Monde* in early October 2002: “We are all Ivorians. We do not want that one part of the population be excluded from politics. We want the xenophobia, which has done much damage to the country, to end”<sup>58</sup> (Tuquoi 2002a). Guillaume Soro, the political head of the MPCCI, in his early statements explicitly said that the Ivorian state was “a mosaic of ethnic groups, and not only made up of the Bété, President Gbagbo’s ethnic community” (*Afrique Express* 17 October 2002).

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<sup>58</sup> “On est tous Ivoiriens. On ne veut pas qu’une partie de la population soit exclue de la vie politique. On veut que cesse cette xénophobie qui a fait tant de mal au pays, précise celui qui se présente comme le responsable des mutins dans la zone.”

Most insurgency leaders referred to the same themes – an end to discrimination, same rights for all Ivoirians, and free and fair elections. They often spoke in coded terms about their cause and used language and made references to events that had become symbols of the exclusion of northerners and immigrants. The call for fresh elections was a central claim of rebel leaders and sympathizers from the early days of the insurgency, since MPCCI members considered Laurent Gbagbo’s regime to lack legitimacy after he had been elected in an election in 2000 in which only 39 percent of the population participated and most major opposition candidates were precluded from competing (Afrique-Express (online) October 17, 2002). Impunity of public officials, and in particular of state security forces, was another theme that insurgents frequently mentioned in public and private conversations that resonated deeply with the northern population. They made reference to recent cases of political violence against opposition members and suspected acts of targeted mass violence to galvanize public support (HRW 2003, 26). A northern MPCCI commander was quoted as saying that he was fighting against “court cases with strange verdicts..., a certain ‘officially sanctioned’ impunity.” A female RDR representative representing the feelings of northern women made reference to recent political assassinations of opposition politician Balla Keita in August 2002 and a close associate of Alassane Ouattara on the first day of the insurgency and the “abductions, the looting and the destruction of properties” of northerners in Abidjan and other towns across southern Côte d’Ivoire (Afrique-Express October 17, 2002). What had come to be known as the Yopougon massacre of October 2000, the summary killing of 57 young northerners by security forces in the Abidjan suburb of Youpougon (RSF and FILDH 2000; HRW 2003, 9), was frequently evoked and served as a particular rallying cry for northerners across the country.<sup>59</sup> Robert Gueï’s

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<sup>59</sup> The alleged perpetrators of the Yopougon killings were put on trial in 2001 but ultimately found not guilty in August 2001, even though a UN investigation in 2001 had considered it “indisputable” that the Ivorian Gendarmerie was implicated in the killings. Human rights organizations criticized the trial for its “serious flaws” (PANA 2001). This provoked great outrage in the northern populations of the country and was seen as a further sign that political violence against northerners was tacitly condoned by the Gbagbo government.

assassination on the first day of the uprising served as a rallying point for the Western Yacouba people and was subsequently used by local leaders and media to rally support for the western rebel groups (Chelapi-den Hamer 2011, 162).

In light of these numerous grievances, the MPCCI had, in addition to the overthrow of the Gbagbo government (Jacquens 2003), quite specific objectives aimed at righting the perceived past wrongs. MPCCI called for a revision of Article 35 of the Ivorian Constitution, which regulates the eligibility requirements to run for president. While the earlier changes of 1994 allowed candidates to have just one parent whom was an Ivorian national, the new constitution, adopted in a referendum in July 2000, required both parents of eligible candidates to have been Ivorians at birth (“ivoiriens d’origine”) (Daddieh 2001, 18). This requirement practically excluded immigrants and even many second-generation Ivorians from voting and provided an excuse for the regime-friendly Ivorian Supreme Court to again prevent Alassane Ouattara from competing in the October 2000 presidential elections. Second, MPCCI objected to changes to the country’s land tenure laws adopted in 1998, which limited land ownership to Ivorian citizens only, meaning the de facto expropriation of hundreds of thousands of immigrants and northerners without official citizenship documents (Toungara 2001).

These conditions remained key elements of the agenda pursued by the MPCCI throughout the conflict. They go to the core of the issues at stake: the definition of who belongs to the Ivorian state and nation and thus has rights to access the country’s land and resources and to stand or vote in elections. All the various peace agreements that were signed between the warring parties – notably the January 28, 2003 Linas-Marcoussis Agreement and the March 2007 Ouagadougou Agreement – contained lengthy provisions that promised a review and revision of those laws.

### ***Organizational mobilization: Threats and coercion***

As Kalyvas found in other civil wars, control of territory helps with recruitment for all armed groups, whether on the rebel or on the government side (Kalyvas 2003, 124-132). The onset of the conflict generated dynamics that changed individuals' choices, and various forms of threats, pressure, and coercion were critical motivations for individuals to join the armed movements once the conflict was underway (Chelapi-den Hamer 2011, 160). In this sense, the speed with which MPCCI took control of the northern half of the country was critical in helping it to grow the rebellion quickly and to entrench itself in the zone under its control, even though there was a significant degree of voluntary recruitment in the early days of the conflict.

Once they find themselves in a zone controlled by a new armed actor, individuals' need to live in safety and security becomes an overwhelming motivation for many actions they take in situations of armed conflict. Over 40 percent of the combatants interviewed by Chelapi-den Hamer in western Côte d'Ivoire in 2007 suggested that their first motivation for joining an armed group on either side was a concern for their own personal security or the security of their family: "By taking up arms, they were protecting themselves from an extremely violent context (or at least they were trying to). Many felt that they would be better off in [an armed group] than out" (Chelapi-den Hamer 2011, 153).

This desire for safety might have prompted a number of individuals in the north to join the rebellion. For example, government officials who hailed from the north and were posted in the north had the choice to either flee, and desert their posts, or join the rebellion. There is evidence that a significant number of them saw the latter option as their best choice and switched sides (Foerster 2012, 11-12). In the early days of the rebellions, the MPCCI also regularly freed prisoners in

towns they occupied, and many of those prisoners were asked to join the group. Semi-coerced conscription in villages was equally common in the early months of the rebellion, whereby rebel commanders asked village and town chiefs in areas under their occupation to mobilize a certain number of young men for the movement. As the war progressed, and with the emergence of the Liberian-influenced rebel groups in the west, outright forced recruitment and abductions became more common, whereby young men and women were simply abducted and recruited by force into the various rebel groups (Chelapi-den Hamer 2011, 101).

### **Material mobilization**

Material incentives certainly played a role in the Ivorian civil war, although they were more indirect and secondary to motivations related to identity and political participation. Material incentives mattered in different ways for different groups of recruits. Since political participation and who controls the state were critical factors in determining which groups benefited from the redistribution of rents in Côte d'Ivoire, concerns about which ethno-regional groups controlled the state were certainly indirectly tied to Ivorians' livelihoods. However, the mobilization around political interests and the struggle for determining who was a legitimate member of the Ivorian polity went much beyond material interests.

There is not much reported evidence that material benefits were a critical mobilizational tool for the MPCCI in the early days of the insurgency, although there were reports of young men being hired for cash payments from towns across the border in Burkina Faso to reinforce the MPCCI (ICG 2003a, 12). As in most civil wars, for the bulk of combatants' material benefits came from the ability to loot areas newly under their control and extort money or goods at local checkpoints (HRW 2003, 29). A profit motive and the benefits of the ability to loot in areas under their control was said to be a

particular motive of the Liberians among the MPIGO and MPJ fighters, who also specifically looted cocoa and coffee crops as well as gold and diamonds. Most of their looted goods were sent straight back to Liberia, where demand was high due to the 13-year civil war there (HRW 2003, 35; Chelpi-den Hamer 2011, 102). The material rewards from the sale of looted goods mainly remained with commanders, though, and regular combatants benefited much less. Gaining regular access to food was a more important concern to most regular fighters than was any larger profit motive. Idleness and the disruption of regular income-generating opportunities, such as farm work or small trade, due to insecurity prompted a significant number of fighters to join an armed group either to secure military protection for their commercial activities or simply “because there was nothing else to do” (Chelpi-den Hamer 2011, 156).

### **Government response**

Just like in the case of Sierra Leone, limitations to the Ivorian government’s mobilizational capacity were critical in determining its response and allowed the insurgents to quickly gain ground and occupy a large slice of the country before the government could fully fight back. Although the Gbagbo government’s reaction to the September 19, 2002 insurgency was multi-layered, it was constrained by deep fissures within the security apparatus and political institutions and its narrow popular support among southwestern ethnic groups. Institutional and popular response was not sufficient to rally broad support and to prevent the insurgents from quickly occupying half of the country’s territory.

### **Organizational mobilization**

The Gbagbo regime’s narrow popular base seriously limited its ability to muster a stronger institutional response to the insurgency. With respect to territorial control, the Gbagbo government did not have a reliable apparatus of local administrators who would have been loyal and effective

enough to organize a broader mobilization against the rebels. Although administrators were in place, most of those posted to the north of the country fled as soon as it became clear that the insurgents were successful in taking control of northern Côte d'Ivoire. Up to 23,000 government workers – mostly local administrators, teachers, and health workers – are estimated to have fled from the north when the rebels took over in September 2002 (IRIN 2006). Several thousand stayed, mostly those with local roots, and collaborated with the MPCCI, often becoming critical interlocutors for the military officers and units that ruled the north under rebel occupation (World Bank 2008, 42).

Weak central state control in most parts of the country was due to two reasons. First, the Ivorian state and its system of local governance had been built and shaped by President Houphouët-Boigny and PDCI single-party rule. Local officials derived authority from personal alliances within the party, with powerful patrons in Abidjan or with the president himself. Remnants of this system were still very much in place when Gbagbo and the FPI came to power in late 2000, and they had few reliable allies in the north of the country. Their core area of support was in the southwest. Second, even if the new rulers sent southwestern administrators to the north, they lacked local relationships and did not command the authority to mobilize support in this highly politicized, fragmented, and informalized system (Foerster 2012; World Bank 2008, 42-46).

With regard to central state institutions, fragmentation and ethnic divisions in the security apparatus were the critical factors that made the civil war possible. These fissures and weaknesses preceded Gbagbo's rule, but since the security apparatus' composition was weighted against his southwestern co-ethnics, he reversed the trend of favoring Baoulé and northerners or northwesterners under his predecessors Bédié and Gueï respectively. In addition, the president and his allies accelerated a process of “privatization of violence” and “militianization” (Banégas and Marshall-Fratani 2007, 99)

of national security that had been underway since the late 1990s. Gbagbo had been in part able to seize power by bringing his own ethno-regional and social networks into power by creating parallel structures and shadow institutions that operated outside the official state apparatus. The roots of the FPI's mobilizational means were laid in the early years of the FPI's opposition politics in the 1980s and early 1990s. Given that the PDCI state at the time had a monopoly on political organization, Gbagbo and the FPI focused on mobilizing support by representing ethno-regional interests of the southwestern Krou-speaking peoples and on certain age and social groups, notably university students and young intellectuals and university lecturers (Konaté 2003). These groups were highly politically active, and their grievances against the PDCI regime and Houphouët-Boigny's rule became the FPI's main political agenda. The political discourse of those times and the organizational networks developed then were key in determining Gbagbo's and the FPI's mobilizational repertoire, which led to a response by Gbagbo and his allies that focused to a significant degree on mobilizing informal and parallel forces and structures while using the state media to disseminate its largely exclusionary message.

### ***Regular and irregular security forces***

The September 19, 2002 attack exposed the fissures and weaknesses that had existed within the security apparatus for decades, but had grown deeper in recent years. As a result, the Gbagbo regime responded to the September 19, 2002 attacks at multiple levels, by relying on the remaining loyalist security forces, purging the military of those suspected to be untrustworthy, and recruiting and deploying large numbers of irregular forces as well as a panoply of foreign mercenaries.

The quick early gains by the insurgents showed the limited ability of the Gbagbo regime to mobilize key national government institutions, most notably FANCI, to respond quickly and vigorously to the armed challenge. Although the insurgency failed to topple Gbagbo, and its initial attack on

Abidjan was beaten back by the deployment of loyal presidential guards and gendarmerie forces, the regime had little authority in the north of the country and was not able to mobilize any significant response by the security forces in the north.

Gbagbo had had doubts about the loyalty of FANCI since coming to power in October 2000 and, as shown above, had tried to take full control of the institution by sidelining and sacking both those seen as loyal to Robert Guëi and northerners suspected of harboring sympathies for opposition leader Ouattara (ICG 2003a, 8). Gbagbo's skepticism about the loyalty of FANCI seemed to be confirmed when the insurgents in their initial attack targeted gendarmerie and police barracks rather than the military bases in Abidjan (ICG 2003a, 14). They seemed to spare FANCI, or have significant support within FANCI, while the internal security forces were considered loyal to Gbagbo. To ensure tighter control of the remaining FANCI forces, President Gbagbo replaced his defense minister shortly after the outbreak of the insurgency and took personal control of the armed forces while appointing a relative as deputy minister (Gramizzi 2003, 15). It took Gbagbo three weeks to stage any significant counterattack in response to indications that the rebellion was seeking to gain access to the coast through a southwestern corridor in mid-October 2002 and only managed to stop the rebel advances through a combination of external help and the mobilization of irregulars.

Realizing the weakness of his defense forces, Gbagbo sought external military support as one key response to the insurgency. He first invoked the defense pact between France and Côte d'Ivoire that had largely guaranteed the protection of Côte d'Ivoire from external attack since 1961. He was quickly rebuffed<sup>60</sup> by French President Chirac, who had felt deceived by Gbagbo previously and, as a

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<sup>60</sup> While France did not want to be seen as openly siding with Gbagbo, French troops, under the cover of the protection and evacuation of French citizens, played a critical role in preventing the insurgents from occupying larger parts of the center and south in the early days of the conflict. The French military provided logistical support to

Gaullist, had little natural sympathy for the long-time socialist Gbagbo (ICG 2003a, 29). After being rejected by the French government, Gbagbo called in favors from other friendly governments. Up to 500 Angolan soldiers on loan from Angolan President Dos Santos reinforced FANCI in the early days, as well as individual French, South African, Israeli, and Eastern European mercenaries. While the French, Israelis, and South Africans were most likely more senior officers and advised on military strategy and tactics, the Eastern Europeans were pilots and helicopter personnel who provided airlift and combat capacity (Smith and Tuquoi 2002; ICG 2003a, 17-18).

In addition, the Ivorian government relied liberally on Liberian fighters to counter MPIGO and MJP after November 2002, but also at times to take offensive action against MPCI. The Liberian forces under the banner of the Front of the Liberation of the Far West (Front de Liberation du Grand Ouest) were under the command of Ivorian officers but often acted quite autonomously and were “the de facto authorities in ‘their’ areas” (HRW 2003, 33). The Ivorian government actively recruited among Liberian refugees in Western Côte d’Ivoire through a mix of incentives and coercion, mainly among members of the Krahn ethnic group whose leaders had long-standing relationships with senior members of the FPI and Gbagbo’s government. Although some of the Liberians joined voluntarily, the Ivorian government also applied considerable pressure on refugees, and they were subject to constant harassment by security forces and involuntary recruitment (ICG 2003a, 19; HRW 2003, 33-34). The participation and role of the Liberian contingents supporting FANCI were significant with up to 2,500 Liberians fighting on the side of the Ivorian government in early 2003 (ICG 2003a, 23).

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FANCI and stood by when government troops retook the central-western towns of Daloa and Vavoua in October and November 2002, most likely motivated by a desire to protect the significant French commercial interests in the country (Smith 2002a; ICGa 2003, 28-30).

Urban youth militias in and around Abidjan were made up either of member of loyalist ethnic southwestern ethnic groups – Bété, Guéré, Dida, Attié – or drawn from among urban young students or disenfranchised, un- or underemployed high school and university graduates. President Gbagbo's FPI had deep roots in the country's student protest movement. This movement had always been an important undercurrent in post-independence Ivorian politics, but became more organized and more openly affiliated with the political opposition in the early 1990s. The students were particularly affected by the economic decline of the 1980s and the seriously proscribed economic opportunities of the country's educated elite. Since Gbagbo and many opposition politicians themselves were university lecturers or teachers, they had a natural affiliation with the student protest movement (HRW 2008, 25-28). Close Gbagbo allies and current and former student leaders Charles Blé Goudé, Eugène Djué, and Charles Groghuet organized large numbers of young FPI supporters and sympathetic students into organized urban militias from the 1990s on (ICG 2003a, 17).

Gbagbo early on relied on these youth<sup>61</sup> as “shock troops” (Banégas and Marshall-Fratani 2007, 106) for the FPI. Youth militias and forces already had been a key element in the public protests that forced General Gueï from power after he refused to accept Gbagbo's victory in the October 2000 presidential elections. These public protests quickly escalated into systematic violent attacks against RDR supporters, northerners, and immigrants generally (HRW 2001). This early pattern of youth mobilization to do Gbagbo's bidding and to mobilize the streets in support of the regime was reactivated and intensified after September 19, 2002. Operating under the umbrella organization of

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<sup>61</sup> “Youth” here refers to a social construct rather than a bio-social (i.e., age-driven) construct. In most African (and other) societies, “youth” is a relational concept and involves connotations of social hierarchy and even socio-economic class relations and is often politicized. See for example the discussion in Olawale 2004. Just like in other African countries, the “youth” who were members of the multitude of “patriotic” groups in Côte d'Ivoire could be of various ages – some were in their 30s or early 40s.

the Alliance of the Young Patriots for National Awakening (Alliance des Jeunes Patriotes pour le sursaut national) or Young Patriots (Jeunes Patriotes) in shorthand, the youth groups proliferated and took on a more openly paramilitary character. The Young Patriots comprised several tens of thousands of members and were increasingly well organized into clear units with command structures. They received training and weapons from the gendarmerie or the various Special Forces tied to the presidency. The youth groups had explicit orders to report “‘suspicious’ behavior” and became the de facto security forces controlling many Abidjan neighborhoods and harassed anyone suspected of affiliations with the rebels. They were openly hostile to northerners and immigrants and engaged in targeted, extrajudicial killings of northerners (Banégas and Marshall-Fratani 2007, 106). Several thousand of the young militia members were integrated into the armed forces throughout late 2002 and early 2003 to fill the gaps left by defectors and to ensure that the armed forces would firmly stay on the side of President Gbagbo (ICG 2003a, 17-18; Chelpi-den Hamer 2011, 98).

Similar to the urban youth groups, the Gbagbo regime also mobilized local defense militias in rural areas. Due to the limited ethno-regional appeal of the regime, these efforts were limited to the south and southwest of the country and were most successful in the traditional FPI strongholds. At the outbreak of the insurgency, local politicians and state officials in rural areas in the southwest, all of whom were by then from the FPI, encouraged young men to set up checkpoints and form self-defense committees. In some places, these were genuinely local efforts to prevent the infiltration of rebels in their midst. Those “barragistes” (literally “checkpointers”) were armed with traditional hunting rifles or machetes and local arms and received small gifts or payments from local authorities for their services. As the conflict continued, they became institutionalized, with more hierarchical organizational structures, and increasingly turned into extortion rackets and into income-generating

activities for the young barragistes who systematically fleeced bus drivers as well passengers, particularly targeting immigrants and northerners (Chauveau and Bobo 2003). In other places, mobilization was more organized, in that state and party structures recruited young people for barrage duty and formed local defense committees, which quickly became auxiliaries to FANCI and to other state-affiliated forces (Banégas and Marshall-Fratani 2007, 100-102). These local defense efforts intensified in the west of the country with the emergence of MPIGO and MJP in late November (Chelphi-den Hamer 2011, 98). Recruitment into militias followed largely ethnic lines, with most members, depending on the area, being Bété, Wè (Guéré, Wobé), or others who considered themselves “autochthones” and who were often also openly hostile to northerners (Chelphi-den Hamer 2011, 129-131). They were then linked with the military command structures through individual FANCI commanders and Abidjan politicians including members of President Gbagbo’s. Over time, many of the local defense groups received training, weapons, and equipment from FANCI or Gbagbo’s various Special Forces units, which had supplemented or outright replaced the formal security forces in many places (Banégas and Marshall-Fratani 2007, 97-102).

The informalization of government security even before the outbreak of the insurgency in part shaped the Gbagbo government’s response to the uprising. The wide use of informal forces led to an underground whose aim was eliminating opposition politicians and punitive or revenge attacks against neighborhoods or population groups suspected of supporting the rebellion.

As the first shots were fired in Abidjan, the Gbagbo government immediately targeted individuals it considered likely to be involved in the uprising, including its political opponent number one, Alassane Ouattara, as well as former military junta leader Robert Gueï. Sub-units of the panoply of informal forces operated as death squads under the command of mid-level commanders with close

ties to the president and his wife (Fall and Seck 2003; ICG 2003, 16-17, FN81). While Gueï and his family members were killed, Ouattara managed to escape to the neighboring residence of the German ambassador, from where he was rescued by the French military (ICG 2003a, 11; Banégas and Marshall-Fratani 2007, 92). Additional opposition politicians and government officials whose loyalty was in doubt were killed in subsequent weeks and months, including interior minister Boga Doudou, and family members of RDR politicians and MPCCI leaders (Fall and Seck 2003).

At the same time, the government started what many interpreted as a campaign of collective punishment against northern and immigrant populations who were considered supporters of the insurgents. All throughout late 2002 and early 2003 youth groups and informal militias supplemented the security forces in harassing, arresting, and killing suspected enemies of the regime in southern Côte d'Ivoire (HRW 2003, 9). This included the tearing down of poor neighborhoods and shanty towns in and around Abidjan and the displacement of its largely northern Muslim or immigrant inhabitants (Smith 2002b; ICG 2003a: 16) under the excuse that insurgents might be hiding among the civilian population. Many settlements around military barracks were also razed to the ground. This response by the security forces against the civilian population caused up to 300 deaths in Abidjan and left more than 12,000 people homeless, mostly northerners and immigrants, in the days following the September 2002 attack (Smith 2002b). A number of massacres against villages and neighborhoods populated by immigrants or northerners were reported in smaller towns and rural areas, notably in the west and southwest of the country, and were an attempt to intimidate those groups and to settle local scores over access to land (Smith 2003).

### ***Symbolic mobilization***

Given the way social and political battle lines had been drawn in Côte d'Ivoire prior to the war, Gbagbo and his FPI government had only limited options for mobilizing support in light of their narrow popular base. As a result, statements and speeches by Gbagbo and government officials drew on a repertoire of rhetorical tools and informal institutional strategies that had been honed during popular and electoral mobilization over the past decade and reached back much further in the Ivorian collective memory (Marshall-Fratani 2006).

The symbolism and the discourse used by the Gbagbo government to rally support consisted of two main strands: an anti-colonial and anti-Western message and an Ivorian nationalist, anti-northern and anti-immigrant notion that dated back to the early 1990s, when anti-immigrant and anti-northern sentiment became more openly expressed and was used for electoral mobilization. The latter drew on language pioneered by Gbagbo himself during the 1990s electoral campaign, which was then formalized and spread by the development of the concept of "ivoirité," which divided ethnic groups into genuine and original Ivorians (autochthones in local parlance) and immigrants ("allogènes" in French) or internal migrants (non-autochthones or "allochtones" in French) under Henri Konan Bédié's rule. It emphasized the rights of "true" Ivorians and the alleged usurpation of similar rights by Ivorians from the north and immigrants and their descendants from neighboring countries. This rhetoric was not only tied to political power and control of the state, but also to economic opportunities linked to the use of land and resources at the local level. This meant that questions of belonging were intimately tied to questions of livelihoods and had thus taken on existential notions for many Ivorians (Dozon 1997, 2000a; Akindès 2000; Gnabéli 2008).

From day one of the insurgency, the Gbagbo regime struck a belligerent tone. In his first televised address to the nation a day after the outbreak of the insurgency, Gbagbo appealed to Ivorians to

defend their country by suggesting that “The time for patriotism and battle” had come and that the population and all security forces should stay “mobilized at any moment” to fight for the country and “to soon find out who is who in this country” (PANA 2002a). The president portrayed the coup attempt as an attack by internal and foreign “enemies” of the Ivorian nation, specifically Burkina Faso, with support from Western countries, notably France.<sup>62</sup>

This rhetoric was in line with the regimes’ prior anti-foreigner and anti-northern discourse and widely resonated among Gbagbo’s supporters. According to that rhetoric, the up-to-then alleged and proverbial “invasion” of southern Côte d’Ivoire by foreigners and northern migrants, which had been used by southern politicians to mobilize against their acquisition of land and important role in local commerce, seemed to have come to pass in the form of an actual military invasion led by Burkina Faso in combination with Ivorian northerners. By singling out Burkina Faso, which indeed did support the insurgency, Gbagbo and his allies also managed to easily link their main political opponent, Alassane Ouattara, and the RDR to the rebellion, although there is no evidence that Ouattara or the RDR leadership was actively involved in the insurgency. Gbagbo and the FPI activated a register that they had been developing since the early 1990s, namely the notion that Côte d’Ivoire was dominated by foreigners from neighboring Burkina Faso, Mali, and Guinea, and that those foreigners, together with their ethnic cousins from the north of Côte d’Ivoire, were exploiting the country, specifically the south of the country. The president and his associates, while avoiding a direct accusation of Ouattara being behind the rebellion, made numerous references to the RDR and “dishonest politicians who are afraid of the ballot box,” references which most Ivorians understood to refer to Alassane Ouattara, who was not allowed to run in the 2000 presidential elections won by

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<sup>62</sup> Anti-French rhetoric was prominent all throughout the conflict and used regularly by the Gbagbo regime to mobilize popular support beyond his core constituency, with some success, in particular in November 2004 after French troops had killed young patriot demonstrators in Abidjan during a pro-government rally, after which Young Patriot members openly attacked French installations and citizens in Abidjan (Banégas 2006, 548).

Gbagbo.<sup>63</sup> Gbagbo activated a discourse honed by himself and his associates over the past decade, which juxtaposed the “patriotism” of those they considered to be true Ivorians, i.e., people from the south who can trace their “Ivorian” ancestry back for generations, against those whom they considered outsiders and usurpers (Marshall-Fratani 2006).

There was a genuine public outcry against the insurgency expressed in large public demonstrations in Abidjan in the early days following the September 19, 2002 attacks. However, public discourse became quickly dominated by the belligerent anti-northern and anti-immigrant rhetoric of the pro-FPI media and youth and student groups affiliated with the Young Patriots. These more extremist groups led by firebrands and Gbagbo loyalists Charles Blé Goudé and Eugène Djué increasingly marginalized more moderate civil society organizations and became central actors in Laurent Gbagbo’s informal war against suspected rebel elements and sympathizers (Banégas and Marshall-Fratani 2007, 105). Their “speeches and press conferences” became “markedly xenophobic, warmongering and intolerant” (ICG 2003a, 17). Operating frequently via these intermediaries who seemingly were expressing public opinion, Gbagbo could conveniently distance himself from them and constantly downplay their activities. At the same time, members of “patriotic” groups openly called for the elimination of Alassane Ouattara and systematically terrorized northern populations directly or served as critical informants in pursuing, harassing, and killing regime opponents and northerners or immigrants generally (Konate 2003; ICG 2003a, 39).

Gbagbo and his allies thus early on doubled down on the pre-war anti-northern and anti-migrant discourse in an attempt to shore up support among their core constituencies in the south and southwest and to mobilize formal and informal forces for the war effort. In so doing, however, they

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<sup>63</sup> The fact that Ouattara was barred from competing in the elections due to dubious legal maneuvers was quietly omitted.

sacrificed any notion that the Gbagbo government represented all of Côte d'Ivoire and rhetorically consecrated the physical division of the country.

### ***Material mobilization***

Although the Ivorian population had faced two decades of economic crisis, the Ivorian state did not seem to be short of means to fund its war effort. The Gbagbo regime seemed to be able to spend liberally all throughout late 2002 and 2003 on weapons, equipment, and foreign mercenaries (ICG 2003). In addition to recruitment along ethnic and political lines, the Gbagbo regime also offered economic incentives to shore up its response to the insurgency. However, these economic incentives mainly swayed those who were already favorably inclined toward the regime and were not the only or even primary motivation to join the various government militias or formal forces. Greater means still did not allow the Gbagbo government to mobilize support beyond its core political constituencies in Abidjan and the southwest and defeat the rebellion in the north.

Due to the unreliability of FANCI in the eyes of the Gbagbo government and the many defections of soldiers who joined the insurgents, the regime quickly sought to fill the depleted ranks by recruiting in the popular neighborhoods of Abidjan among young men who were already part of youth militias or generally supportive of the regime. Given the economic hardship that many middle class and working class residents of Côte d'Ivoire's big cities had gone through in the previous years, the prospect of permanent employment in the military was certainly economically attractive (Chelpi-den Hamer 2011, 133). Similarly, economic benefits played some role for local recruits of government-friendly militias or self-defense committees in rural areas but were not the predominant motivation. In interviews with more than 200 locally recruited combatants, Chelpi-den Hamer found that "Contrary to the widespread idea that the core of armed groups consists of opportunistic young men, relatively few respondents reported having joined for work" and even those who might have

been moved mainly by a profit motive “were quickly disabused” (Chelpi-den Hamer 2011, 156).

Local recruits who fought on the front lines with FANCI or the Liberian-led pro-Gbagbo forces of the Front de Liberation du Grand Ouest (Liberation Front of the Greater West – FLGO) reported having been paid for the first few months or temporarily during combat operations but not during quieter periods while there was no active fighting. Recruits were at times promised larger payments or integration into the military after the war, but received few immediate material incentives. Local recruits who manned checkpoints were able to live off extorted money and goods, while many members of local militias and defense committees had to rely on their families and communities (Chelpi-den Hamer 2011, 168-169).

## Conclusion

This section has shown how a narrowly constituted regime was unable to successfully counter the insurgency that erupted in its midst and broke apart its institutions, notably its military. A post-independence history of regimes with a narrow and narrowing popular base led to heightened struggles over the control of the state in the 1990s and left each regime with incentives to appeal to a narrow set of the population at the expense of other groups. Ethnic balancing had always been an issue in Côte d’Ivoire’s post-independence state. The state had always had a certain bias in favor of certain groups – Baoulé mainly and to some extent northerners and foreign immigrants under Houphouët-Boigny’s 30-year rule, but then increasingly narrowly Baoulé and southerners under Henri Konan Bédié in the 1990s, and ultimately the minority Kru-speaking peoples (Bété, Attié, Dida, Wê/Guéré) under president Gbagbo since late 2000. The logic of narrow regimes and the need to mobilize core constituencies led over time to a heated political struggle for control of institutions and the official discourse. Starting with president Konan Bédié, who inherited a system with subtle Baoulé dominance in 1993, those representing the state tried to shore up support among their core constituencies by shutting out a large part of the population – northerners and

immigrants, who together constituted more than half of the population. Increasingly exclusionary official rhetoric and concrete steps to exclude them from elections and access to land and resources culminated first in a coup d'état, then in another stolen election by another minority candidate, Laurent Gbagbo, and ultimately in the insurgency of September 2002.

At the time of the outbreak of the insurgency in September 2002, the Ivorian government's organizational repertoire was thus highly limited. Ethnic divisions and exclusion had affected the entire state apparatus, including the security apparatus, which had been fragmented and had faced recent purges of northerners and northwesterners. Institutions of territorial control had always been weakly institutionalized and operated mainly through patronage and the single-party PDCI network. Laurent Gbagbo and the FPI did not have the same networks across the country as they did in the southwest and Abidjan and were unable to mobilize local administrators in their response to the insurgency. Gbagbo's regime's symbolic mobilizational capacity was also severely limited by more than a decade of attempts to mobilize support among southwestern and southern ethnic groups by stoking resentment against northerners and immigrants. This exclusive rhetoric framed the regime's response to the uprising and led to open hostility against northerners and immigrants.

The regime's response to the armed challenge thus was not only weakened by its narrow appeal to select population groups, but its vilification of northerners and Burkinabe immigrants also drove members of those groups into the arms of the rebellion. Limited state mobilizational capacity and growing grievances went hand in hand and were reinforced by the same discourse and policies that helped the regime to shore up its core support.

Due to the unreliability of state institutions and the divisions within the security apparatus, the Gbagbo government relied to a significant degree on external and informal forces to fight the rebellion. Since most of the informal forces were recruited according to ethno-regional affinities and some of them were later brought into the formal security apparatus, the forces fighting for the government mainly defended the interests of the regime and those of southerners and southwesterners rather than those of the country as a whole. This further cemented the deep rifts in society between southerners and northerners.

## **Guinea: Foreign-backed insurgency and successful mass mobilization**

### **Backdrop to the attacks**

By the turn of the millennium, the Guinean regime under President Lansana Conté seemed to be “an easy target for rebels” (Africa Confidential 2001, 4). Conté headed a government that seemed to face many of the challenges of its war-torn neighbors like Sierra Leone. Not only was Guinea as poor as Sierra Leone at the time of the outbreak of its war, but its semi-authoritarian regime faced numerous internal challenges, society was divided, and there was prior history of political violence. Human development indicators ranked Guinea toward the bottom in ranking, and life expectancy or literacy rates were only slightly higher in Guinea than in Sierra Leone (UNDP 1995; EIU 1996, 28; 2001, 12).

There were ethnic imbalances within the Guinean state, and a number of ethno-regional groups had good reasons to be aggrieved with the regime. President Lansana Conté was from the minority Soussou ethnic group and had appointed and promoted many Soussou to senior posts in government. He had used two coup attempts in 1985 and 1996 as opportunities to purge the military of real or presumed loyalists of former president Sekou Touré, most of them from Touré’s Malinké ethnic group, the second-largest ethnic community in the country (Barry 2000, 123-125). Although

Conté's stance against the Malinké ethnic group softened over time, he had Malinké opposition leader Alpha Condé arrested in 1998 and sentenced to a five years in prison for treason on what international observers considered trumped-up charges (McGovern 2002, 88-89). Condé's arrest deepened grievances among Condé's Malinké supporters and triggered frequent protests by the opposition, which regularly led to violent crackdown by government forces and deaths in 1998 and 1999 (Africa No. 1 Radio, 1998). The other large ethnic group in the country, the Peulh, had many historical grievances against the state. More Peulh were arrested and killed or disappeared under Sekou Touré's rule than any other ethnic group (Charles 2010, 153-157), and they had been underrepresented in key state institutions, notably the security forces, ever since.

The smaller Forestier ethnic groups – the Loma, Guézzé, Kissi, Kono, and Mano – had struggled to gain full representation within the Guinean state ever since they had been targeted by Sekou Touré's violent "demystification" program, aimed at rooting out traditional religious practices (McGovern 2004; Straker 2006). While their influence within the Guinean state apparatus and military increased under Lansana Conté, they were also purged in significant numbers after the 1996 coup attempt, since several Forestier officers were among the alleged instigators (ICG 2002, 4; ICG 2010, 6-7). In addition, there were significant tensions within the forest region between the communities that considered themselves autochthonous to the region – mainly Toma and Guézzé – and Manyá/Malinké<sup>64</sup> families who were seen as more recent migrants to the area.<sup>65</sup> These conflicts were over control of land, resources, and political influence (McGovern 2004). These tensions had escalated to open violence during the first municipal elections in 1992, which led to the killing of up

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<sup>64</sup> Manyá is the term used in Guinea's Forest Region for the same group that is known in general terms as Malinké in Guinea and Mandingo in Liberia. In Guinea that includes members of a number of related ethnic groups, including the Konianke who are particularly numerous in the Forest Region.

<sup>65</sup> This is the common view expressed by many Guineans, Forestiers, and Manyá representatives themselves, although it is ethnologically and historically probably incorrect. See the extensive discussion in McGovern 2004, 175-232.

to 1,000 ethnic Manya by Guérzé in and around the town of Nzérékoré. Tensions ran high between the communities thereafter, and only a forceful intervention by the military and subsequent mediation efforts between traditional leaders helped to calm down the situation (Béavogui 2005). The Guérzé and other Forestier groups then followed with great skepticism the Conté regime's support to the Liberian rebel group ULIMO from 1992 on. ULIMO was predominantly ethnic Malinké and had strong support and bases among the Manya communities in the Forest Region. Forestier groups read Conté's support for ULIMO as a sign that he had turned against them (McGovern 2004, 574-575; Interview with former administrator of Nzérékore, Conakry, 12 Nov 2010).

### **The attacks**

The attacks against Guinea between September 2000 and February 2001 were very similar in nature to the beginnings of the Sierra Leone war nine years earlier, and many of the actors involved were the same. Relatively low-scale skirmishes had been occurring along the border between Liberia and Guinea since 1998. They took on a new scale and quality in early September 2000 with coordinated attacks from Liberian and Sierra Leonean territory. First, on September 1 and 2, 2000 a mix of Guinean, Liberian, and Sierra Leonean insurgents attacked Massadou, a small Guinean town close to the Liberian border approximately 25 km southeast of Macenta, a larger administrative and commercial town in Guinea's Forest Region (see map below). The initial attack left 47 Guineans dead and 18 injured. Houses in the village were destroyed and looted, and Guinean villagers were abducted by the assailants (Kamara 2000). This attack was a significant escalation from prior border skirmishes (Kamara 2000, McGovern 2002). Three days later, armed assaults several hundred miles to the northwest against two border towns, Madina Woula and Pamelap along the Guinean-Sierra Leonean border, made it fully clear a serious attempt to destabilize and invade Guinea (New York Times 2000) was underway. Fighting reached or came close to the two major towns of Forécariah

and Kindia and within 75 km of the capital Conakry, which caused significant alarm among the Guinean leadership. Attacks by armed groups operating from Sierra Leonean territory around Pamelap continued throughout the month of September 2000 (Blunt 2001).

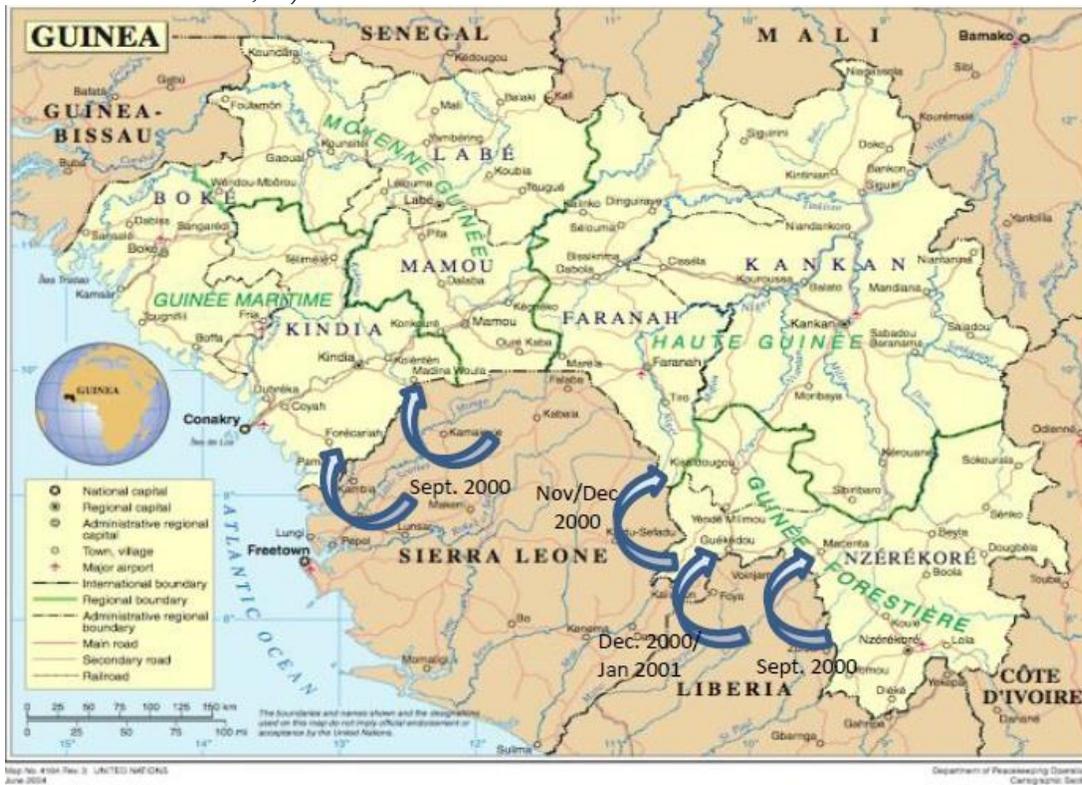
A second major attack in the forest region targeted the larger town of Macenta itself. Early in the morning of September 17, 2000 significant numbers of fighters attacked Macenta, killing up to 35 Guineans and abducting a number of civilians. This attack caused international outrage, since it led to the death of the head of the local office of the UN High Commissioner of Refugees (UNHCR) in Macenta and to the abduction of another international UNHCR staff (UNHCR Press Release 17 Sept. 2000). Further attacks continued in the area between Macenta and Youmou (farther south) and the Liberian border for the next few months, causing the death of more than 300 people by October 2000 (BBC 25 Sept. 2000; BBC 30 Sept. 2000; BBC 23 Oct. 2000) and approximately 600 by December 2000 (ICRC 2000).

Subsequently, armed action seemed to spread along the border in the forest region west of Macenta, as the large trading center of Guéckédou near the triangle where the Liberian, Sierra Leonean, and Guinean borders meet<sup>66</sup> was occupied by insurgents in December 2000. In same month, even the major regional center of Kissidougou, 75 km from the Liberian and 50 km from the Sierra Leonean border, came under attack. While the Guinean military reestablished control of Guéckédou in February 2001, fighting continued near the Guinea-Sierra Leonean border southwest of Kissidougou and west of Guéckédou until April 2001 (MSF 2001a; Bensimon 2001; MSF 2001a).

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<sup>66</sup> An area often referred to as the “parrot's beak” due to the shape of the piece of Guinean territory that juts out into Sierra Leone. This area is now also infamous as the origin of the first Ebola case in December 2014 that triggered the 2015 Ebola crisis.

**Map 1:** Illustration of the 2000/2001 attacks against Guinea at Pamelap (near Forécariah), Madina Woula (near Kindia) from Sierra Leone and against Kissidougou, Guéckedou, and Macenta from Liberian territory – the dates indicate the month(s) of each attack (UN Department of Peacekeeping Operations, June 2004; taken from ICG 2010, 26).



The coordinated attacks at different sites far apart seemed to confuse the Guinean military. The attacks on Pamelap and Forécariah, in relatively close proximity to the capital Conakry, focused the attention of the Guinean government and military on defending the eastern border. The armed forces then seemed to be taken by surprise by the subsequent attacks against Macenta in the Forest Region (Bangoura 2001). Although Guinea had a large army base near Macenta, the Guinean troops were routed in the initial attack against Macenta and retreated while the attackers invaded the town and held it for over a week. The regional trading center of Guéckédou, located at about 50 km from Macenta, came under rebel control in November 2000 and changed hands between Guinean irregular troops and Sierra Leonean and Liberian rebel forces multiple times in subsequent months. The initial success of the attack might have been due to a certain element of surprise and to the

attackers' use of informants among the Liberian and Sierra Leonean refugee community, in particular in Forest Region around Macenta and Guéckédou (Béavogui 2005).

Although the Guinean military seemed to be soundly beaten at first, the government recognized the seriousness of the threat and regrouped. Between September and November 2000, the government security forces seemed stretched, but they gradually recovered and quickly retook towns and positions occupied by the insurgents. Guinean forces reestablished control over Macenta approximately ten days after they had been chased from the town by the insurgents. Helped by popular mobilization and through the organization of local defense committees, they managed to reaffirm control in most areas around Macenta and along the border with Liberia. Guinean forces shelled some key towns in northern Liberia's Lofa County in October and November in support of Liberian anti-government rebels (The Perspective 2000; BBC September 25, 2000). Retaking the town of Guéckédou, which rebel forces had occupied in December 2000, took somewhat longer, in part due to dissension within Guinean military units, some of which temporarily were rumored to have joined the insurgents in Guéckédou. Government troops laid siege to the trading town in January 2001 and largely flattened it with heavy artillery fire (Africa Confidential 2001, 5). This attack helped to dislodge recalcitrant insurgent units, and government troops retook control of Guéckédou in February 2001 (Amnesty International 2001, 6, 17; ICG 2003b, 1 Fn 3). Air and artillery attacks against suspected RUF and insurgent positions in northern Sierra Leone helped to contain any further insurgent attacks from Sierra Leonean territory by late 2000. The insurgents subsequently focused their efforts in the forested and hard-to-access areas southwest of Kissidougou and west of Guéckédou, where fighting continued until April 2001 (MSF 2001a; 2001b). The Guinean military, with support from hunter militias and Sierra Leonean CDF fighters and hunter militias, finally defeated the insurgents by April. There were no more attacks recorded thereafter (Milner 2005, 151).

## **Actors and their motivations**

There were three distinct dimensions to the fighting in southern and southeastern Guinea between September 2000 and April 2001, each one with a different set of actors: an internal Guinean dimension related to old power struggles, mainly within the military; a Liberian dimension tied to Charles Taylor's politics and regional ambitions and his desire to counter the use of Guinean territory as a base by his opponents; and a Sierra Leonean dimension linked to the political and military situation on the ground in Sierra Leone, where the RUF had come under growing pressure by British and United Nations forces to disarm and demobilize. Although all three dimensions followed their own logic, the actors had complementary interests in destabilizing Guinea. There was a significant degree of coordination and collaboration between the different components of the insurgent force. All three dimensions converged in late 2000 and had the potential to trigger a major conflagration within Guinea and in the sub-region.

### ***The internal dimension: Guinean dissidents and insurgents***

There was an internal political dimension to the September 2000 attacks against Guinea, although most of the fighting was done by Liberian and Sierra Leonean insurgents. The exact number of Guinean dissidents involved in the attacks has remained nebulous. After the attack on Macenta on September 17, 2000, Mohamed Lamine Fofana, a self-proclaimed spokesman for a so far unknown Guinean insurgent movement, the Rally of Democratic Forces of Guinea (Rassemblement des Forces Démocratiques de Guinée – RFDG), called international radio stations and said that the group's goal was to unseat the regime of President Conté and to take over power in Conakry. He also claimed that his insurgency was operating independently from groups in Liberia and Sierra Leone (BBC World Service September 18, 2000). No one had heard the RFDG movement before. The Guinean government dismissed the claims as a ploy by Charles Taylor. Eyewitnesses said that there was little evidence that large numbers of Guinean dissidents were involved in the attacks

against Macenta and other towns and villages in the Forest Region, although Guineans were spotted alongside the Sierra Leonean RUF fighters who attacked Forécariah and other border towns along the Guinea-Sierra Leone border (Blunt 2000). These Guineans were few in number, though, and some observers suggested that they were mainly youth of Guinean descent who had grown up in Sierra Leone and Liberia and had joined the RUF or Taylor's forces (Bensimon 2001).

The origins and composition of the RFDG have remained obscure. It appears that it was not a coherent movement.<sup>67</sup> This lack of coherence does not mean there were no Guineans involved and no Guinean interests at stake. There is some evidence that at least three different sets of people participated in or supported the insurgency.

The first two groups were former Guinean military officers who were involved in the 1985<sup>68</sup> and 1996 coup attempts already mentioned. Many of the conspirators in the 1985 plot were Malinké, like Sekou Touré, and they wanted to keep the reins of power in the hands of Touré loyalists. The attempted coup was thwarted by Conté and his followers and led to severe purges within the military. Many senior Malinké officers were arrested, and Soussou hardliners among Conté's followers incited mobs to harass Malinké in the street and to attack Malinké-owned businesses in major towns (Reuters 1985). A number of the senior coup plotters were publicly executed, while others as well as some senior Malinké officers who were not involved in the coup plot, fled the country (ICG 2010, 6; Groelsma 1998, 168-170).

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<sup>67</sup> Suggestions by the International Institute for Strategic Studies that the insurgent group was 1,800 fighters strong are probably exaggerated (Milner 2005, 169).

<sup>68</sup> In July 1985, a little over a year after Lansana Conté's CMRN military junta of the Military Committee for National Recovery had assumed power, a number of military officers led by the ex-Prime Minister and Minister of Education, Diarra Traoré, himself a former member of the military, attempted to overthrow Conté (Yansané 1990, 1237). The coup has to be seen against the backdrop of the power struggle that ensued after Sekou Touré's death between different factions in the military and their political and ethno-regional constituencies (Groelsma 1990, 168-170).

As mentioned, the February 1996 mutiny of rank-and-file soldiers over poor living conditions and unpaid salaries turned into another coup attempt by disgruntled officers who seized the national radio and television. They shelled the presidential palace where President Conté had been hiding for two days, forcing Conté to negotiate in person with the mutineers. He succeeded in winning over the bulk of the rank-and-file with promises of better living conditions. However, the mutiny was followed by another purge of the military. Dozens of alleged coup leaders – rank-and-file and officers – were arrested and tried. Some were forced to retire while others fled the country (Barry 1998; ICG 2010, 7). At various times those who fled were rumored to have regrouped abroad to take revenge by invading the country with foreign help<sup>69</sup> (La Lettre du Continent, 12 September 1996, 10 September 1998, 13 January 2000a). The most frequently mentioned name among those who fled Guinea in 1996 was that of Major Gbago<sup>70</sup> Zoumanigui, a senior officer who was part of the original coup of April 1984 that brought Lansana Conté to power. Zoumanigui was considered to be one of the leaders of the 1996 coup attempt and fled to Mali and later Liberia. Throughout his exile, there were rumors that he was training with Liberian support to launch an insurgency to overthrow Conté (Fofana 1998; Blunt 2000). Many analysts at the time considered Zoumanigui or his close associates to be one of the leaders of the Guineans among the insurgents that attacked Guinea in 2000 (ICG 2000, 5; Africa Confidential 2001, 5; La Lettre du Continent April 20, 2000b).

A third group of individuals who might have had a direct interest in toppling Lansana Conté, and whose names were mentioned in relation to the September 2000 attacks, were family members of

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<sup>69</sup> A former RUF fighter, in his testimony before the Special Court for Sierra Leone, the war crimes tribunal that tried rebel and militia leaders in Sierra Leone, mentioned a “General Ibrahim Bah,” whom he described to be “Guinean Special Forces” and who met RUF leaders as early as 1996 to discuss how he could “use RUF fighters to go to Guinea” (The Prosecutor of the Special Court v. Charles Ghankay Taylor 5 September 2008).

<sup>70</sup> Zoumanigui’s name is alternatively spelled “Gbagbo” and “Gbago” in the media.

former President Sekou Touré, notably Mohamed Touré, Sekou Touré's son and an outspoken critic of the Conté regime (Gberie 2001, 11). Several former Sierra Leonean RUF rebels who testified before the Sierra Leonean war crimes tribunal implicated Touré, suggesting he may have provided financing for the insurgency. One ex-RUF rebel stated that “Mohamed Turay<sup>71</sup> was the rebel leader for Guinea who was going to take the war into Guinea, but he did not actually have manpower on his own...So that was the reason why he passed through the RUF, so that the RUF could assist opening the road for him so that he will carry out his war” (The Prosecutor of the Special Court v. Charles Ghankay Taylor 21 August, 2008).

### ***The Liberian dimension***

The second important dimension of the September 2000 attacks against Guinea was the Liberian involvement. In part, the fighting along the Guinean-Liberian border was seen as an outgrowth of the struggle between Liberian warlord-turned-president Charles Taylor and his opponents from the former ULIMO<sup>72</sup> for control of northwestern Liberia's Lofa County (Africa Confidential 2001).

Although the factions in the first Liberian civil war (1989–1996) signed a peace deal in 1996, the old rifts between the former warring parties quickly reemerged after Charles Taylor won the Liberian presidency in 1997. Taylor integrated his former rebel forces into the state apparatus and continued to harass and kill former ULIMO members, which prompted them to flee to Guinea. They reorganized and renewed their armed struggle against Taylor from Guinea. Guinea was the

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<sup>71</sup> Turay is the Sierra Leonean spelling of Touré.

<sup>72</sup> The United Liberation Movement of Liberia for Democracy (ULIMO) was one of the main rebel groups opposed to Charles Taylor during the first Liberian civil war. It was formed in 1991 among Liberian refugees from the Krahn and Mandingo ethnic groups allied with former President Samuel Doe. They were sworn enemies of Charles Taylor's Gio and Mano ethnic base, who dominated Taylor's National Patriotic Front of Liberia (NPFL). ULIMO's ranks were decimated after Taylor became president of Liberia in 1997. Many of its former leaders and fighters fled to Guinea and reconstituted an armed group to challenge Taylor from 1998 on. This group was not officially called ULIMO, but most people in Guinea and Liberia still referred to it that way. It then later morphed into Liberians United for Reconciliation and Democracy (LURD) (Reno 2007).

birthplace of ULIMO leader Alhaji Kromah, and many Liberian Mandingo/Malinké had family connections in Guinea's Forest Region. Supposedly with Guinean government support, ULIMO successor groups started incursions into northern Liberia from April 1999, which led to occasionally pitched battles with Charles Taylor's troops for the control of Lofa County in 1999 and 2000. Liberian troops retaliated with several incursions into Guinean territory in mid-1999 and early 2000 (Liberia Threatens War with Guinea 2000). As ULIMO successor organization Liberians United for Reconciliation and Democracy (LURD) took form in early 2000, they challenged Charles Taylor's hold on northern Lofa County. The September 2000 attacks against Guinea and the attempts to raise an insurgency were seen in part as retaliation by Taylor (Reno 2007). Observers suggested that several of the September 2000 attacks targeted Malinké villages in which ULIMO/LURD commanders and foot soldiers were supposed to be hiding (McGovern 2004, 579-582).

While some of the attacks against southeastern Guinea might have been of a more tactical nature to flush out LURD rebels, there were also indications that Taylor had broader strategic goals in destabilizing Guinea. Due to the existing history of tensions between Guinea's Forestier ethnic groups of the Guézzé and Toma and the Konianke/Malinké, Taylor could legitimately hope to stoke those conflicts and trigger a genuine civil war within Guinea (Reno 2007, 77). Taylor would have welcomed the destabilization and ultimate overthrow of Lansana Conté, who had been hostile to him throughout his reign (Béavogui 2005). He could also have used new rear bases in Guinea's Forest Region for his militias and RUF allies, and exploit the iron ore and diamond deposits on the Guinean side of the border (La Lettre du Continent October 5, 2000; Gberie 2001; Onishi 2001).

### ***The Sierra Leonean dimension***

The largest contingent among the insurgents involved in the attacks against Guinea comprised, according to most accounts, forces associated with the Sierra Leonean RUF. The units that attacked

Madina Woula near Kindia on September 4, Pamelap and Forécariah on September 6, and Kissidougou on November 30, 2000 appear to have been predominantly RUF. While Liberian troops led the attacks against Macenta and surrounding villages on September 17, 2000, the attacks against Guéckédou were led jointly by the RUF and Liberian Government Special Forces, notably Charles Taylor's so-called Anti-Terrorist Unit (Bangoura 2001, 19; The Prosecutor of the Special Court v. Charles Ghankay Taylor 5 September 2008; The Prosecutor of the Special Court v. Charles Ghankay Taylor 21 August 2008). Most of the continued fighting in the forested area between Kissidougou, Guéckédou, and the Sierra Leonean border between January and April 2001 seems to have been conducted by the RUF (Amnesty International 2001a, 4-6).

Charles Taylor had supported the RUF from the beginning and had remained influential in shaping RUF strategy, even at later stages.<sup>73</sup> At the same time as Taylor came under pressure in Liberia's northern Lofa County from the attacks from former ULIMO elements starting in 1999, the RUF also saw its fortunes dwindle in Sierra Leone. Under pressure from renewed military efforts by Nigerian ECOMOG troops, the various Sierra Leonean Civil Defence Forces (CDF), and UN troops, the rebel movement had split into different factions, with the more hardcore elements resisting the calls to disarmament (SLTRC Vol. 3A, 351-355). An intervention by British Special Forces to bolster the fledgling UN peace operation and Foday Sankoh's arrest in May 2000 further weakened the rebels. In July 2000 UN-imposed embargos on the sale of diamonds from Sierra Leone and the delivery of weapons to the region added to the pressure on Taylor and his Sierra Leonean rebel allies (SLTRC Vol. 3B, 18).

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<sup>73</sup> The Special Court of Sierra Leone has convicted Taylor as the head of a "Joint criminal enterprise...to forcibly control the population and territory of Sierra Leone and to pillage its resources...by the use of...a campaign of terror...with members of the RUF, AFRC/RUF..." (The Prosecutor of the Special Court v. Charles Ghankay Taylor Special Court for Sierra Leone 18 May 2012). He was sentenced to a 50-year prison sentence, which was upheld in appeal in September 2013 (Simons 2012; Smith-Spark 2013). SL TRC Final Report, Vol. 3A, pp. 110; Vol. 3B, 79-80.

With the territory under their control shrinking in Sierra Leone, significant numbers of RUF troops came to Lofa County in Liberia (Bangoura 2001, 2) where the RUF, as well as some of Taylor's troops, had bases (The Prosecutor of the Special Court v. Charles Ghankay Taylor 5 September 2008). Taylor regularly called on the RUF to help him in Liberia, including in the fight against ULIMO/LURD<sup>74</sup> (The Prosecutor of the Special Court v. Charles Ghankay Taylor 4 September 2008).

In addition to doing Taylor's bidding in attacking Guinea, the RUF leadership had its own grievances against the Conté regime. Guinean troops assisted the various Sierra Leonean governments in fighting the RUF from the beginning of the war (SLTRC Vol 3A 2004, 150). They had played an important role in ECOMOG, the West African intervention force in Sierra Leone, and had been heavily involved in fighting the RUF. RUF fighters testified before the Special Court for Sierra Leone (SCSL) that they were told Guinea had to be attacked since Lansana Conté was supporting their and Charles Taylor's enemies, notably Sierra Leonean President Tejan Kabbah.<sup>75</sup> RUF battlefield commander Issa Sesay seemed to have spearheaded this effort. Witnesses suggested that he received significant amounts of money from Guineans who wanted to see Conté overthrown (The Prosecutor of the Special Court v. Charles Ghankay Taylor 21 August 2008).

## Government response

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<sup>74</sup> See Stephen Ellis' testimony before the Special Court for Sierra Leone (The Prosecutor of the Special Court v. Charles Ghankay Taylor 17 January 2008).

<sup>75</sup> One former RUF member told the court that "The reason why people were...asked to go to Guinea, it was because the President who was there, Lansana Conte [sic], was conniving with the Sierra Leone government and that enemies used his territory to enter Liberia through the Lofa County." (The Prosecutor of the Special Court v. Charles Ghankay Taylor 21 August 2008).

The Guinean government seemed surprised by the attacks in September 2000 at first, but then quickly kicked into action and responded at various levels. The response was at first a stuttering one, but later became more robust and formal. The security forces, the organization of local defense committees, and irregular forces were involved in the response. It also included a significant nation-wide popular mobilization that helped to galvanize both the population and institutions and helped significantly with maintaining a unified effort at counter-insurgency.

### ***Institutional mobilization***

#### *Security institutions*

The performance of Guinea's security forces during the 2000–2001 attacks was mixed, although ultimately they managed to demonstrate a common sense of mission and determination and played a part in pushing back and defeating the insurgency. Although the Guinean military, at least in terms of numbers, seemed better placed than some of the neighboring armed forces to respond to an insurgency, it struggled at first. Guinea's military was almost twice as large as Sierra Leone's as a ratio of population (16 members of the military per 10,000 people in Guinea vs. 8 per 10,000 in Sierra Leone) and Guinea had a higher defense budget (IISS 2000, 272). Guinean troops had significant recent combat experience and knew specifically the RUF well, since they had been actively involved in fighting the RUF rebels in Sierra Leone since 1991 under the mutual defense pact with Sierra Leone and after 1996 as part of ECOMOG.

The Guinean forces were not without their weaknesses – they suffered from an aging officer corps, weak oversight, and outdated equipment (ICG 2003b, 12). However, even though there were divisions within the Guinean security apparatus, notably between the military and the various Special Forces units as well as between junior officers and more senior ranks, ethnic divisions mattered less. Despite significant ethnic, regional, and political clan divisions in Guinean society and politics and

the fact that former members of the Guinean military were involved in the insurgency, the Guinean armed forces did not break apart, like its Ivorian neighbors had. There were no reports of soldiers joining the insurgents.<sup>76</sup> In times of an external crisis, the Guinean security forces traditionally held together and responded as one force (Arieff 2009, 344).

After the Guinean forces' initial difficulties and retreat, the troops regrouped and quickly adopted a more aggressive approach. Conté did not fully trust the regular military forces and, after the first retreat, relied on several of the special forces units directly under his command, notably the Security Battalion in charge of Presidential Security (Bataillon Autonome de Sécurité Présidentielle – BASP) and the Parachutist Battalion (BATA – Bataillon Autonome des Troupes Aéroportées), in its ultimately successful military response. The Conté government quickly restocked depleted supplies and replaced non-functioning weaponry and equipment.

Conté's regime received assistance in its efforts to fight the insurgency from the French and U.S. governments (ICG 2003b; Smith 2006, 434), who both had been involved in training Guinean Special Forces units earlier in an effort to counter Charles Taylor's expansionary desires in West Africa. As border skirmishes along the Guinean-Liberian border increased from 1999 on, the Guinean government had already turned to Ukraine to replace its outdated air force with four MI-24 armored attack helicopters, two MI-8 helicopters, as well as used MIG-24 and MIG-17 fighter aircraft (Africa Confidential 2001, 5; IHS Jane's 2007). Ukrainian military advisors and support personnel to maintain the fleet stayed in Conakry to ensure the continued operation of the aircraft (Petite Guerre Froide à Conakry 2001). The reinforced air force arsenal was used in aggressive strikes against rebel positions in the border areas and rebel hideouts across the border, notably along

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<sup>76</sup> There was some dissension within troops that seemed to have led some Guinean soldiers to join the insurgents for a brief period near Guékédou in late 2000 or early 2001 (Béavogui 2005).

the Guineo-Liberian border and across the border in northern Sierra Leone's Kambia district. The Guinean military also shelled key towns in northern Liberia's Lofa County in support of Liberian anti-government rebels (Liberia Says Guinea Helped Dissidents in Zorzor Attack 2000; Liberia Turns up the Heat 2000). It later besieged and largely destroyed the town of Guéckédou with heavy artillery fire to dislodge insurgents and recalcitrant insurgent units from there (Amnesty International 2001a).

### *Territorial administration and irregular forces*

A second critical element of Guinea's response was to rally an array of informal forces to help counter the insurgency. This was possible since there was a tradition in the country of state institutions and administrators displaying considerable organizational mobilizational capacity in times of crisis and mobilizing informal popular militias. In addition to the mobilization of local irregular militias, mainly in the Forest Region, there were a number of other, partly external, armed groups that joined the Guinean security forces in their counter-insurgency efforts.

The first critical component of Lansana Conté's reliance on informal forces was the mobilization and arming of large numbers of volunteers for civil defense committees and irregular armed units, mainly young, able-bodied men, many of whom were not engaged in active fighting, but set up checkpoints along main roads to control entrances and exits to most villages and towns in Guinea's Forest Region. Given that most Guinean state institutions could have been described as ineffective in normal times, the recruitment of these volunteers was a rather organized affair. The President instructed the centrally appointed territorial administrators – prefects and sub-prefects (“*préfets*” and “*sous-préfets*” in French) to each recruit 150 volunteers per sub-prefecture and to constitute people's defense committees. The administrators were supplied with arms by the central government and handed out weapons first to members of the administration and to local defense committee

leaders and volunteers. Many of the volunteers were government officials or their family members as well as traditional leaders and their relations. The volunteers were recruited without regard for ethnic and regional origin or affiliation, and arms were handed out to any volunteer, regardless of their ethnicity or regional origin.<sup>77</sup> Some estimates suggest that up to 30,000 volunteers were recruited within a few weeks starting in early September 2000, predominantly in the Forest Region and along the border with Sierra Leone, but also in some larger cities including the capital Conakry (Milner 2005, 167). More than 10,000 of the volunteers were given arms (ICG 2010, 7), mainly those who manned checkpoints along main roads to control arrivals and exits in towns and villages. The volunteers' main mission was to prevent infiltration by insurgents disguised as civilians. They searched vehicles and questioned strangers who were not known to them about their origins, mission, and destination. Human rights abuses were rampant at the checkpoints, including physical abuse of strangers, the extortion of money and goods in exchange for free passage, and the looting of the possessions of people on the run. Those targeted were mainly of Liberian and Sierra Leonean origin (Amnesty International 2001).<sup>78</sup>

The mobilization of popular defense committees had had a precedent in the past, notably during the November 1970 attack by Portuguese military on Conakry, when a similar popular mobilization occurred and civilian defense committees were successfully armed and organized to fight foreign invaders (Arieff 2009, 335-336). In September 2000, only a small number of the volunteers were trained by the military and used in actual combat. In early 2001, President Conté replaced the

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<sup>77</sup> Interview with former Guinean government official who was based in Macenta in 2000 and 2001, Rutshuru, DR Congo, November 2011.

<sup>78</sup> The young volunteers were originally recruited under the premise that they would be integrated into the Guinean security forces in the future. After the attacks had been repelled, this turned out not to be a manageable solution. The military created marching bands in each of the larger Forest Region towns to create some jobs for volunteers, but thousands were still left to their own devices and retained their weapons. This led to a surge in violent crime in the Forest Region in the early to mid-2000s. Programs by international agencies to disarm the former volunteers seemed to diffuse the tension (Milner 2005).

prefects and sub-prefects of Macenta, Kissidougou, and Guéckédou prefectures with trusted military officers to maintain control and guarantee a more effective state response and coordination between the administration, the military, and informal forces on the ground (Guinea: Army Officers Replace Prefects in Clash Areas 2001).

The two additional irregular forces that fought the insurgents alongside the Guinean military were the already mentioned ULIMO, which morphed into LURD in late 2000 (see above p. 164) and traditional hunter militias recruited from among the Sierra Leonean refugee population. The Guinean government's support for ULIMO and then LURD started in the early 1990s and intensified during the September 2000 crisis (Béavogui 2005, 6). Although little is known about how Guinea's presumed – it was never officially acknowledged – support to ULIMO/LURD was managed, it seems to have been coordinated first through Conté's office directly and then through Guinea's Ministry of Defense. ULIMO/LURD forces seemed to have benefited from training at Guinean military facilities and allegedly received equipment and weapons that had been procured for the Guinean military (ICG 2002, 4-5).

Traditional hunter militias represented a second important component in the mobilization of irregular forces. There had been allegations that Sierra Leone's pro-government militias, the Civil Defence Forces (CDF) had been recruiting fighters in Guinean refugee camps since 1998. This was particularly the case for the so-called donsos, the civil defense militia of Sierra Leone's Kono people, who had been operating on both sides of the Sierra Leone-Guinea border for some time against the RUF. Due to the close ties between President Conté and Sierra Leone's President Tejan-Kabbah, donso groups, reinforced by retired Guinean military officers<sup>79</sup> and Guinean irregular fighters, were

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<sup>79</sup> Interview with retired Guinean military officer, Kankan, August 9, 2008.

key elements in the battle against the insurgents, notably in the dense forest area south of Kissidougou and west of Guéckédou in late 2000 and early 2001. The mobilization of the traditional hunters was quite formidable. Residents of Kissidougou have described how, when Kissidougou, a large town and a major trading center considered to be the gate to the Forest Region, was attacked in December 2000, “tous les féticheurs de la forêt,”<sup>80</sup> i.e., all the traditional hunters of the Guinean Forest Region gathered in Kissidougou to defend the town and the region and to counterattack. There were also reports that the traditional hunter militias received intelligence support and training from the British Government (ICG 2002, 5; Gberie 2009).

#### *Symbolic mobilization and popular mobilization*

The Guinean government’s mobilization of informal militias was complemented by appeals to the entire population to defend the nation. On September 9, 2000, four days after the insurgent attack against Pamelap at relative close proximity to Conakry, President Lansana Conté summoned all Guinean political actors and parties to a public presidential address, which was broadcast live across the nation. In his speech, Conté invoked the attempted Portuguese invasion of Guinea of November 1970 (Gerdes 2006, 96 Fn163) and launched an emotional appeal to Guineans of all political colors to close rank for the sake of national security and to “crush the invaders” (Saint-Paul 2000). Conté stressed that the attacks were the work of external aggressors and blamed a broad regional conspiracy by Liberian President Charles Taylor with support from Burkina Faso and opposition leader Alpha Condé. In his nation-wide radio address, Lansana Conté suggested that “Rebels are hiding among the refugees” and ordered all Guineans to “Gather all foreigners in your neighborhood in order to know who does what,” and to identify all those who might make common cause with the invaders (Saint-Paul 2000). He urged Guineans to separate insurgents from the regular population and to have them live in camps instead of being hosted in towns and villages.

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<sup>80</sup> Interview with residents of Kissidougou, August 1, 2008.

Conté referred to the fact that Liberian or Sierra Leonean refugees in the border areas allegedly provided local intelligence and served as guides to the insurgent forces. Given that the insurgents were already near Forécariah, less than a two-hour drive from Conakry, the president thought it safer to preempt any attempts at infiltration with this mass mobilization (Gerdes 2006, 85). The state-run media followed up on Conté's speech in subsequent days and weeks with continued calls for Guineans to mobilize and defend their country. Victims of the attack in the border areas offered their testimony on state-controlled news programs and concluded their testimonies with appeals to all Guineans to mobilize in defense of the nation.

Conté's speech and the subsequent media campaign indeed jolted Guinean security forces and wider society into action. Within hours of his address, "Guinean civilians enthusiastically participated in chasing foreigners" (Saint-Paul 2000). They identified, questioned, harassed, and arrested refugees all across the country, even in places far from the front lines. The military, gendarmerie, and police were joined by vigilante groups and regular Guineans in rounding up many thousands of the approximately 450,000 Sierra Leoneans and Liberians who had found refuge in Guinea under the suspicion of helping or sympathizing with the insurgents (Milner 2005). Suspicion against refugees ran high for months, and many legitimate refugees were repeatedly harassed by security forces and regular villagers alike for fear of further infiltration by insurgents from neighboring countries (Onishi 2001). With respect to the broader defense effort, one analyst described the situation, with some hyperbole, as follows:

Retired officers of the Sekou Touré army dusted off their uniforms and arms to defend the motherland. Students and youth volunteers mounted guard and ensured the defence of their villages and towns...The Guinean business class created a war fund. Musical caravans of peace led by griots, traditional praise singers, chanted old patriotic songs of the Sundiata, Samourou (sic), and Sekou Touré eras. It was like the entire nation was in trance. (Doe 2003, 154)

Conté's popular mobilization campaign was highly successful because he relied on a rhetoric that historically resonated deeply with Guineans, in particular with older generations who had grown up under the regime of Guinea's first post-independence ruler Sekou Touré. Conté made reference to a deep-seated fear of foreigners, foreign invasion, and domination by external forces that had been drilled into people's minds throughout Touré's regime (1958 to 1984). Conté's blaming of a large conspiracy by neighboring governments thus seemed credible and in line with those deep-seated fears and was a familiar rhetoric that most Guineans had grown up with. Touré had perfected the strategy of the "permanent coup d'état," the frequent discovery of alleged coup plots and attempts to overthrow the regime, many of which were based on exaggerated or trumped-up charges, although others were real. Each of these alleged or real coup attempts led to arrests and were used to purge the government and civil society of real or suspected regime opponents. Guineans had long lived in an environment where outsiders were considered suspicious. The country was seen as surrounded by external enemies and infiltrated by internal enemies. Government officials and regime-friendly citizens and students who had been members of the popular militias and other state-dominated mass organizations in the 1960s and 70s were used to being vigilant and keeping an eye on all foreigners and their activities (McGovern 2002).

These old reflexes among Guinea's officials, members of the security forces, and regular citizens apparently trumped other, more recent fault lines within Guinean society. As mentioned earlier (see p. 142), there were significant ethnic tensions in the Forest Region. It was not unreasonable for Charles Taylor and his collaborators to assume that those tensions and general discontent with the Conté regime could be exploited for their purpose (Reno 2007). The insurgents of September 2000 made significant efforts to mobilize support among the Forrestier (mainly Guézzé and

Toma/Loma<sup>81</sup>) ethnic groups by exploiting their resentment against Malinké communities. Among the Liberian troops that attacked southeastern Guinea were significant numbers of Liberians from the same ethnic groups who sought alliances with their ethnic brethren on the Guinean side. Liberian Loma speakers among the invading forces appealed to ethnic solidarity and tried to rally support among Guinean Loma communities in attacking Manya/Malinké villages south of Macenta. These appeals were ultimately unsuccessful. In light of the appeals by the Guinean government to stand united against the invaders, most Guinean Loma refused to join the invading forces. Instead, Guinean Loma chiefs and elders mobilized their own self-defense militias and entire villages to fight the attackers from across the border. They also severely punished those among their ranks who colluded with the Liberian invaders (McGovern 2004, 579-582). McGovern offers this detailed description of one of one of these recruitment attempts by the insurgents:

We found out that there is a group of young Tomas from Lofa County who have joined forces as rebels to fight against ULIMO...It was (a young man from) the village of Nuvanuita...that they contacted...(They said,) 'We come from Liberia. We want to exterminate the ULIMO Manya who live in (the three villages between the border and Nuvanuita), but we're not coming to kill any Loma – only Manyas, as we did in Massadou. We want you to give us free passage in order to arrive at these villages.' They came with cola nuts and small pieces of money, as is the custom here. The young man, deciding that this was a good plan, accepted the colas and went to report the offer to the district chief. The chief did not accept their wishes, and told the young man not to give them a chance to attack. The chief told the whole village. Having heard this information, certain men in the village (who had disagreed with the decision) joined the young man to go negotiate secretly with the rebels at night. They told the rebels, 'we are going to plant little sticks with strips of plastic tied to the top...This will lead you all the way to the (first) village. These markers will be your guide because you cannot pass by the real path – everything is guarded now...

On the night of the 25<sup>th</sup>/26<sup>th</sup>, they attacked (the first village). It was 2am that a (reconnaissance) group of three rebels found the young Guineans guarding a roadblock at the entrance to the village...They tried the same approach as before, saying, "Let us past, we've come here for the Manyas and not for you.' But the young guard refused, saying, "Here there are neither Manyas nor Loma, nor anything else: we are all Guineans.' They encircled the Liberians and tied their arms together... the other rebels...sent a large group to see what had happened. As soon

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<sup>81</sup> Toma is the term used in Guinea for the group called Loma in Liberia. They are one and the same ethnic group.

as they became visible to the men of the village, they sent up another signal...and the whole village automatically got up, so as not to give them an opportunity to enter the village, and pushed them back 200 meters to a coffee plantation. It was a very tough battle...The men of the village dropped their hunting shotguns, and picked up machetes and poisoned arrows. It was at this moment that they began to kill a lot of rebels...The rest of the rebels fled, but they fell into an ambush at (a nearby village), and were all killed, because as soon as the first village had been attacked, the second was informed... The attack failed... (McGovern 2004, 580-581)

This account provides a powerful demonstration of the sense of duty to defend the Guinean nation, which was deeply engrained in the Guinean population's psyche no matter their ethno-regional origins or social status. In spite of all the individual gripes that Guineans had with the state and with their fellow Guineans from other ethnic groups, in times of crisis, they largely stood together and were able to jointly defeat the attackers.

## Conclusion

Insurgents in Guinea tried to use the same playbook as in 1991 in Sierra Leone but failed due to a residual capacity by the Guinean state to mobilize its institutions and the wider population in times of crisis.

The differences among the civil war states are subtle but significant. Guinea's state and security institutions were not strong in any conventional sense. Even though its security forces were surprised and routed by the rebel attacks at first, they did not break apart into different ethnic factions, and there were no reports of Guinean soldiers joining the insurgents. Territorial administrators who were often unreliable and ineffective in administering Guinea's countryside in normal times, mobilized local chiefs, administrative personnel, and regular Guineans to protect villages and towns. Guineans of all stripes followed appeals by their president, for whom many had little respect, to denounce suspected activity and assist the security forces in rounding up potential rebel collaborators. This happened despite serious efforts by the insurgents to exploit local tensions

and find support among ethnic groups they suspected to be friendly to their cause. Although many Forestier communities had an ambiguous relationship with the regime and their own grievances against the Guinean state, they still felt that their being part of the Guinean state was more important for their future than to engage in the risky business of rising up against the regime.

Grievances and even a history of violence alone are not sufficient for larger-scale violent conflict to occur, as shown in the Guinea case. Prior cleavages only matter as far as they can be activated for mobilization for a specific cause. In the preparatory or early stages of an insurgency,<sup>82</sup> those targeted by those mobilizational efforts carefully weigh their options. They weigh the credibility and chances of either side in the conflict. Although long-standing grievances against an oppressive regime might be a powerful motivator to rise up against an existing order, it can be countered by a credible appeal to defend a larger community and the state and the security and value they embody.

Therefore, despite significant inefficiencies, the Guinean government could rely on long-standing practices and a rhetoric developed decades ago to rouse the masses and to mobilize key security and administrative institutions to stand together in times of crisis. The appeal to the nation to stand together and for all Guineans to mobilize, be “vigilant,” and play a part in the collective defense of the state was a critical complement to the institutional defense. The appeals to the wider population helped to fire up Guineans of all stripes to join the defense efforts and to form local defense committees or join volunteer militias to fight next to traditional hunter units and fighters borrowed from Sierra Leone’s Civil Defence Forces.

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<sup>82</sup> As Kalyvas (2006: ch. 3?) has shown, once territory is firmly under military control by one side or another, mobilizing for one side or another in a civil war becomes less of a choice.

## **Senegal: The separatist uprising in Casamance and its containment**

In Senegal, the separatist insurgency by the Movement of the Democratic Forces of Casamance developed at the margins of the state and in actual opposition to the expansion of the core state into Casamance region. Although the Casamance uprising proved resilient to peacemaking efforts over now three decades, it remained a regional and ethnic-based movement that never really challenged the core state in any serious way. It was not able to sow disunity and divide core state institutions and state security forces. The territorial administration acted largely in unison and successfully contained the conflict.

### **Backdrop to the Casamance uprising: Grievances and separatist sentiment**

The backdrop to the Casamance uprising by the MFDC was intimately linked to the way the southern region was integrated into the Senegalese state. A Casamance political identity developed as soon as the electoral franchise was expanded to rural areas in the late 1940s. A political grouping called Movement of Democratic Forces of Casamance became the first political party of Casamance aiming to ensure that the region's interests would be heard among the established parties in Dakar. The group also wanted to gain influence for its leaders in the capital. Although the historical MFDC did not have any separatist leanings and, despite claims to the opposite, there was no historical link between the historical party and the modern movement, the separatist leaders built on the idea of a special Casamance identity different from other parts of Senegal developed at the time. This original discourse evolved in light of grievances against the central state that built up over the first two decades of independence, with an escalation in the late 1970s. This was due to the links the central state forged in Casamance. The southern region became part of the state's clientelist network under Léopold Senghor's Bloc Démocratique Sénégalais (BDS) and later the single party, the Union Progressiste Pénégalaise (UPS). Early Casamance politicians, including Emile Badiane, the head of the historical MFDC in 1948, were appointed to party and government positions and expected to

deliver the Casamançais vote in return for favors from the center to the region (Lambert 1998, 591). The central state in Dakar treated Casamance just like most other regions of Senegal, where strong social hierarchies allow local traditional leaders to command significant authority and a large following. However, Diola society had historically been fragmented with political power being highly localized and invested in lineage heads of founding families of villages and towns (Boone 2003, 100-104). Early Casmançais leaders thus had only a limited local following in and around their immediate area of origin, but not across the whole region. Since Casmance had limited political clout in Dakar compared to the critically important Wolof and religious elites in the country's central region, it already received a relatively small share of national investments. Since these investments were channeled through the high-ranking Casamançais government official and party members, they only benefited those officials' immediate home towns and villages. Large parts of Casmance saw few resources. At the same time, northern politicians and business interests set their sights on Casmance's resources – ocean, river, and forest products and fertile land. The political integration of Casamance into the state produced thus an influx of northern Senegalese from Dakar and central areas to do business in Casamance. This influx led to an economy whereby raw materials were exported from Casamance to the north and abroad. Although there was significant state and private investment in the capital Ziguinchor and in the tourist areas along the coast, most of the trade was controlled by northerners, who earned most of the surplus value of the natural goods traded. Many of those northerners also had ties to the single UPS/UDS party or to the government. This created a sense of being exploited and not receiving a fair share in return from the Senegalese state among Casamance's emerging educated middle class. Attempts by the state to take over the attribution of valuable land in and around Ziguinchor, undercutting the power of local lineage heads, further increased tensions between northern allochtones and Casamance autochtones (Eichelsheim 1991). Several highly publicized cases of expropriation and displacement of local inhabitants resonated

across Casamance and contributed to the deepening of local grievances against external interests and the Senegalese state.<sup>83</sup> It was these expropriations that touched on the interests of the autochthonous population, including members of the educated middle class and professional groups, notably teachers. Some of those affected by the expropriations formed the core group of opponents<sup>84</sup> who led the recreation of the MFDC in the early 1980s (Marut 2010, 85-87). This anti-northern sentiment was worsened by persistent stereotypes among the Wolof-influenced majority of northern Senegalese about Casamançais people, considering them backward and lazy. Even though many migrants from the southern region went to Dakar to attend university or to find low-skilled jobs, they often felt discriminated against when competing with northerners and brought some of these resentments back to Casamance (Marut 2010, 88).

The MFDC insurgency was thus rooted in genuine grievances against the Senegalese state and was due to the expansion of central state hegemony into the southern region (Eichelsheim 1991). It built on a pre-existing discourse of a distinct Casamance identity in opposition to a northern (“nordiste” in French) identity. This Casamance identity was predominantly a Diola identity, since the other large ethnic groups of Casamance, Peulh and Mandingo,<sup>85</sup> did not share all those grievances and largely remained at the margins of the uprising. Despite regular denials by the MFDC leadership, the MFDC insurgency was thus primarily a Diola uprising and represented Diola grievances and interests. It represented the interests of the Diola middle class in and around Ziguinchor and the

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<sup>83</sup> This included notably the displacement of several dozen Baïnouk Creole families, descendants of the founders of Ziguinchor, due to the construction of apartment blocks for northern functionaries who had been assigned to Casamance and the expropriation of 44 local families to construct the luxury Nema Kadior hotel by a French investor in 1978 (Marut 2010, 85).

<sup>84</sup> Abbé Diamacoune himself was at the receiving end of this treatment, when the government only gave him titles for a fraction of the various plots he owned in the suburbs of Ziguinchor in the late 1970s. In the two-year span of 1980–1981 there were 2,000 plots of land expropriated in the urban and peri-urban districts of Ziguinchor alone (Dykman 2000, 8).

<sup>85</sup> In the 1976 census, Diola constituted 31 percent, Peulhs 26 percent, and Mandingo 15 percent. Each of these three ethnic groups is dominant in different parts of Casamance with the Diola dominant in the western part around Ziguinchor, the heart of the MFDC insurgency (Darbon 1988, 28-30).

farmers and fishermen of the marshes and forests of the Casamance river delta and lower Casamance. Since the insurgent movement was largely organized around the clientelist networks of its main leaders and Diola society has traditionally been decentralized, recruitment was most successful in and around the villages and hometowns of these leaders. While the movement had a significant number of urban recruits in the early days, recruitment was mainly done locally in villages controlled by the various splinter groups of the Front Nord and Sud, in refugee camps in Guinea-Bissau, and even among the Diola population in Guinea-Bissau (Foucher 2007, 173-174, 183-185; Châtelot 2012). The MFDC gave voice to what had been until then numerous disjointed acts of local resistance, boycotts, and even the formation of local defense militias against the perceived usurpation of local fishing grounds by northern fishermen (Marut 2010, 82-84).

### **Evolution of the insurgency**

The December 26, 1982 protest march in Ziguinchor, the capital of Casamance region, against perceived northern domination, started out peacefully. It had been organized under the banner of the Movement for the Democratic Forces of Casamance by a core group of Casamançais intellectuals, mainly school directors and teachers from Ziguinchor and surrounding areas, and Casamançais, mainly ethnic Diola, university students in Dakar and France (Marut 2010, 99-100). When hearing of the demonstration, the Senegalese security forces preventively arrested the two MFDC leaders, Mamadou Sané and Father Augustin Diamacoune Senghor,<sup>86</sup> on the day before the event. Although the demonstration was peaceful, Senegalese security forces were out in strength and

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<sup>86</sup> The movement was initiated by a Casamançais émigré in Paris, Mamadou Sané, called “Nkrumah,” who had founded a Diola cultural association in the late 1970s. Sané contacted a politically engaged priest, Father Diamacoune, who was popular across Casamance and had increasingly taken more radical positions in favor of Casamance independence (Marut 2010, 95-99). Father Diamacoune ended up becoming the president and main public face of the MFDC, while Sané was mostly in exile in Paris and led all its external relations. The two individuals jostled for the main leadership of the insurgency throughout their tenure and Sané declared himself secretary general and leader of the MFDC after Diamacoune’s death in 2007.

tightly controlled the roughly 1,000 marchers. When the protesters proceeded to symbolically lower the Senegalese flag in front of the local government office and replace it with a white flag, security forces started firing into the crowd and killed several demonstrators. Armed with traditional weapons, some of the demonstrators were said to have attacked and killed members of the security forces in return (Marut 2010, 100-101). Subsequently, known members and alleged sympathizers of the MFDC were arrested in sweeps in Ziguinchor and across lower Casamance. Several hundred Casamançais were imprisoned. The key leaders were sentenced before the state security court to prison sentences of up to five years (Amnesty International 1990a).

This violent response by the Senegalese state spurred a much broader popular mobilization and greater organization of the MFDC. The separatist movement's mobilization was hampered, though, by the fact that most of the senior MFDC leadership was in prison. While the imprisonment of its leaders and many members was highly useful for the movement's symbolic mobilization – the large-scale arrests seemed to demonstrate the northern-dominated state's unjustness and anti-Casamance repression – it did constrain its organizational capacity. The arrests and absence of the leadership on the ground led to radicalization of the movement. MFDC members who were formerly in the Senegalese military rose to prominence and fully embraced a more violent approach to making their claims.

Almost one year after the initial demonstration, several armed MFDC units attacked security forces at various points in Ziguinchor on December 18, 1983.<sup>87</sup> Although many MFDC fighters were poorly armed with traditional weapons or hunting rifles, the state government forces were taken by

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<sup>87</sup> This date is mainly explained by the fact that many of the MFDC leaders arrested in December 1982 had just been convicted of crimes against state security by the national security court in Dakar on December 13, 1983 and sentenced to up to five years in prison.

surprise, and fighting ensued for most of the day. The official death toll was 24 with many dozens injured, combatants as well as members of the military and police (Foucher 2007, 177; Marut 2010, 106). This event marked the official beginning of the MFDC's armed wing, called "Atika" ("fighter" in the Diola language). Further arrests of suspected MFDC members followed, and state repression took on new dimensions as the state security forces took their revenge on the Casamance population. Since those fighters who escaped in the aftermath of the December 18 attacks sought refuge in the forests and mangrove swamps around Ziguinchor, the military systematically raided villages and harassed, arrested, and often tortured or otherwise abused numerous civilians, often based on flimsy evidence.

The indiscriminate targeting of the civilian population in the early and mid-1990s increased the existing but until-then diffuse anti-state feelings among the broader population of lower Casamance. Support for the MFDC was at its peak in those years. Local chiefs and support committees in many villages in lower Casamance collected regular contributions to the insurgency and offered shelter and other material support (Marut 2010, 147). Since the civilian leadership of the movement was in prison, though, it was not able to fully take advantage of the outpouring of sympathy among the population, and a broader mobilization of the population never occurred. Instead, the MFDC in those days was led by ex-soldiers who focused on extending the group's armed activities.

When many of the MFDC leaders were released from prison in the late 1980s, they were intent on launching a more organized armed insurgency. MFDC forces reorganized and, with support from Guinea-Bissau, launched systematic attacks against military and government installations, border posts, and villages suspected of being hostile to the separatist cause (Immigration and Refugee Board of Canada 1992). The early 1990s saw the most severe combat of the conflict. Atika could at

times openly battle Senegalese military forces. The Senegalese military seemed at first to be caught unprepared and struggled to contain the violence. It responded with further arrests, torture, and extrajudicial killings (Amnesty International 1990b). The severe combat of the early 1990s prompted a change of tactics on the part of the government, which subsequently deployed a wider range of tools to contain the insurgency. It released 349 political prisoners and signed a first ceasefire agreement with the insurgents in May 1991, after which the conflict transformed into a low-intensity guerrilla insurgency with occasional pinprick attacks and ambushes by the MFDC and regular revenge operations and arrests by the state security forces. MFDC camps along the southern border with Guinea-Bissau and the northern border with the Gambia greatly benefited from shelter, support, and commercial opportunities across both borders (Foucher 2007, 178-179). This cross-border help largely explains the staying power of the MFDC and its ability to survive until today.

Despite the 1991 ceasefire, the MFDC, in particular the more radical faction on the Front Sud, continued its guerilla activities with a few armed attacks against the Senegalese state throughout the 1990s and 2000s. The Senegalese state, under presidents Abdou Diouf (until 2000) and Abdoulaye Wade (2000–2012) alternated between forceful and accommodative approaches, combining the carrots of negotiations, some concessions, and pay-offs to individual factions with the sticks of military pressure against recalcitrant MFDC splinter groups throughout the 1990s and 2000s.

Things remained largely unchanged throughout the 2000s with a few attacks against military convoys or installations a year as well as occasional in-fighting between MFDC factions, which was particularly intense after Father Diamacoune's death in 2007 as faction leaders jostled for power. Fighting escalated again in 2011 in the lead-up to presidential elections as faction leaders wanted to improve their bargaining positions. The election of then opposition-politician Macky Sall in 2012 led

to renewed hopes for peace due to outside facilitation and a new negotiation strategy aimed at concluding separate agreements with individual factions. Violent incidents in Casamance have decreased since, and the main MFDC leader Salif Sadio declared a unilateral ceasefire in May 2014 (Sénégal: Salif Sadio Annonce un Cessez-le-feu en Casamance 2014). The Casamançais people continue to suffer from the effects of the insurgency. The numbers of tourists visiting the region have remained at much lower levels than during its heyday in the 1980s, and many farmers and villagers still die regularly from land mines.

The MFDC's mobilizational efforts and armed struggle were made less effective by significant internal divisions, which led to a split of the military organization in 1992 into a more radical Southern Front (Front Sud) and a less influential Northern Front (Front Nord). The Front Nord itself split again into two splinter groups each in the mid-1990s (Humphreys and Mohamed 2005, 252-253). These divisions were in part a function of the Senegalese state's arrest of the key leadership early on in the insurgency and their imprisonment throughout the 1980s. They were also caused by deliberate attempts by the state to divide the movement through targeted pay-offs to certain leaders and sub-groups in return for their respect of ceasefire terms and continued negotiations with the regime in Dakar. The fragmentation of the MFDC was such that since 1998 the Senegalese state has tried to facilitate a reunification of the different MFDC splinter groups. The divisions had become detrimental to reaching negotiated settlements (Foucher 2007, 172, 185-189).

The MFDC never controlled enough territory to set up an alternative administration or governance structure in Casamance. In fact, beyond the diffuse notion of taking revenge against perceived northern domination and taking control of and exploiting Casamançais resources for their own benefit, the MFDC did not have a detailed alternative vision of political and social organization that

would have been different from that of Senegal. They simply wanted more autonomy or independence. They defined their vision largely in terms of their opposition, or “resistance” as they liked to see it, against the Senegalese state in Casamance (Marut 2010, 139-141).

### **Mobilization strategy**

Given the evolution of local politics and the tensions around the incorporation of Casamance into state and party structures, exploiting grievances through symbolic mobilization was the main and most promising mobilizational strategy for the MFDC. Organizationally, the movement was weak and its reach limited. It also operated in a relatively resource-poor context since there were no high-value mineral deposits in Casamance that could be exploited. While a local war economy helped the insurgency to simmer at low levels for three decades, it was not critical in explaining the origins of the conflict.

The MFDC relied mainly on appeals to negative feelings toward northerners and the central state. It created its own “mythicohistory” (Foucher 2007, 176) out of somewhat diffuse Casamançais and Diola identities through the reinterpretation of historical materials and symbols that appealed to members of the Diola group. The MFDC saw itself as a “liberation” movement in the tradition of other liberation movements. It made frequent reference to the French resistance, the Algerian FNL, and PAIGC,<sup>88</sup> the Bissau Guinean pro-independence party (Marut 2010, 34-35). To justify this claim, MFDC leaders, in particular Father Diamacoune, based their symbolic mobilization on a number of myths and a reinterpretation of history that portrays Casamance as a rich and fertile piece of land, the bread basket for all of Senegal, exploited and disadvantaged by the north. Diamacoune appealed frequently to a mythical tradition of three centuries of resistance among the Casamance

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<sup>88</sup> Partido Africano da Independência da Guiné e Cabo Verde – African Party for the Independence of Guinea and Cape Vert.

people, notably the Diola, against attempts at colonization, even though this claim has little foundation in history.<sup>89</sup> There was a particular emphasis on Diola resistance to French colonial and northern dominance, notably by referring to the often-cited liberation heroine Aline Sinoë Diatta, a Casamançais self-declared priestess who resisted French taxation of agricultural production and the introduction of cash crops, notably peanuts instead of local crops (Marut 2010, 35). In MFDC's narrative, Casamance was never meant to be part of Senegal and was annexed illegally by the Senegalese center at independence. One central aspect of this claim is an alleged pact by Casamance leaders at the time with President Senghor, according to which the southern region would gain independence if the Casamançais voted in favor of Senghor and his party in the critical elections in the late 1950s that allowed Senghor to establish his hegemony over the Senegalese state (Marut 2010, 41-42). Although there is no historical evidence for this assertion, Diamacoune always argued that Senghor did not hold up his end of the bargain. Instead, in Diamacoune's version of events, what followed after independence was a sustained exploitation of Casamance's resources by northern, in particular Wolof, elites, who expropriated land, sold Casamançais resources in the north or in international markets, expropriated land, and married Diola women (Marut 2010, 42-43). Although the MFDC leaders were themselves largely from a middle class background as teachers and professionals, they portrayed the movement as representing the interests of the lower classes, juxtaposing "virtuous" Diola peasants against the northern elites and their comparatively lavish lifestyles (Marut 2010, 45-46).

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<sup>89</sup> Casamance was only created as a region in a French-Portuguese agreement on the demarcation of the borders of their colonial possessions in 1886. Before that there was no unit called Casamance (only the river of the same name). It was administratively integrated into French Senegal in 1895 and divided into two administrative circles in 1890 (Marut 2010, 56-59). When Senegal became independent in 1960, Casamance was fully part of it and fully integrated as one administrative "circle," and there was no documented open opposition to its being part of newly independent Senegal at the time (Marut 2010, 57).

This populist, anti-northern and anti-state discourse seems to equally explain the MFDC's success and its limited popular appeal. While the grievances against the northern-dominated central state were widespread in Casamance, not more than a few thousand protesters joined in the December 1982 and 1983 demonstrations. This early mobilization was limited to members of the urban middle class and those directly affected by discriminatory practices by state institutions. The violent crackdown by state security forces against the peaceful protesters during both those public protests in 1982 and 1983 significantly boosted the MFDC's popularity and appeal among the general Casamançais population.

Material incentives were never a major factor in the MFDC's mobilization. The developing war economy made conflict resolution harder and the fragmented nature of the resources also may have supported the fragmentation of the insurgency over time (Humphreys and Mohamed 2005). Experts generally agree that the Casamance conflict was rather a "resourceless" war (Foucher 2007, 180). There was no one high-value export commodity that the insurgents controlled and that would provide the subsistence base for the armed struggle. The MFDC insurgency naturally had to finance itself, but it did so through the taxation of an already impoverished local population and a wide range of income-generating strategies that grafted themselves onto "Pre-existing forms of production and trade, mostly using established marketing channels rather than developing a parallel economy" (Evans 2003, 19).

The MFDC could never translate the successful mobilization and the popular sympathies of the early 1980s into a genuine mass movement, not in Casamance and certainly not anywhere outside its region of origin. Due to the political sensitivity of the pro-independence feelings, there were never any surveys about how widespread support for the MFDC's positions was. Although there is no

precise data on the size of the movement, no estimate puts it beyond a few thousand members at any given time (Evans 2003, 4; Evans 2004, 6). This small number of members was in large part due to its focus on narrow ethno-regional interests and identities. The Senegalese state's response was overall quite successful and significantly limited the insurgency's reach and mobilization. Even throughout the years, the MFDC never grew into a movement any larger than the few thousand protesters it mobilized in December 1982 at the start of the insurgency.

### **State response to the insurgency**

The Casamance uprising never posed any serious threat to the integrity of the Senegalese state. Senegalese state institutions, the security forces and territorial administration, were solidly loyal to the center. The separatist message did not resonate within the formal state apparatus. From the 1990s on, Senegalese leaders were able to deploy a wide register of responses which, together, helped to contain the insurgency without being able to fully eliminate it. There were three main strands to the state's response: a military response to go after MFDC leaders, members, and suspected sympathizers; efforts to undermine the movement by denying the existence of a Casamançais identity and by stoking the fragmentation of the movement; and efforts to quietly address some of the Casamançais grievances.

Any pro-independence stirrings or discourse threatening to undermine the unity of the state were anathema to the Dakar government. Senegalese leaders were certainly concerned about Casamance setting a precedent for other regions and minority groups. This concern explained a rather forceful response to a relatively limited protest movement at first, which rather stoked the conflict and made mobilization easier for the insurgents. The Senegalese state at first reacted with a heavy hand to the MFDC protests in 1982. Repression was its main strategy under President Abdou Diouf until the

early 1990s. The 1980s thus saw first the arrest and imprisonment of most of the MFDC leadership and hundreds of its members as well as revenge attacks and regular sweeps throughout lower Casamance against suspected MFDC strongholds and members' villages.

The Senegalese security forces – both military and gendarmerie – comprised approximately 14,000 troops in total, to which a few thousand special Mobile Intervention Forces (Groupes Mobiles d'Intervention) under the Ministry of Interior need to be added. At any given time, around one-third and, during acute crisis, up to one-half of those troops were based in Casamance (Marut 2010, 163; Evans 2003, 4-5). Just like in most African militaries, there were common complaints about late pay and difficult living conditions by Senegalese soldiers serving in Casamance, which, at times, impeded their ability to fight the insurgency (Evans 2000, 656-657). However, there were no reported defections from the military to the insurgents. Generally, the Senegalese military was known to be relatively well-trained, coherent, and disciplined<sup>90</sup> compared to its African peers. They were largely effective in defending central state interests in Casamance. The Senegalese troops always controlled most parts of the territory and all the major roads, while the rebel camps were confined to remoter parts of southern and northern Casamance along the borders with Guinea-Bissau and the Gambia. The MFDC had small units of a few men in the outskirts of Ziguinchor at times, but beyond hit and run attacks against military convoys or checkpoints they were not a major threat. As a statement by the government to counter the claim of the MFDC being a legitimate popular movement of the Casamance or Diola people and to demonstrate the solidity of the core Senegalese state model, significant parts of the military and security forces fighting in Casamance were ethnic Diola, just like the insurgents (Marut 2010, 165).

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<sup>90</sup> Cox and Kessler described the Senegalese military of the 1970s as “An effective fighting force...well-equipped and well-trained, with an esprit de corps inherited from the colonial period” (Cox and Kessler 1980, 334). They also suggest that Senegalese troops' early involvement in UN peacekeeping missions and their intervention in then-Zaire's Shaba province in 1978 also contributed to increasing their effectiveness and professionalism.

State repression had an ambiguous effect on the movement. First, it made mobilization easier, since it seemed to confirm all the grievances and negative feelings Casamançais elites and common people harbored against the central state. It significantly increased the sympathy that the MFDC had within the broader population. Second, though, the organizational decapitation of the movement through large-scale arrests deprived it of the ability to better organize and build a more forceful and broader-based social movement. Instead, radicals within the MFDC took over what was left of the organization and wholeheartedly embraced violent means as the only way to respond to the state's heavy hand. With the strengthening of the MFDC's military wing in the early 1990s and a significant escalation of armed action against state installations, the Senegalese government diversified its response. It entered into unofficial negotiations with various factions of the MFDC while maintaining a strong presence of the security forces in the province. These forces would occasionally launch operations against insurgent hideouts and continued to harass the civilian population suspected of sympathies with the rebels. Many human rights violations including extrajudicial killings, disappearances, torture, and various forms of abuse of civilians occurred (AI 1990, 1998).

The second aspect of the Senegalese government's response to the uprising was a multi-layered effort to undermine the MFDC. This undermining included a refusal to recognize the movement and its claims and a coordinated effort at public communication that painted the MFDC as a small ethnic fringe movement. The government denied any legitimacy to the MFDC's claims or to the existence of a Casamançais identity. In particular in the early years, but generally until the mid-2000s, Senegalese presidents and government officials in Dakar refused to acknowledge the MFDC and its agenda in official communications. When it was mentioned, the movement was treated as criminal and its members labeled "bandits" or "terrorists." Official pronouncements never mentioned

military action in Casamance and only spoke of operations “to maintain public order” or to “secure the territorial integrity.” Dakar politicians or media used euphemisms such as “events” or “problems” and never used the terms “conflict” or “war” to describe the situation in its southernmost region. Journalists who reported about the conflict too openly were sanctioned. Some foreign journalists were expelled for their reporting on the Casamance conflict (Marut 2010, 172-173).

These symbolic efforts by Senegalese state representatives were rooted in a feeling of betrayal and outrage at the MFDC’s anti-state mobilization. The sense of a Senegalese nationalism with a Wolof identity at its core was strong in most parts of northern and central Senegal. There was widespread disapproval of any attempts at ethnic mobilization against the state. Even all opposition political parties stood firmly behind the government in their rejection of MFDC’s separatist agenda, although some criticized the government’s military strategy (Marut 1995, 167). State officials further tried to delegitimize the movement by occasionally referring to its foreign supporters or by mentioning unnamed “obscure” forces that were supposed to be behind it to undermine the Senegalese nation (Marut 2010, 176-177). These efforts at denying any legitimacy to the MFDC and its demands did not only remain the rhetorical realm, but also had a concrete impact in the administrative organization of the region. Soon after the outbreak of the uprising, the Senegalese state reorganized what was then called Casamance Region into two separate units in an attempt to undercut any Casamançais identity formation beyond the Diola heartland in Lower Casamance. In 2008, it divided Casamance into three administrative regions, each one named after its capital – Ziguinchor, Sédhiou, and Kolda. The name “Casamance” as an administrative unit then ceased to exist (Marut 2010, 173).

In addition, attempts at marginalizing the MFDC included first the refusal of any contact with the movement in the 1980s, and then efforts to exploit divisions within the insurgency. Negotiations with the MFDC were often conducted through back channels, which allowed the government to play different factions off each other. Following the clientelist script that largely dominated how the Senegalese state operated (Beck 2008), each round of negotiations and ceasefire or peace agreements was accompanied by significant cash payments or other material benefits given by the Senegalese state to MFDC faction leaders or the entire factions. These payments were significant and cost the Senegalese state up to several million dollars per year around the signing of the peace agreement of 2004. International aid was channeled to MFDC units in the form of disarmament and reintegration and local economic development programs (Marut 2010, 177-181). These payoffs not only helped to buy the cooperation of certain leaders and their followers, but they also deepened divisions and sowed distrust between MFDC factions, with the aim of isolating the more radical elements. The fact that there was little or no violence by Atika fighters on the Front Nord from the early 1990s on is largely attributed to the significant state resources that were channeled to the Front Nord leaders during that time (Foucher 2007, 188-189, FN56).

Third, despite a firm official stance that denied or ignored the MFDC's demands for independence, the state's parallel strategy of coercion and negotiation was quietly accompanied by political changes and reforms that addressed some of the Casamançais grievances. These changes included the appointment of more Diola and people from the region, many of them from younger, educated generations with no ties to the MFDC, to key political and administrative posts (Darbon 1988, 190) as well as the establishment of a land claims and dispute settlement commission (Foucher 2007, 187-188). There were influential Diola politicians in all governments as well as among the military hierarchy in Dakar. They exercised influence through their clientelist networks in Casamance to limit

the MFDC's appeal. These concessions helped to blunt the MFDC's claims and contributed to undercutting the popular support the insurgency had (Humphreys and Mohamed 2005, 284). It also demonstrated that the MFDC was by no means popular across Casamance and that many Casamançais, and particular younger generations, had no problems supporting and identifying with the central government.

## Conclusion

The Senegalese state displayed signs of significant mobilizational capacity. It deployed the security forces in relatively large numbers. The security forces acted as one unitary force and were effective, even though too aggressive at times, which deepened grievances among local Diola communities and helped with insurgent mobilization. Overall, though, the Senegalese state responded effectively and spoke with one voice. There was wide agreement among state actors that any attempt to destabilize Senegal and secede from the state was unacceptable. Due to its strong core, Senegalese governments ultimately had a much wider range of tools available to counter and contain the insurgency, combining a military response with targeted attempts to sideline the MFDC leadership first by imprisoning them, then by dividing the movement through offering selective incentives to certain leaders and making quiet concessions to undercut the legitimacy of the movement's claims. In the end, the MFDC remained a relatively marginal phenomenon for the Senegalese state. The MFDC's message and mobilizational efforts to divide and undermine state institutions ultimately only resonated with a relatively limited number of ethnic Diola and had no appeal beyond this core group. By standing up to the regime in Dakar, it may have given the Casamançais population, and in particular the Diola, back some of their pride, but the broader population of the region was neither in favor of independence nor did it see the Senegalese state as a negative force it needed to fight against (Marut 2010, 76).

The Casamance case also demonstrates how a strong core state might not only shape state capacity to respond to an armed uprising, but also structure the options available to the insurgency. The Wolof-dominated state was so strong at its core that resistance to state expansion only occurred in peripheral areas. Longer-term processes of state formation thus may not only shape the state's repertoire of responses to an armed challenge, but also narrow the choices available to potential insurgents about what kind of uprising might succeed.

## 5. Late colonial mobilization and states' mobilizational capacity

### Sierra Leone: Narrow rule and powerful chiefs

Various developments during the late colonial period, notably the British reliance on Paramount Chiefs to administer the countryside and the holding of competitive elections with a limited electorate, led to weak mobilization and political party organization across the territory. An ethnic and regionally defined ruling coalition easily won the decisive 1957 parliamentary elections and led Sierra Leone to independence, which set up fierce future competition over control of the state between northern- and southern-dominated political parties and interests.

### The enduring influence of early power accumulation: Chiefs as powerful intermediaries

Pre-colonial Sierra Leone had been divided into a large number of village- or mini-states ruled by traditional leaders or kings whose claims to authority had various sources. Most were descendants of the founding families of the villages or towns; others were powerful warriors, spiritual leaders, or heads of initiation societies (Dohrjahn 1960; Day 1984, 484). These kings were entrusted with wide-ranging powers. They were the representatives of their community, keepers of peace and unity, adjudicators of traditional laws and customs, administrators, tax collectors, security chiefs, and often had spiritual responsibilities. They ruled through a network of sub-chiefs and village headmen and had a circle of advisers made up of family members, landowners, elders with knowledge of traditional laws, and individuals occupying various administrative and ritual functions. Chiefs were usually elected for life by councils of elders. Their rule was not unchecked. Elders and other influential members of the community had to give their consent to important chiefly decisions. Chiefs could be deposed or forced to resign if they neglected their duties or did not meet the needs of the population. After the arrival of European traders and colonial officials, they formed alliances,

first with Western slave traders and later with the colonial powers, earning increased income and access to Western goods and weapons (Caulker 1981).

The directive by the UK Colonial Office that colonies had to be financially self-sufficient (Cartwright 1970, 27) imposed significant restrictions on the available strategies of administrative domination and economic exploitation in the Sierra Leone Protectorate. British colonial officers considered the chiefs, with whom they had interacted as trading partners since earlier in the nineteenth century, to be the natural representatives of the Sierra Leonean people and useful intermediaries in enforcing British rule. Consequently, the British left only a “light” administrative footprint in the hinterland. They divided the Protectorate into administrative districts, each headed by a British District Commissioner and a deputy. In 1896, only five British district commissioners represented the colonial government in the hinterland, a territory of 71,700 km<sup>2</sup>, almost the size of the U.S. state of South Carolina. The administrative districts were restructured a number of times, but by 1936 there were still only 22 British colonial District Officers and deputies, or roughly one per 60,000 Sierra Leonean inhabitants.<sup>91</sup>

By the 1930s, the colonial administration had consolidated the number of chiefdoms from more than 400 to 148 by merging two or three smaller chiefdoms into larger units. Each traditional chiefdom had one officially recognized “ruling house,” made up of the families of the existing king or ruler at the time. These rulers were given the title of “Paramount Chief” and became the chiefdom representatives of the colonial government. Although nominally their powers were restricted since they were under the direct supervision of a British District Commissioner, the chiefs

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<sup>91</sup> This small number contrasts starkly with the number of administrative personnel deployed in neighboring French colonies, where there were at least three to four times as many colonial officials per share of the population. For example, in the same year, 1936, one French colonial officer was responsible for 24,050 Guineans, 19,292 Senegalese, and 18,134 inhabitants of Côte d’Ivoire (Cartwright 1970, 27, Fn 52).

became de facto all-powerful agents of the colonial state (SLTRC 2004 Vol. 3A, 7-8) through their control over all that was considered to be the domain of customary law. Only the governor was empowered to appoint and depose chiefs upon the recommendation of the District Commissioner (Conteh-Morgan and Dixon-Fyle 1999, 41). However, given the poor supervision that the few District Commissioners had over the activities of the traditional leaders, Paramount Chiefs and their subordinates governed their hinterland territories as quasi-absolute rulers thanks to widespread powers and privileges.

Paramount Chiefs received cash compensation as early as 1896 – most notably a five percent rebate from the collection of the hut tax, but also other payments including “treaty stipends, annual gifts and entertainment allowances” (Kilson 1966, 53-54). Chiefs were also allowed to keep income from fines collected in native courts, which provided an incentive for them to impose heavy fines and to hear more and more cases in order to raise additional income. They often imposed additional non-tax levies that solely benefited themselves, using the money to construct themselves larger residences or to purchase vehicles and other luxury items (Kilson 1966, 54). Paramount Chiefs as well as subordinate town and village chiefs customarily had access to local labor for communal works on community farms or on infrastructure that benefited the entire community. Many chiefs made considerable use of this privilege. They had community members work on their and their family members’ farms and perform other work that benefited the elites only, such as the construction of large houses for chiefs and their families or guesthouses to host the occasional visitor from the colonial administration. The British colonial authorities attempted at various times to curb the relatively unregulated ability of chiefs to raise funds and mobilize local laborers, but did not have the manpower and supervision to enforce stricter rules. Furthermore, since they generally benefited

from chiefs' ability to raise taxes and mobilize laborers for works mandated by the British Crown, they were limited in their ability to crack down on abuses.

Chiefs also enjoyed economic privileges due to their control of economic resources. Key among those privileges was their role as final arbiters over the distribution of land. Although land tenure regimes varied slightly across Sierra Leone, chiefdom councils were the ultimate custodians of all communal land and chiefs wielded significant influence in the chiefdom council (Hanson-Alp 2005). Chiefs and elders often used large tracts of land for their own benefit and played a key role in the attribution of farm land. Chiefs thus had the ultimate power to regulate access to the chiefdom by outsiders to the chiefdom (Acemoglu et al. 2013). This was particularly valuable in chiefdoms with diamond and gold deposits, which ultimately could not be mined without the consent of the chief and without the chief receiving a share of the income (Reno 2003, 49-50).

Various British efforts to reform the chiefdom system did little to decrease the chiefs' influence. Even though nominally District Commissioners would hear any complaint by citizens against chiefly abuses, British colonial officials were far too few to properly investigate most complaints. Since they relied to a large extent on chiefs for the maintenance of law and order, they were also hesitant to undermine Paramount Chiefs' authority and rarely imposed sanctions on chiefs out of concerns for stability and law and order. Chiefs had to commit grave and blatant abuses of power for colonial officials to depose them (Tangri 1980, Mitchell 2002, 108-109 and 117-118). In 1937 Sierra Leonean Paramount Chiefs received the ultimate recognition of their role as the central agents of British rule in rural areas by having many of their rights formalized in the Native Administration Act.

Paramount Chiefs continued to be the official interpreters of customary law and were officially in charge of tax collection. A small bureaucracy was set up comprising administrative, court, and

treasury clerks to assist them in that endeavor. A chiefdom police force under the control of the Paramount Chief was established to keep order and security (Mitchell 2002).

The British restructuring of chiefdom boundaries and the amalgamation of smaller chiefdoms into new colonially recognized administrative units brought a number of traditional ruling lineages together within each chiefdom. Generally, there were between two and four so-called chiefly lineages, so-called “ruling houses,” in each re-designed administrative chiefdom. Since Paramount Chiefs could only be elected from among the ruling houses and since they ruled for life once elected, the stakes of controlling the Paramount Chieftaincy were high. This sowed the seeds for significant friction and, at times, open conflict between ruling families and their supporters about Paramount Chiefs’ succession and control of resources within each chiefdom. These conflicts were exploited by the British administration to keep sitting chiefs in line, thus setting the stage for the later politicization of chiefdom power struggles by political parties (Tangri 1976; Keen 2005a, 19-20, 69-70).

Paramount Chiefs’ additional political authority bestowed by the central state led to an overall strengthening of their position, while it weakened the traditional accountability mechanisms to their own communities. Chiefs with political support at the center became increasingly untouchable to criticism and not controllable by their own communities (Barrows 1976; Fanthorpe 2003, 8-9).

### ***The empowerment of Protectorate elites in the Colony***

Paramount Chiefs and members of ruling families gradually gained in influence in the Colony and were the first to represent the Protectorate in the colonial political institutions. This was due to their access to significant capital from their various privileges – salaries, tax revenue, court fines, control

of land, free labor – and, in particular for southern elites, to Western education after the establishment of Bo<sup>92</sup> Government School in 1906 to educate sons (indeed, sons only) of chiefs.

The first group of university-educated leaders from the Protectorate almost all had roots in chiefly families. The country's first Chief Minister (before independence) and Prime Minister (after independence), Milton Margai, was the first Protectorate man to go to medical school abroad and become a doctor.<sup>93</sup> His successor, his half-brother Albert Margai, was the first foreign-educated lawyer from the Protectorate. The country's first foreign minister, John Karefa-Smart, was the second Protectorate person to receive a foreign medical degree. It was this very small and new class of educated young Protectorate men with roots in both the traditional world of customary law and chiefly power, and the modern world of Western education, British laws, and government institutions.

As Protectorate elites became more prominent in Freetown and as opportunities for political organizing gradually grew starting in the 1930s, early political organizations and competition were marked by the disparate interests of the established Krio<sup>94</sup> elite in Freetown and the Protectorate newcomers. The Krio elite had a long history of involvement with colonial government, mostly through jobs at the lower rungs of the colonial administration and participation in elections (since when?) and political organizing. The Krio looked down on Protectorate people and considered them uncultured. At the same time, British officials had, over time, grown wary of Krio elites, viewing

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<sup>92</sup> Bo is the largest town in southern Sierra Leone and second-largest town of the country.

<sup>93</sup> Milton Margai was the grandson of a Mende warrior chief and son of a wealthy trader, and as such his family had the means to send him to Freetown to study at the elite Albert Academy, the best secondary school in the country at the time (Cartwright 1970, 37).

<sup>94</sup> Sierra Leone's Creole or Krio people were the first settlers taken to the West African coast by British Abolitionists under the Sierra Leone Company starting in 1887. They were descendants of freed slaves from the Americas, West Indies, and from ships intercepted in the Atlantic Ocean. The Krio were the dominant ethnic group in the Freetown colony, but only make up approximately four percent of Sierra Leone's total population today.

them as elitist and overconfident. They were more favorably inclined toward the new Protectorate elites.

Political reforms starting in the 1920s gave more political representation to Protectorate elites, notably by allowing for three Protectorate Paramount Chiefs to join the Legislative Council as non-voting members in the constitution of 1924 despite opposition by Krio members. With greater international pressure for the emancipation of colonized peoples after the end of World War II, constitutional reforms in 1946 introduced District Councils as advisory bodies to colonial District Commissioners made up of two representatives from each chiefdom, one of whom had to be a Paramount Chief. This reform meant that District Councils were dominated by Paramount Chiefs or their representatives, who then also became influential in the new central-level Protectorate Assembly, created in the same year to give Africans more representation in the administration of the Colony. The Protectorate Assembly was composed of representatives of District Councils, and chiefs made up at least 75 percent of the Assembly membership in every given year from 1945 to 1955 (Cartwright 1970, 39). Although the District Council nominees only served in an advisory capacity, this marked a significant shift by the British administration in favor of the Protectorate elites and marked a decline of Krio influence (Cartwright 1970, 39).

Common interests in opposing the Krio and representing rural interests in the Colony, common roots among the chiefly elites, and ethnic, clan, and family ties, brought modernists and traditionalists among the Protectorate elites together to organize politically (Conteh-Morgan and Dixon-Fyle 1999, 59). Prompted by the first somewhat competitive elections,<sup>95</sup> for the new

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<sup>95</sup> The elections were only competitive and open to a somewhat broader electorate in the Freetown Colony, while Protectorate members were only indirectly elected. Yet even in the Colony the “electorate consisted of some 5,000 relatively well-to-do literate males out of a total population of 123,000” (Cartwright 1970, 55).

Legislative Council in 1951, the Sierra Leone People's Party (SLPP) was founded under the leadership of Milton Margai as the first genuine political party with ambitions across the Colony and the Protectorate. In addition to uniting two previously separate associations of the younger educated Protectorate elites as well as the more traditional chiefs, it also managed to rally a number of the moderate Krio leaders.

### ***Late elections, limited franchise, narrow ruling coalition***

The fact that most of the early representatives in the Protectorate Assembly were appointed by the District Councils and the limited franchise in subsequent elections of the late colonial period had a significant impact on the emerging organization of political parties in Sierra Leone.

The 1950s were largely dominated by the rivalry between the interests of the Protectorate elites, represented by the SLPP, and the interests of the Krio elite in the colony, represented by the United People's Party (UPP). As the electoral franchise expanded to the Protectorate and to a broader set of voters, the SLPP was almost guaranteed electoral victory due to the demographic preponderance of the Protectorate population. The Krio-supported UPP did not have any organizational infrastructure in the Protectorate and no support in most other parts of the country. In contrast, the SLPP had a ready-made network of Paramount and lower-level Chiefs and their family members and patronage networks to rely on for electoral mobilization.

The SLPP also benefited from the goodwill it had with the British colonial administrators and from the fact that their leaders rose to prominence early by being appointed to positions within the colonial administration. African members of the Colony's Executive Council were given government portfolios in the early 1950s, becoming a kind of government-in-training for Africans. In 1953 all six

African members were named ministers, although British officials were kept in charge of all key portfolios, and the means given to the African ministers were very limited. Milton Margai, as a Western-trained doctor, was first appointed Minister of Health, Agriculture, and Forests and, in 1954, as leader of the SLPP, was named Chief Minister. Although the Governor retained formal authority over all decisions and appointments, the Chief Minister was considered to be a shadow-governor. The Governor would consult him on most decisions, notably on senior appointments (MacKenzie and Robinson 1960, 178). The SLPP thus dominated Sierra Leonean political institutions early on, and Margai was the uncontested leader. The party was thus in a strong position to compete in the 1957 legislative elections, the first competitive electoral contest with an expanded franchise.

The Protectorate Assembly was replaced by a House of Representatives in 1955. Since the 1957 elections would determine the future distribution of power between the Colony and Protectorate elites, the composition of the House of Representatives and the modalities of the elections were hotly contested. The SLPP had been lobbying strongly in favor of a unicameral parliamentary system with a large representation from the Protectorate and with reserved seats for Paramount Chiefs. The Creole-dominated United People's Party (UPP) countered with a proposal that would have given many more seats to the Freetown Colony and would have limited the involvement of chiefs. The SLPP largely got its way, since the new House of Representatives was made up of 14 directly elected members from the Colony, 25 elected representatives from the Protectorate, one Paramount Chief from each of the 12 districts, as well as two non-voting appointed members representing professional and commercial associations (MacKenzie and Robinson 1960, 179). Although there was some rebalancing of political power in favor of the Colony, the make-up of the House allowed for the balance of power to tip largely in favor of the Protectorate. While there was "quasi universal

suffrage” for the House elections in the Colony, the rules for the Protectorate empowered only individuals who had a cash income and was largely limited to men since there were few female taxpayers (MacKenzie and Robinson 1960, 182). Nonetheless, there was a potential electorate of almost 500,000 voters eligible to participate in the 1957 poll, the first broad-based election in Sierra Leone’s history.

The SLPP swept the House of Representative elections. It “Won the elections largely by default” (Cartwright 1970, 96) due to the absence of any other major political organization in the Protectorate and thanks to the popularity of Milton Margai, the SLPP mobilizational network of chiefs, and the additional 12 House seats reserved for Paramount Chiefs. It won 25 of the 39 competitive seats, mostly in the south and east of the country but also in the north and in the Colony (nine seats). Eight independent candidates also won seats and joined the SLPP group in parliament after the elections since winning gave them access to party patronage. Together with the 12 Paramount Chiefs who had been appointed by the District Councils, the SLPP won an overwhelming majority in the House of Representatives commanding 88 percent or 44 out of 50 seats, although it had directly captured only half of the parliamentary mandates (Cartwright 1970, 96).

Although this election established the SLPP as the predominant political force in the country, its clear victory was not necessarily due to overwhelming popular support. Abstention rates were significant in many parts of the country. With a voter turnout of roughly 33 percent, only a minority of Sierra Leoneans voted,<sup>96</sup> which translated into very limited popular support for many candidates

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<sup>96</sup> There were 494,917 registered voters, or 24 percent of a total population of 2,113,000. Only 165,479 Sierra Leoneans actually voted, which made for a participation rate of 33.4 percent or only 7.8 percent of the total population (see MacKenzie and Robinson 1960, 268-280).

who were ultimately elected. SLPP also benefited from the fact that it managed to prevent opposing candidates from running in four districts, in which the SLPP candidates ran unopposed. Single-member districts made it easier for the SLPP candidates allied with a ruling house to win the constituency, since a plurality of the votes was all that is needed. If chiefs were only popular and had a reliable following in part of a constituency, they could still often garner enough votes to carry the constituency (MacKenzie and Robinson 1960, 268-280).

All these factors combined made the SLPP appear to be much stronger and more dominant than it actually was. Its mass appeal was limited, and, as Cartwright suggests, “From the point of view of developing an effective political party..., the SLPP’s reliance on the chiefs was little short of disastrous” (Cartwright 1970, 89). Since it never had to appeal directly to the population for support, it remained a party of educated Protectorate elites and traditional chiefs and looked first after their interests. SLPP leaders gave chiefs wide latitude in managing their chiefdoms in return for the chiefs’ support during election time (Barrows 1976, 119). Chiefs had only to act during election time and use their authority to deliver the vote of their people en bloc. Party members fought for their own interests and their constituencies and were hardly interested in party affairs and the welfare of the country. As a result, “SLPP leaders were doing little in the way of party-building,” and despite claims to having up to ten thousand members in the early 1950s, local observers suggested that it had no more “than half-a-dozen local branches” (Cartwright 1970, 87) across the country. This was also illustrated by the weak attendance at party congresses. For example, only approximately 70 delegates participated in the 1956 SLPP national convention, only two of whom were from the north of the country. The party’s organizational infrastructure barely existed in the north of the country (Cartwright 1970, 88), and its appeal across ethno-regional divisions was limited. This lack of an organizational structure in the north would soon become a challenge as contestation of the southern

and Mende-dominated SLPP grew even in the years before independence and as a northern-dominated opposition emerged.

The way Sierra Leone gained independence did not provide any incentive or opportunity for mass mobilization by Sierra Leone's leaders either. The independence negotiations with Britain were a peaceful and elite-led affair driven much more by British interests than by Sierra Leonean initiative. SLPP leaders had been quite happy with the British presence in the country and the colonial power's ultimate responsibility for key functions, such as state security. Independence, which was ultimately granted in April 1961, was achieved without any popular mobilization.

### **Post-independence state formation and the evolution of states' mobilizational repertoire**

The lack of incentives for broad popular mobilization in the late colonial period and cleavages, albeit weak, already inherent in the early post-colonial state led to an increasingly ethnically and regionally narrow state and to a state-building strategy focused on alliances with rural chiefs. At the same time, since Sierra Leone's early leaders did not have to rally broad popular support through direct communication with the populace either to get elected or to achieve independence, they never developed a strong overarching identity beyond narrow ethnic or regionally-focused interests. The absence of any genuine nationalist sentiment or discourse did not allow state leaders to counter the significant fragmentation of the state apparatus and the weak institutional and material mobilizational capacity.

### ***Institutional capacity***

A narrow and narrowing post-independence state

From late colonial times, successive Sierra Leonean regimes became increasingly narrow in terms of the regional, social, and ethnic interest and groups they represented. This progressive narrowing of regimes' support base seriously undermined the effectiveness of state institutions, including of the security apparatus. It also produced growing numbers of aggrieved and frustrated individuals and groups. Combined, these factors significantly hampered the regime's ability to enact broad mobilization in times of crisis.

The narrowing of the support base for the regime had already started in the last years of the colonial period. As shown above, although the SLPP seemed to have broad-based support due to the 88 percent majority it enjoyed in the House of Representatives during the last few years of the colonial period, this majority was not rooted in genuine popular support and was fairly narrow with respect to popular support outside the southern heartland of many of its leaders and among less economically privileged groups. While the opposition to the Krio elite in Freetown had united the Protectorate elites in the SLPP, latent differences quickly emerged as soon as the large majority was won and independence seemed within reach.

Even though soon-to-be Prime Minister Milton Margai was generally seen as being above ethnic politics, he sidelined Siaka Stevens in 1959 and excluded other northern members of the Executive Council in 1960. Stevens had not only been the main northern representative on the SLPP leadership council, but was also the only "commoner" among early SLPP leaders, as he was without chiefly family connections. Margai's commoner status added a certain class dimension to his moves. As a result, Stevens refused to sign the independence agreement with the British government to mark his distance from the SLPP and the Margai brothers. Stevens then severed all ties with the SLPP and formed the APC as the main opposition party with the intention of representing the

interests of northerners as well as the working and rural underclasses. In response, Milton Margai had key APC members arrested in the days before Independence Day in April 1961, ostensibly because he was afraid they would disrupt the independence celebrations. All these acts cemented the image of the SLPP as southern and pro-Mende party rooted in rural elites' networks of power and set up the SLPP-APC contest as an ethno-regional struggle between northerners and southerners for control of the central state (SLTRC 2004, 18-19).

Due to these early rifts within the SLPP, and then between the SLPP and ACP, each side representing almost equal-sized parts of the country, an ethno-regional logic to the organization and composition of central state authority took hold. While Milton Margai had maintained a degree of parity between southern and northern interests, his half-brother Albert consolidated his rule after Sir Milton's death in 1964. Albert Margai succeeded Sir Milton as both the head of the SLPP and Prime Minister and quickly replaced northerners in the party and state apparatus with southerners by more or less openly favoring the recruitment and promotion of Mende within the administration and the military (Bundu 2001, 40-41). To consolidate control, the younger Margai cut the number of ministerial portfolios in his government from 19 to 11 and forced out ministers from the north or those who had been loyal to his half-brother. These actions left five Mende (south), four Krio (Freetown), one Temne (north), and one Susu (north) government minister. There were no representatives of other key minority groups, notably the Limba (Siaka Stevens' group) or Kono (SLTRC 2004 Vol. 3A, 20). Despite indications in the 1962 general and the 1966 local elections that the SLPP's support in the north and west of the country was eroding, Albert Margai continued the consolidation of his rule. When it came to the nomination of SLPP candidates for the 1967 elections, Albert is said to have personally selected only those candidates who had pledged personal loyalty to him (SLTRC 2004 Vol. 3A, 52). He sidelined a number of SLPP stalwarts who then

decided to run as independents or even to join the APC, which further diminished the SLPP's ability to mobilize a broad electorate.

Due to this narrowing of support for the SLPP, and thanks to the considerable popular appeal of former trade union leader Siaka Stevens, the APC narrowly beat Margai in the 1967 elections. Margai attempted to stay in power by force by asking the head of the Sierra Leone Armed Forces (SLAF), a close Margai associate, to intervene on his behalf. These attempts to subvert the electoral process were short lived, though. In response, junior military officers seized power, and, after another counter-coup in 1968, military junta leaders ultimately handed over power to Stevens in April 1968.

As Prime Minister, Siaka Stevens followed Albert Margai's playbook by purging the administration and military of Mende and southerners and replacing them with loyalists from the north. While his first governments included a significant number of prominent Temne leaders, the early 1970s saw a further consolidation and concentration of power among northern minority ethnic groups. Stevens relied mainly on his co-ethnics from the Limba, a northern ethnic group that represented roughly 9 percent of the country's population. After key Temne intellectuals and members of his government criticized his rule and formed an alternative party, the United Democratic Party (UDP) that also appealed to northern interests, Stevens had prominent government ministers Mohamed Forna and Ibrahim Bash-Taqi, as well as SLRAF Force Commander John Bangura, arrested in an alleged coup plot in 1971 and ultimately publicly tried and executed for treason (SLTRC 2004, 3A, 34). Purged even of many Temne members, Stevens' governments of the 1970s and 1980s were dominated by ethnic Limba, although members of other minority northern groups such as Koronko and Temne, as well as Krio and token southerners were always part of his government cabinets. Key Limba members of Stevens' regime included the Inspector General of Police, Bambay Camara, and the

Head of the Military, General Joseph Momoh (Fithen 1999, 169), as well as many senior members of the judiciary, which was stacked with Stevens and APC loyalists so that “Important court cases [would] be tried by their friends, tribesmen and loyal servants” (SLTRC 2004 Vol. 3A, 45). Even the leaders of key civil society institutions such as the Sierra Leonean Labour Congress or the influential teacher’s union were Limba or from small northern groups (SLTRC 2004 Vol. 3A, 69). Most members of the paramilitary Internal Security Unit were Limba or Koranko. Patronage distribution went to the north and to northern allies. Siaka Stevens in 1970 took the highly symbolic action of formally dismantling the country’s only railway, which had serviced the main southern (Bo) and eastern towns (Kenema, Pendembu) to make even physical access to the south of the country harder (Fithen 1999, 169).

This continuously narrowing of the ethno-regional support base for the regime also continued under Joseph Momoh, Stevens’ handpicked successor. Like Stevens, Momoh was himself a Limba and surrounded himself with many Limba co-ethnics who were members of Ekutay, a Limba secret society (SLTRC 2004 3A, 58). While select outsiders could be initiated into Ekutay, access to patronage resources were limited for leaders and populations from other parts of the country. With the Limba representing approximately nine percent of the Sierra Leonean population, the Momoh regime had an extremely narrow popular base. President Momoh made some concessions to the south by including a few southern politicians in his government, but they never were part of the inner circle and were removed if they became a threat. The most drastic example was Momoh’s Vice-President Francis Minnah, from southern Pujehun district, who was accused of plotting a coup against the Momoh and publicly executed in 1978 (SLTRC 2004 Vol. 3A, 63).

The enduring rule of powerful chiefs

This fierce two-way ethno-regional competition for control of the central state that defined the Sierra Leonean state from the early 1960s was made worse by a second key legacy that Sierra Leonean post-independence state builders had to contend with: the existence of strong Paramount Chiefs and their critical ability to administer rural areas and mobilize local populations. Rural areas remained the sites of fierce political competition, and attempts at wresting control from entrenched Paramount Chiefs testify to the central importance, and ultimately enduring power, of the chiefs.

Due to the pivotal role chiefs played in the SLPP, local power structures and practices barely changed after independence in 1961 (Allen 1968, 306). The Sierra Leonean state continued to administer rural areas through Paramount Chiefs and their networks of subordinate chiefs.

Paramount Chiefs enjoyed a considerable degree of autonomy in that they held the means of local social control and had access to local resources in their role as custodians of the land and as chief interpreters of customary law,<sup>97</sup> which allowed them to levy often significant fines against local political opponents and underprivileged young men they considered troublemakers. They also controlled chiefdom administrative staff and the “tribal police” officers who were in charge of maintaining order in the chiefdom. Despite abuses of power, chiefs still commanded a high degree of loyalty and reverence among local populations. Many people within a chiefdom depended on chiefs for patronage distribution and access to land, assets, or work. In some areas chiefs were also able to impose social sanctions on individuals through the secret initiation societies and to mobilize young men from non-privileged families for community labor and coercive action in intra- and inter-chiefdom disputes (Little 1966). Naturally, there was a certain mutual dependence between central rulers and the chiefs – central state leaders derived resources from their control of external trade and

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<sup>97</sup> Chiefs had a local monopoly over the adjudication of law in their chiefdoms until 1965, when the first magistrate courts were established in the Provinces. Customary law was not codified and could be interpreted by chiefs in the local courts over which they presided in the way they wanted (SLTRC 2004, 3A, 60).

relations, and, in extreme circumstances, could mobilize the coercive apparatus of the central state against the rural powerbrokers. However, this mutual dependence was more significant with respect to chiefs from poorer districts. Those in charge of chiefdoms in the southeastern diamond belt or who had access to taxes from other significant minerals or cash crops such as rubber or palm kernels/oil could mobilize significant resources of their own.

Consequently, chiefs were critical to maintaining order in rural areas and were central gatekeepers for all political activities within their chiefdoms. They held all the keys to mobilizing the local population for or against the state by controlling the flow of information and the local means of coercion. There was no alternative central state-controlled infrastructure of power that could have contested the chiefs' role as gatekeepers to rural populations. The central state and the ruling party still at times deposed disloyal chiefs to set an example (Cartwright 1970, 243). The state used a mix of coercion and incentives, in the form of patronage distribution or access to national offices, to keep chiefs and their family members loyal and willing to do the ruling party's bidding. Due to various manipulations to the chiefdom system in colonial times, there were usually two to three ruling houses<sup>98</sup> in each chiefdom, which heightened local political competition and provided a fertile ground for national politics to graft itself onto chiefdom politics.

Most ruling houses in power became allied with the SLPP in the 1950s. The SLPP quickly became the only relevant political formation in the Protectorate and the organization that represented the interests of rural elites. However, as soon as the APC emerged as an alternative political force in the early 1960s, representatives of ruling houses that were out of power, in particular in the north of the country, started to associate themselves with the new opposition party. They hoped to garner

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<sup>98</sup> The British colonial powers designated ruling "houses" or families as those who had a right to nominate candidates during Paramount Chieftaincy elections.

support from APC in their local power struggles by offering it an opportunity to unseat the incumbent ruling house. Since Paramount Chiefs were elected for life and, once in power, were able to manipulate chiefdom institutions in their favor, the only way for competing ruling houses to unseat them was to seek an alliance with central-level politicians since only the central state could depose chiefs (Tangri 1976, 312). Opposing ruling houses used all means at their disposal to discredit incumbent chiefs. They filed complaints against them and mobilized those citizens loyal to them in the chiefdom as well as discontented social groups, such as underprivileged “youngmen” who suffered the brunt of chiefs’ abuses of power. This local mobilizational capacity offered national parties a critical resource to establish local outposts and to rally support among population groups opposed to local incumbents. They also could use local young men as political “muscle” in local electoral contests (Tangri 1978, 166-167).

Neither political party ever developed strong party structures in the provinces, in particular outside their regional strongholds, as alternative mobilizational structures. The chiefs and their networks were thus critical allies for electoral mobilization throughout Sierra Leone’s modern history. After the SLPP had used the power of sitting Paramount Chiefs to curb the growth of the APC by investing chiefs with the power to allow or disallow public gatherings (Cartwright 1970, 223-224, 231, 243) and had chiefs heavily intervene in the 1967 elections (Allen 1968, 318-320), Siaka Stevens pledged to proscribe their role and democratize the chieftaincy system (SLTRC 2004 Vol. 3A, 19). Once in power, though, Stevens and the APC recognized that he would not be able to effectively rule against the Paramount Chiefs. Instead of democratizing the chieftaincy structures, Stevens co-opted or coerced chiefs into submission and replaced those chiefs considered disloyal with party loyalists or members of opposing ruling houses. To keep the chiefs in line, the APC provided patronage resources to loyal chiefs and deployed party thugs against those who strayed openly from

the party line. This method was more effective within APC strongholds in the north and west of the country rather than in traditional opposition areas, although many chiefs in the south and east also switched allegiance to the APC. In chiefdoms where there were no opposing ruling family or none of the ruling families were trusted by the APC regime, chiefs were forced out and replaced with outsiders. In the end, Stevens did not fundamentally alter the role of chiefs, but rather further manipulated the office. As an institution, Paramount Chiefs seamlessly weathered the political transition to APC majority rule. They remained pivotal players in the mobilization of rural support for the ruling party.<sup>99</sup>

Stevens also tried hard to weaken chiefs' grip on alluvial diamond mining revenue and operations as keepers of public order and arbiters of local land allocation, in particular in diamond-rich Kono district. In an effort to co-opt Kono's chiefs and to control rampant illegal alluvial diamond mining, Paramount Chiefs were given the responsibility to grant diamond mining licenses in 1956 under an arrangement called Alluvial Diamond Mining Scheme (ADMS) (Reno 1995, 62-65). This scheme did indeed curb illicit mining activities (Keen 2005a, 13), but it also greatly strengthened Paramount and subordinate chiefs by formalizing their role in diamond mining and allowing them to forge useful alliances with foreign diamond extractors and dealers (Fithen 1999, 161).

Since up to 1967 most of the Kono chiefs were allies of the SLPP, the APC regime, upon taking power in 1968, set out to dismantle the SLPP networks and to exert greater central control over

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<sup>99</sup> Even after the devastating 11-year war, Paramount Chiefs continue to exert significant influence over social and political life within their chiefdoms and in national politics. Chiefs still control most of the levers of local power – the appointment of lower-level chiefs, a small administrative staff (usually composed of members of the extended family), the right to collect local taxes and spend its revenues, as well as the control of land tenure rights (Fanthorpe 2006). The introduction of new, supposedly competing institutions through the donor-funded decentralization process, conceived as a counterweight to traditional chiefs, has not significantly diminished their role (Jackson 2007). The defeat of SLPP candidate Solomon Berewa in the 2007 presidential elections was seen to be partly due to his lack of connections to influential chiefs and rural elites in southern Sierra Leone (ICG 2008, 7-8).

diamond production and revenue. Stevens dismantled the previous monopoly on the sale of all Sierra Leonean diamonds by South African mining giant De Beers and gave 20 percent of the diamond export monopoly to loyal Lebanese clients. He also established the National Diamond Mining Company (NDMC), which was run by APC loyalists and centralized the issuing of mining licenses in the Ministry of Mines in Freetown, thus undercutting the authority of Kono chiefs. However, as Fithen suggests, “Stubborn political opposition remained in Kono District” (Fithen 1999, 167), and Kono chiefs connived with illegal mining operators or disrupted legal mining businesses by mobilizing young men and illegal miners to sabotage unwelcome outsiders. Stevens’ attempt at imposing his own order on the chiefs was largely unsuccessful. As Reno suggests, “Stevens struggled to build a political organization capable of replacing the authority he wished to destroy” (Reno 1995, 87). There was simply no credible alternative local authority structure other than the chiefs, and the central state was too weak and dependent on local resource extraction. As a consequence, Stevens introduced a new system in 1973, the Co-operative Contract Mining Scheme (CCMS), which allowed the issuing of larger mining concessions to chiefs and their families as well as to other opponents and loyal supporters such as high-ranking APC and government officials. With the CCMS, “Once troublesome Kono chiefs, cabinet members and parliamentarians were bought off with large NDMC tracts in return for new found fealty” (Fithen 1999, 167). The APC regime was finally able to assert some degree of political control of Kono district by the mid-1970s. However, the chiefs once again had not only survived an attempt to weaken their role in diamond extraction, but emerged even stronger.

### Territorial administration

The continuously narrowing support base for the Sierra Leonean state and the reliance on Paramount Chiefs as influential powerbrokers and administrators of rural areas had a significant

impact on the central state's capacity to administer rural areas and to build or sustain effective and reliable institutions in charge of maintaining security and public safety.

Generally, the central state thus had no real capacity to administer and control public life in rural areas beyond the chieftaincy system. Paramount Chiefs and their chiefdom administrations remained the dominant local political force and the main representatives of the central state in rural areas. The only other state agents in rural areas were poorly and infrequently paid teachers, health center staff, or agricultural extension workers. Centrally deployed senior administrators, so-called Provincial ministers, who were directly responsible to the central government only had nominal powers and had little influence beyond the district capitals.<sup>100</sup> The only structure of decentralized local government, elected district councils, was abolished in 1972. Even before their abolition, however, their writ was also limited and their funding insufficient. District councils were replaced by so-called "local management committees" in 1972, which were staffed with loyal APC party activists but had little influence on governance in rural areas and "By the early 1990s...were no longer functioning" (Rosenbaum and Rojas 1997, 534). The same was true for local offices of central line ministries, notably in health, education, agriculture, and mining, which were based in district headquarters. These state agents were generally starved of resources, had their insufficient salaries paid late, and lacked significant budgets to carry out their duties. They often had no means of transport<sup>101</sup> either, were confined to the district capitals, and had few means to check on the few rural health posts and

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<sup>100</sup> Sierra Leonean districts cover large territories and range in size from 3,108 km<sup>2</sup> (Kambia district), which slightly larger than the U.S. state of Rhode Island, to 12,121 km<sup>2</sup> (Koinadugu districts), approximately the size of Connecticut.

<sup>101</sup> It was difficult for district state agents to communicate with their Freetown head offices since phone lines were few and ill-functioning. The road infrastructure continuously declined from independence on. Since the basic transport infrastructure in the country – the railway and roads – had favored access to the south and east since colonial times, the northern-based APC regime dismantled the railway network in the early 1970s and neglected investment into the road system in order to make access to Freetown more difficult for southeasterners. Transport infrastructure in the country was so poor that the Sierra Leonean TRC found that "By 1991, the road network was...in ruins. The total length of roads in good condition was not more than 160 kilometers for the entire country. The depleted road network hampered troop movements for the Government's conventional fighting forces during the conflict" (SLTRC 3A, 80).

schools in hard-to-access rural areas. Echoing colonial practices, the few District officials only left the district capitals a few times a year to visit rural areas, usually for tax collection purposes. The way these forays into the chiefdoms were organized was reminiscent of the bi-annual treks colonial District officials undertook to the chiefdoms to collect taxes and to check in on chiefs and adjudicate major legal cases (Ferme 1998, 564; Mitchell 2002, 66-87).

### Security apparatus

The intense and ethnicized competition for control of the central state led to ineffective central state institutions, most critically with respect to national and territorial security. The Sierra Leonean Truth and Reconciliation Commission stated that almost 30 years of APC rule had led to “Grave abandonment of the basic needs of the Republic of Sierra Leone Military Forces...to the extent that the country was devoid of an operational Army when it needed one most in 1991” (SLTRC 2004 Vol. 3A, 145). Successive regimes with an increasingly narrowing popular base were mainly concerned about regime security and asserting control through a mix of coercion and patronage distribution. This affected the security sector in a number of ways, all of which undermined the security forces, in particular the military’s effectiveness and ability to defend the national territory. First, the narrowness of the regime meant that recruits for the military were selected according to political, ethnic, and patronage considerations, which affected the force’s composition, effectiveness, and motivation. Second, after military intervention in politics in 1967 and 1968, the military was deliberately weakened to prevent challenges from within the armed forces, which led to a fragmentation of the security apparatus and the use of informal forces.

On the first point, ethnic divisions within the Sierra Leone military had existed since colonial times. When the Sierra Leone Army (SLA) was established at independence, the officer corps was composed largely of southerners and easterners, since they had had better access to education in

colonial times, while the rank-and-file was made up of northerners, who were considered better warriors (SLTRC 2004 Vol. 3a, 72). This ethnic imbalance was not a politically salient issue in the early 1960s, since the Sierra Leone Army (SLA) was still led mainly by British officers (Cox 1976, 45). When Albert Margai took over as Prime Minister in 1964, he accelerated the Africanization of the officer corps and openly favored political loyalists, mainly ethnic Mende. Margai promoted a trusted ally, David Lansana, within one year, from Lieutenant Colonel to the first Sierra Leonean Force Commander of the SLA (SLTRC 2004 3A, 73). As appeals to ethnic belonging were used to shore up political support for the Margai government, the military became more and more openly ethnicized, too.<sup>102</sup> Recruitment for political and patronage purposes became a defining feature of the Sierra Leone military in the post-independence era. Positions in the military were coveted because they came with significant perquisites, including a salary, free medical care for the immediate families, travel allowances, opportunities for overseas training, and security of tenure (SLTRC 2004 3A, 72). As a consequence, from the mid-1960s, military recruitment became driven by considerations of loyalty, ethno-regional origin, and connections to important patrons within the political establishment rather than by qualification or suitability.

This was reinforced by the open military intervention in politics through a series of military coups in the wake of the 1967 elections and the struggle between the SLPP and the APC over control of the state. First, Margai loyalist David Lansana declared martial law and had APC leader Siaka Stevens arrested upon proclamation of election results in October 1967 (Cox 1976, 113-129). Within three days, Lansana himself was toppled by a group of senior officers who ruled as military junta until they

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<sup>102</sup> Among the 17 junior officers recruited in 1967, 13 were Mende, although Mende only made up approximately one-third of the country's population (SLTRC 2004 3A, p. 73). To rid himself of opponents within the security apparatus, Force Commander David Lansana had his deputy John Bangura, a Temne, as well as six other northern and Krio officers, arrested for an alleged coup attempt in early 1967 (Cox 1976, 98-100). By March 1967, only one northerner remained among the senior officer corps above the rank of major, and he was a relation of an SLPP politician (Cox 1976, 106).

were overthrown in April 1968 in a second counter-coup by junior officers from the north. Those officers invited Siaka Stevens and the APC as the winners of the 1967 elections to form a government and return to civilian rule (Dixon-Fyle 1989, 213-214).

Against the backdrop of this military interference in matters of the state, the politicization of the Sierra Leone military reached its apex under Siaka Stevens' rule in the 1970s. According to Stevens' own admission, reasserting control over the military was his most challenging task after he came to power in 1968 (Dixon-Fyle 1989, 212-213). To achieve control, Stevens promoted junior northern officers to senior ranks and, under a policy called "Tribal Returns," summarily dismissed Mende and other southerners across the ranks and replaced them with northerners (SLTRC 2004, 3A, 74).

Stevens also made it a condition that new recruits had to be members of the APC and had to have a patron within the political establishment.<sup>103</sup> Within two years of the Stevens' rule, only 10 percent of the senior officers and less than one-third of junior officers were Mende, while Temne and other northern groups made up 60 to 70 percent (Cox 1976, 209; Conteh-Morgan and Dixon-Fyle 1999, 81). This trend was further accelerated throughout the 1970s. Stevens' purges of Temne from the state apparatus in the early 1970s also affected the military, including Temne Force Commander John Bangura, who was executed. From the mid-1970s up to the beginning of the civil war in 1991, the military was predominantly made up of officers and rank-and-file from smaller ethnic groups (mainly Koronko and Limba) from the north and west of the country (SLTRC 2004 Vol. 3A, 27).

The mix of political, patronage, and ethnic considerations in recruitment led to a force that did not necessarily attract the most motivated fighters. Promotions and new recruitments were contingent

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<sup>103</sup> The SLTRC reported that "Candidates into the army had to present a recruitment card issued to them by a politician. Without such a card, even the best qualified candidates stood the risk of rejection. Elevations and promotions went to those either from the north or who owed allegiance to Siaka Stevens and his successor, Joseph Momoh" (SLTRC 2004, Vol. 3A, 27).

on receiving the endorsement of influential politicians or party supporters. Military officers and soldiers responded to different masters and fulfilled many roles that were unrelated to their core military duties, such as providing security for government members or securing the reelection of members of parliament. As a consequence, the military did not exist as a single coherent force. There was no unified chain of command within the military. Politicians could at any time interfere with the deployment and use of units and soldiers whom they patronized (SLTRC 2004 Vol. 3a, 72-76). In addition, the soldiers joined the forces for political reasons rather than because they were motivated or demonstrated combat prowess. Since many of them were from the north, they had limited knowledge of the areas that came under attack in the southeast.

Second, doubts about the loyalty of the military after the coups d'états of the 1967–68 period led, according to a former SLA officer, to “Intense political interference” amounting to a “Deliberate strategy to make the Army a non-effective fighting force” (SLTR 2004 Vol. 3A, 145). This strategy had several dimensions. The military was starved of resources by its political masters and by the senior officers who had been co-opted into the political and party apparatuses. There was little investment in equipment and weaponry, and there was little training for the rank-and-file. The loyalty of senior officers was bought through generous perks such as chauffeured service vehicles and ample rice donations, most of which they either kept for themselves or sold. Only a small portion was distributed to privileged junior officers or to favored units. Barracks and living quarters were not regularly maintained and often had no sanitary facilities, which prompted a lot of soldiers to live outside barracks in towns and villages, further eroding already weak discipline (SLTRC 2004 3A, 73-75). As a result of this deliberate underinvestment in the military, at the time of the RUF insurgency, the RSLAF had only two battalions, the first of which “Consisted of a little below 1,000 extremely old soldiers,” while the second one was only approximately 600 men strong. Four

hundred of the more capable soldiers were deployed in Liberia as part of the West African peace enforcement force. In total, the RSLAF had about 3,000<sup>104</sup> active soldiers in the early 1990s. Only a smaller number of them were in fighting shape (SLTRC 2004, 3A, 145-146).

Not only was there systematic underinvestment in the military, Sierra Leonean leaders also relied on parallel security forces and arrangements. These arrangements included an external defense pact, the creation of parallel paramilitary forces, and the frequent use of political party youth as irregular political shock troops. The signing of a defense pact with neighboring Guinea in 1965 indicated that Sierra Leonean leaders did not fully trust their military and sought external assurances in case of a coup or armed challenge. Internally, the regime set up parallel forces as insurance policy. Siaka Stevens set up a paramilitary police force, the Internal Security Unit (ISU), in 1972, renamed Special Security Division (SSD) in 1979 (Harris 2014, 65), nominally under the Sierra Leonean police, but directly controlled by the president as his own Praetorian Guard. The roughly 800-strong ISU/SSD “Bore little or no allegiance to the Sierra Leone police” (SLTRC 2004 Vol. 3A, 26). It was trained by Cuban Special Forces and better equipped and armed than the RSLAF. The ISU reported directly to the President’s office. Its recruits were also mainly Limba and Koranko. They were carefully selected and had to have close links the APC party apparatus. To some observers the ISU could be considered “The ruling party at arms, a tool that, unquestioningly, would do [its] official bidding” (Dixon-Fyle 1989, 214). As a result, the ISU was deployed mainly to guarantee the safety of the president, crack down on regime opponents and anti-government protests, and to ensure that APC candidates or parliamentarians loyal to Stevens were reelected. Although the ISU/SDD was the

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<sup>104</sup> Before the war, in the late 1980s, Sierra Leone had fewer citizens under arms than many other West African countries with between 7 and 8 military troops per 10,000 population as compared to 15–16 in Guinea in the late 1980s (IISS 2003).

most capable military force in the country, it was fairly small and focused on cracking down on urban protests rather than fighting wars in remote rural areas.

The mobilization of groups of what Sierra Leoneans commonly refer to as “youngmen” and “youth”<sup>105</sup> for political purposes by chiefs or other strongmen has a long tradition in Sierra Leone (Tangri 1976). This practice was first adopted by SLPP leaders in the early 1960s. Albert Margai was reported to have traveled with a security detail of loyal soldiers and young supporters. As the opposition APC party started to gain strength in the mid-1960s, violent clashes between SLPP and opposition politicians and their supporters became more frequent (Cartwright 1970, 232). With the hotly contested 1967 elections, the use of political party thugs became routinized; it was an essential instrument in the APC regime’s coercive toolkit after Siaka Stevens took power in 1968 (Christensen and Utas 2008, 517). In an attempt to take firm control of parliament and to gain control of SLPP-loyal chiefdoms in the south and east of the country, Stevens deployed APC party officials and members of the APC Youth League to intervene in chiefdom succession struggles, in candidate nominations, and during elections to prevent opposition party supporters from voting throughout the 1970s (Reno 2003, 54; Christensen and Utas 2008, 518).

Although the deployment of youth thugs was a formidable tool of political intimidation and helped the APC to consolidate power, it also had the effect of further fragmenting the state’s control of the means of coercion. No candidates for national parliament who wanted to have a chance at winning could do without their own private security force: “Every candidate realized that it was necessary to have ‘muscle’ and ‘thugs’ if only to protect oneself” (Hayward and Dumbuya 1985, 74). Many of the

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<sup>105</sup> Note that the category of “youth” is expansive in Sierra Leone. The official definition by the Sierra Leonean government and accepted by international organizations is any individual between the ages of 15 and 35 (Aning and McIntyre 2005, 70).

youth gangs were thus not under Stevens' or APC control, but run by individual politicians. They served their individual masters, such as Minister of the Interior and Vice-President S.I. Koroma (in the 1970s and 1980s) and Vice-President Francis Minah (in the 1980s), and did not do the state's bidding (Reno 1995, 97-100).

### **Symbolic capacity**

The combination of a lack of incentives for mass mobilization, the reliance on chiefs to mobilize rural populations, and the increasing domination of narrow ethnic interests among state leaders worked against the emergence of a strong symbolic state capacity. Modern Sierra Leone never developed a clearly formulated national identity. National symbols that its citizens would feel proud of or would rally around are practically non-existent even more than 50 years after independence. As one observer put it, Sierra Leone throughout its independent history has been an "Unusual case of a country with almost no tradition for patriotic imagery. While the governments of most newly independent nations are careful to fashion symbols of patriotic pride based on history, culture and political ideology, this has not happened in Sierra Leone" (Opala 1994, 198). Symbols or political imagery used in public speeches or displays much more frequently referred to particularistic interests than to a broader nationalist sentiment. Most Sierra Leoneans, at least since the mid-1960s, grew up in a context where state power was seen to be captured by one or several ethnic groups (Kandeh 1992), and there were few countervailing forces, narratives, or symbols that would convince them otherwise. There was no clearly developed and universally understood national identity. Political leaders had little material to work with to mobilize the broader population in defense of the nation. As a consequence, when Sierra Leone was attacked in 1991, political leaders had little material to work with for popular mobilization. Even though President Momoh did appeal to Sierra Leoneans to stand together as he painted the insurgency as an attack by foreign forces against the Sierra Leonean nation, there was no obvious public mass outrage and movement to support the

government. The attempts by leaders to rally the broader population did not go beyond a few public speeches in Freetown by Momoh and key government figures. Their rhetoric had little resonance with most ordinary Sierra Leoneans.

Unlike some of its neighbors, in particular Guinea, there was no discernable grassroots movement for independence in Sierra Leone. Even Milton Margai and other leaders seemed hesitant about becoming an independent state. Sierra Leoneans acceded to independence in a quiet, orderly, and negotiated process of handover of power between the British colonial administration and the Sierra Leonean leaders who had led the country since the 1957 House of Representative elections. “In Sierra Leone, the transition from colonial rule to independence was seen primarily as a change in personnel, neither requiring nor warranting major changes” (Hayward 1984, 22). Prime Minister Milton Margai was a widely revered doctor and elderly gentleman not prone to lofty rhetoric and captivating speeches (Hayward and Dumbuya 1983, 655-656). Margai’s speech to mark Independence Day on April 20, 1961, was a remarkably sober affair and set the tone for much government rhetoric to come. In it, Margai addressed specifically the different social groups in the country – workers, traders, farmers, regular people, government officials, trade unionists – and simply asked them for their “Wholehearted service and hard work” and their “Active help and support” (Benedict 2009). He warned that the government’s means were limited and that Sierra Leoneans should not have undue expectations of the state. There was no celebration of achieving independence or reference to national symbolism or pride. Margai addressed the nation more like a father addresses his children. This trope became one of the common ones used by Sierra Leonean political leaders – they styled themselves as father figures and treated the country as their family and children. All subsequent Prime Ministers and Presidents – Albert Margai, Siaka Stevens, and Joseph Momoh – saw themselves as the incarnation of the state while neglecting to create other imagery

that could bring the country together and generate a greater sense of belonging among all regions and groups (Hayward and Dumbuya 1983).

Since the SLPP leaders in the late 1950s and early 1960s could rely on the chiefs' mobilizational capacity to win elections or to rally rural populations when needed in support of the government, there was little incentive for party and state leaders to directly communicate with the population and to develop tools for broader popular mobilization. While touring the country during election campaigns, SLPP leaders would hold small meetings with local chiefs and elders instead of addressing the population in larger meetings. Although Siaka Stevens' success in the 1967 elections was in part credited to the fact that, as a former trade union leader, he achieved some degree of grassroots mobilization, it was still impossible to win elections in rural constituencies without the backing of the most influential ruling families. Generally, there was little direct communication between state representatives in Freetown and the rural populace. Most information was transmitted to rural areas through chiefs or other intermediaries (Barrows 1976, 98-141).

Since the two main political parties, the APC and SLPP, operated as large patronage machines that sought to channel state resources to their client groups and regions, "A political ideology or guiding principle behind government activity [was] not evident" (Fyle 1993, 8). Candidates for political office generally used symbols related to their party, region, ethnicity, clan, or family to mobilize voters. During electoral campaigns, there was little mention of the Sierra Leonean nation. Candidates openly fought for particularistic agendas and used rhetoric and symbols that reinforced those claims (Ferme 1998). During the 24 years of APC rule from 1968 to 1992, "The...regime, especially under Siaka Stevens,...was more concerned with projecting the emblems of the APC party – its red banner, song, and rising sun emblem" (Opala 1994, 207). Even though the SLPP campaigned in

1967 under the motto “One People, One Country,” the party was so closely associated with the traditional elites and the southeastern ethnic communities that the APC’s campaign was explicitly built around the goal of wresting power from those elites. Their campaign slogan was “Now or Never,” and they openly appealed to class and northern ethno-regional sensibilities (SLTRC 2004 Vol. 3A, 19). As shown, instead of promoting a broader identity in which all Sierra Leoneans could recognize themselves, APC governments under Siaka Stevens and Joseph Momoh explicitly promoted the Limba ethnic group, which only represented 8.5 percent of the overall population, not only in terms of governments and military posts, but also by boosting Limba culture. For example, they elevated the Limba language to the status of a national language, although it was not widely used and did not have a standardized orthography at the time (Francis and Kamanda 2001, 237-238).

Until the 1980s there were practically no Sierra Leonean government publications about the history of the country. Bothered by the absence of those materials, a booklet on Sierra Leonean national heroes – former warrior and Paramount Chiefs, as well as a few modern Sierra Leonean politicians – was developed on the initiative of a Sierra Leonean university lecturer in the late 1980s, more than 20 years after independence. It was symptomatic of lack of nationalist sentiment within the APC regime that the booklet, which was supposed to educate the country’s students about their history, was sold by the government rather than distributed for free, thus greatly limiting its distribution (Opala 1994, 200-201).

This lack of an official inspiring, inclusive, or nationalist discourse left room for the RUF and other rebel groups to claim the mantle of patriotism and nationalism. Foday Sankoh explicitly referred to his national vision for Sierra Leone in his early speeches and styled himself as the only Sierra

Leonean leader who truly had the interests of the Sierra Leonean people at heart. As a former RUF member told the Sierra Leone Truth and Reconciliation mission:

He [Sankoh] made reference to many Sierra Leoneans who had been killed by the APC; to the mismanagement of our natural resources...how politicians were manipulating people – through tribal politics, sectional politics and party politics...Pa Sankoh had a huge amount of national pride. (TRC Vol. 3A, 138)

Similarly, the subsequent military regimes and some of the other armed movements were considered to be much more genuinely patriotic than the Sierra Leonean political parties. When Valentine Strasser and the military junta of the NPRC took control of State House in April 1992, something akin to patriotic fervor briefly swept parts of the country. Freetown residents appreciated the apparent new discipline the military leaders brought and their championing of “military values” such as order and responsibility. Prompted by the new military leaders, Sierra Leoneans briefly mobilized for public clean-up campaigns and signed up in large numbers for the military effort to fight the RUF rebels in the east. At closer look, however, this popularity and the apparent outpouring of public support was shallow and short lived and had as much to do with the young military junta members’ use of symbols that underprivileged young men could identify with, notably pop culture symbols such as reggae and hip-hop artists (Opala 1994). So even this unifying moment in mid-1992 was short lived, as the NPRC regime also quickly became dominated by ethno-regional interests from the south. Although Valentine Strasser was himself a Krio from Freetown, other, more senior members of the junta, as well as most of the civilians who joined the NPRC government, were from the south and east of the country. The political north-south division that had marked the country for most of its post-independence history quickly became the dominant lens again through which many Sierra Leoneans saw politics during the war years. After the SLPP’s electoral victory in 1996, open north-south struggles reappeared in form of the May 1997 coup d’état by the Armed Forces Revolutionary Council, which was explicitly a reaction by the northern-dominated military against

the perceived pro-south policies by the SLPP regime and attempts to sideline the military in favor of the southern-based Kamajor civil defense forces (Fithen 1999, 252-253).

## Conclusion

At the moment of the RUF attack, the Sierra Leonean state's mobilizational repertoire was extremely limited, in particular with respect to its symbolic and institutional capacity. The relatively small-scale attack by the RUF laid bare all the fault lines and weaknesses, the "Factional struggles," and "The tenuous nature of state hegemony" (Hayward 1989, 170) that had been wracking the state for years. Narrow, ethnically defined governments, fierce ethno-regional competition for control of the state, and limited central state control of the countryside had been fundamental traits of the Sierra Leonean political system, traits with deep roots in the late colonial and early independence period.

Sierra Leone's access to independence in a peaceful, negotiated process driven by the British colonial administration rather than local leaders did not provide any incentives to mobilize the country's population. The SLPP and its leader Milton Margai easily won the critical 1957 elections thanks to the SLPP alliance with the powerful Paramount Chiefs. However, despite this overwhelming electoral success, the ruling coalition that came to power was seen as dominated by leaders from the south and east of the country representing the Mende and affiliated ethnic groups. This domination prompted the formation of the opposition APC, which came to represent the interests of northern ethnic groups.

This had significant consequences for the organization of central state authority and the administration of rural areas in the country. At the center, Sierra Leonean leaders from second Prime Minister Albert Margai (1964-1967) onwards were focused on consolidating their rule by channeling resources to their core constituents and by surrounding themselves with members of trusted ethnic

groups. This focus led to governments with a narrower and narrower ethnic support base. After Siaka Stevens and the APC came to power in 1968, the state apparatus was composed mainly of northerners and, after the early 1970s, increasingly of northern minority ethnic groups, notably Stevens' own Limba group. People from the south and southeast were largely excluded from decision-making at the center and had only limited access to state offices and resources.

In rural areas, throughout 30 years of its existence as an independent state, successive Sierra Leonean regimes never developed either the physical or the administrative infrastructure to exert direct control. Instead, they continued to rely on the country's traditional chiefs and other situational alliances and patronage relations to reach into rural areas. However, state authority was therefore extremely fragmented. The main state agents, Paramount Chiefs and lower-level chiefs in 148 chiefdoms, had independent sources of legitimacy and authority and often pursued their own interests. Chiefdom politics became politicized, and national political competition grafted itself onto chiefdom-level contests. Links between the central state and Paramount Chiefs were based on patronage distribution and were inherently unstable.

The combination of continuously narrower and narrower regimes and a reliance on unreliable Paramount Chiefs to rule the countryside had a number of significant consequences for the state's mobilizational capacity, in particular for symbolic and institutional dimensions.

First, it made for weak central state institutions. Central state institutions were largely dysfunctional and rarely had the means or staff or motivation to carry out their original mandate. They were staffed by individuals who had not been hired for their qualifications but for their political connections or ethnic belonging. A clientlist and predatory mindset prevailed in most government

departments. Most staff were not regularly paid and sought ways to raise income themselves however they could. Central state institutions were also largely focused on Freetown. All these dynamics were at play in the military and security apparatus. The military was dysfunctional. Senior officers lived lavish lifestyles and skimmed off most funds destined for the troops while the troops remained unpaid, lived in substandard conditions, and had only derelict equipment to work with . There were jealousies between the military and the SSD, which was relatively well trained, equipped, and paid, but had mainly focused on ensuring the president's and the regime's security in Freetown (SLTRC 3A, 149). The SSD was used to dispersing unarmed protesters, but had little experience in fighting an organized rural insurgency. Ineffective central state institutions had led to decades of underinvestment in the country's infrastructure in rural areas, so that troops did not even have an easy time getting people and material to the east of the country from Freetown.

Second, it made for a lack of genuine rural control by the central state and an inability to rally rural populations. The central state was largely absent from rural areas and dependent on the fickle intermediaries, the Paramount Chiefs and their networks of lower-level chiefs. Although chiefs in rural areas were to some extent dependent on central state patronage, they had enough sources of income and traditional authority to operate fairly independently if they had to. In particular in diamond districts, chiefs were coveted by international mining enterprises or diamond traders and local operators and could play off these relationships against the state. The forced imposition of loyal but non-local or less-legitimate Paramount Chiefs in some chiefdoms undermined their authority and significantly limited their ability to mobilize popular support for the government. Over time, the politicization of the chieftaincy and the fierce competition between political parties and competing ruling houses for control of chiefdoms meant that many chiefs only felt limited fealty to the central government or were contested and faced significant opposition within their chiefdoms.

Both factors significantly hampered the central government's ability to mobilize even a semblance of systematic popular resistance in rural areas.

Third, not only did the narrow regime base and ineffective territorial administration undermine state institutions, the state also had no symbolic capacity to speak of to rally the population in times of crisis. Due to a lack of mass mobilization in the pre-independence period and the growing dominance of ethno-regional interests since Albert Margai's rise to the Premiership in 1964, Sierra Leonean leaders always appealed to narrow, particularistic interests instead of an overarching identity that all peoples and regions could identify with. National symbols or a widely recognized discourse that could mobilize the whole population were absent throughout Sierra Leone's post-independence history. When the RUF attacked, Sierra Leonean leaders had neither the mindset nor the tools to generate mass mobilization against the insurgency. The state's efforts to rally the population in defense of the state were feeble, and there was no major coordinated effort to mobilize the southeastern population in the areas under attack.

Fourth, the same factors that undermined the Sierra Leonean state's institutional and symbolic mobilizational capacity also generated significant grievances among the peoples of the southeast and thus made mobilization easier for the insurgents. The ethno-regional logic was so dominant, from the early days of the Sierra Leone state, that the state always came to represent particularistic interests. Significant parts of the country were at any given time largely cut out from access to state and patronage resources. Since the APC regime was mainly composed of narrow northern minority interests, the vast majority of the country's population did not see their interests represented by the state. Significant economic inequality, entrenched urban elites, and those elites' alliances with rural chiefs and their family networks accentuated grievances among certain socio-economic groups. The

Sierra Leonean state had always largely focused on serving the interests of these elites. Marginalized urban and rural people from underprivileged backgrounds were largely left out of patronage distribution tied to the ruling ethnic groups and to chiefly families. Paramount Chiefs also often abused their power and required forced labor contributions or even kept underprivileged young men and their families in quasi-dependent relationships. This treatment made for a large pool of disillusioned young people who could easily be mobilized by alternative political entrepreneurs, and some of them did join the RUF early on. Even when recruited by force, the RUF's basic message of redistributing resources to the underprivileged resonated with them.

### **Côte d'Ivoire critical juncture: The late colonial period and party and state-building 1945–1960**

Côte d'Ivoire's emerging state and mobilizational structures were determined by the encounter of colonial institutions and African institutions and practices that were influenced by a series of contingent events in the crucial period from 1945 to independence in 1960. This included an economic model focused on extensive cocoa and coffee production, the rise of Félix Houphouët-Boigny to prominence, and his ability to dominate Ivorian politics and elections without having to build up a strong organizational infrastructure across the country.

### **Cash crop economy, labor migration, and regime clients**

The first element that is critical to understanding post-independence state formation is the Ivorian leadership's whole-hearted embrace of the export-focused tree crop economy, which generated significant resource rents for elite accommodation and patronage distribution. It also determined the main popular base of the PDCI state – southern large-scale and smallholder cocoa and coffee

farmers, mainly Baoulé, and northern migrants and immigrant<sup>106</sup> agricultural laborers – and thus the state’s interests and its ability to mobilize certain ethno-regional and social groups.

The development of an expansive “frontier” tree crop economy based on the continuous expansion of cocoa and coffee farming across all of southern and central Côte d’Ivoire and the rents this cash crop economy generated was Côte d’Ivoire’s main economic and national project from the 1950s onward (Chauveau and Dozon 1985; Chauveau 2000). This development was a continuation of a pattern of economic production established during French colonial rule, in which cocoa and coffee exports came to dominate Côte d’Ivoire’s economy. Cocoa, coffee, and timber exports generated almost 90 percent of the country’s GDP in the late 1950s and made Côte d’Ivoire by far the most productive<sup>107</sup> French West African colony (Brou and Charbit 1994, 37). After facing French pressure to renounce all vestiges of communist influence in the PDCI in the early 1950s, Houphouët-Boigny and the PDCI saw the continuation of the extensive tree crop economy as the country’s best bet to develop quickly and generate the wealth they thought was required to maintain social peace and Côte d’Ivoire’s role as regional economic powerhouse. This strategy also matched the personal interests of many members of the early PDCI leadership, most of whom were large cocoa farmers or benefited in other ways through involvement in trade and processing from the cocoa and coffee export economy (Widner 1993, 43-44). Houphouët himself inherited a large cocoa farm in 1940 and became one of the largest cocoa farmers, and probably the largest agricultural export producer, in all

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<sup>106</sup> It is a gross simplification to treat Ivorian immigrants from the north of the country and migrants from neighboring countries, mainly from Burkina Faso, Mali, and Guinea as one ethno-regional group. These categories comprise a variety of ethnic and language groups – Malinké, Sénoufo, Mossi, Lobi, Bambara. One common feature is that the vast majority of them are of the Muslim faith. However, Ivorian society and politics has increasingly viewed migrants from the north of the country and immigrants from the neighboring countries to the north as one group under the label “Dioula” (Banégas 2006, 541).

<sup>107</sup> In 1925 Côte d’Ivoire’s share among all exports within French West Africa was 14.8 percent while by 1956 it made up almost half of all exports from the AOF (Schachter Morgenthau 1964, 167).

of Côte d'Ivoire.<sup>108</sup> Due to his work as a health worker in the cocoa-growing regions of Southern Côte d'Ivoire and as a Baoulé chief, Houphouët understood the realities and the potential of the cocoa and coffee frontier economy for large planters as well as for smallholder farmers and for the country as a whole. All throughout his rule, Houphouët stressed his rural and farming roots and occasionally referred to himself as the country's "First" farmer or its "Farmer president" (Chauveau 2000, 101-102).

A reliance on an extensive tree crop economy had two consequences for the emerging Ivorian state. Southern cocoa and coffee producers, large and small, as well as farm laborers became the main constituencies and support base of the Ivorian post-independence state. The Ivorian economic model based on the exportation of cocoa and coffee tree crops became the main national project pursued by Houphouët-Boigny.

Two critical elements were needed to support this continued expansion of the tree crop economy: a sufficient supply of affordable labor and measures that encouraged farmers to keep investing in expanding cocoa and coffee production.

Although land was plentiful and fertile in the sparsely populated Côte d'Ivoire's southern forest zone with 16 million hectares of unused primary forest at independence (Boone 2003, 218), French plantation owners and Ivorian smallholder farmers<sup>109</sup> lacked sufficient labor to clear forest land and

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<sup>108</sup> Widner estimates that by the 1980s Houphouët's farms produced up to one-fifth of national cocoa output and one-third of the country's pineapple exports, some of which was sold outside official marketing channels (Widner 1993, 43).

<sup>109</sup> Official statistics of the time suggest that in 1953 there were 235 registered European plantation owners, although they had significant combined landholdings of 61,877 hectares. Only a small group of wealthy Ivoirians owned larger cocoa farms. Schachter Morgenthau estimated that 50 Africans owned farms of more than 25 hectares in 1944. Most of them were ethnic Baoulé or Agni (Schachter Morgenthau 1964, 168-170).

work the trees to fully take advantage of the favorable natural endowments. As a result, at independence, the new Ivorian leaders continued a colonial practice of encouraging large seasonal or permanent labor migration from the north of Côte d'Ivoire and from neighboring territories.<sup>110</sup> Houphouët and the PDCI did not only want laborers to migrate south, but also wanted them to settle there and set up their own farms. This migration had already occurred naturally as Baoulé farmers had moved, first east and then west from the Baoulé heartland in the center of the country, from the 1920s and settled in the Krou-speaking regions of the center-west and southwest to establish their own farms and communities. Immigrant farmers from Burkina Faso and Mali also had started acquiring land under lease or sharecropping arrangements all across the south, but in particular the southwest. This “Agricultural colonization” (Chauveau 2000, 98) of the center-west and southwest first by Baoulé and northern migrants, then by immigrants, was based on a range of informal arrangements between local landowners, lineage heads and chiefs, and the migrants. Migrants could use the land in return for a share of the harvest or regular favors and gifts (Chauveau 2000). Land could not officially be “sold” according to customary rules. These informal arrangements became contested and a significant source of tension from the early 1990s on.

Incentives to keep on clearing land and expand cocoa and coffee cultivation were a second element critical to the political economy of Côte d'Ivoire from the late colonial period. These incentives included, in particular, the stabilization of producer prices so as to encourage farmers to grow cocoa (mainly) and coffee (to a lesser degree) while helping them to hedge their risk against world market price fluctuations. This stabilization was achieved through the establishment of a stabilization fund,

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<sup>110</sup> Since the 1920s the French colonial administration had concluded agreements with northern chiefs for the recruitment of able-bodied men to work on cocoa farms in southern Côte d'Ivoire. The chiefs were compensated for these agreements, but could also be forced to deliver the required number of laborers (Schachter Morgenthau 1964, 3). Up to 400,000 workers, mainly from Upper Volta and the French Soudan (today's Mali), were sent to southern Côte d'Ivoire until 1946 (Bouquet 2005, 183) and another 265,000 from 1947 to 1959 under a more formalized system after the abolition of forced labor in 1946 (Bouquet 2005, 183).

the Caisse de Stabilisation or CAISTAB, which was created in 1955 and remained in place until 1999. With CAISTAB, the state set guaranteed annual producer prices and provided incentives for farmers through subsidized inputs and the distribution of cocoa and coffee seedlings to smallholder farmers across the southern half of the country, in particular in the center-west and southwest. However, marketing and produce-buying circuits were not state controlled and largely dominated by foreign companies and traders. The state benefited immensely from this arrangement by keeping the CAISTAB's surplus if producer prices were below world market prices but ensured producers of price stability should world market prices drop. Due to favorable market conditions, the CAISTAB always produced a large surplus for the state until 1978. It was this surplus that fueled the rapid Ivorian economic growth, with investment in other export crops and with significant investments in the country's educational system and rural infrastructure in the south of the country (Hecht 1983). Southern cocoa and coffee farmers, large and small, became the main clients and support base of the Ivorian post-independence regime.

### **Early political organization and the rise of Houphouët-Boigny and the PDCI**

The second key factor that significantly influenced Côte d'Ivoire's post-independence mobilizational capacity was the rise to power of Félix Houphouët-Boigny. His early access to mobilizational networks allowed him to become the first Ivorian member in the French parliament, a position of influence that he used to make himself the pivot of political life in Côte d'Ivoire and his party, the PDCI, the central, and soon, the only political organization.

When the establishment of African political parties was legalized in French West Africa in 1945, there were no broader organized parties in Côte d'Ivoire, only a number of regional and ethnic-based interest groups (Dozon 2000a, 16). Political parties emerged from those regional associations or from among the professional organizations that had sprung up in 1944. Among the new political

groupings, the African Agricultural Union (Syndicat Agricole Africain or SAA) was the largest interest organization, with a membership of up to 8,000 Ivorian planters and cocoa and coffee farmers (Zolberg 1964b, 66). Under its chairman Félix Houphouët, it would quickly become the dominant political force in the country and morphed into the PDCI in 1946.

At the end of World War II, elections for a new French National Assembly were to include African members for the first time. Africans only had approximately six months from April 1945, when the formation of political parties was allowed, to prepare for the elections in October of the same year (Schachter Morgenthau 1964, 27-31). This short timeframe greatly favored existing African associations and networks. In Côte d'Ivoire, this meant that the SAA and its leaders, with their wide network of members and contacts throughout the southern cocoa belt, were best placed to play a central role in future politics. Due to Houphouët's background straddling traditional and modern, educated elites,<sup>111</sup> he was able to speak to a wide range of audiences and appeal to many socio-economic strata. As president of the SAA, he represented the large cocoa and coffee planters and also had support within the business community in southern Côte d'Ivoire. He was also able to speak the language of the smaller cash crop farmers and seemed to understand their needs and concerns. In addition, he had been a canton chief and a doctor in the French colonial administration, so he was popular with Africans who worked in the colonial system as much as with those who represented the traditional chiefs and rulers.

Houphouët won the October 1945 elections for the French National Assembly only by a narrow margin of 50.7 percent of the vote. He garnered almost all the southern vote, from within the

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<sup>111</sup> SAA chairman and future president Houphouët was the scion of a royal Baoulé family and a large planter himself. He was a graduate of the Ecole William Ponty, the French-run school for sons of African chiefs in Dakar, Senegal and also had obtained a medical degree and had worked as a medical officer in the French colonial administration (Schachter Morgenthau 1964, 177).

territory of today's Côte d'Ivoire, while Upper Côte d'Ivoire (today's Burkina Faso) voted largely for his opponent from the north (Schachter Morgenthau 1964, 179). Houphouët received wide support among his own Baoulé people and other, smaller, southern Ivorian ethnic groups, even from southeastern and southwestern groups that later would oppose him. He was also able to win the support of Gbon Coulibaly, the traditional leader of the Sénoufou in the north of the Côte d'Ivoire and had a running mate from the north, which assured that the vast majority of the Sénoufou and a share of other northern peoples in the country would cast their vote for Houphouët (Kone 2003, 22-26).

Despite his narrow victory, once elected, Houphouët took full advantage of being a member of the French National Assembly. Houphouët had made the abolition of forced labor his main cause and electoral promise in the 1945 elections. Once elected, he played a prominent role in the legislative debate in the French Assembly. The bill outlawing the use of forced labor by French colonial administrators carried his name. It was adopted on April 5, 1946. The end of the forced labor regime was widely celebrated and instantly made Houphouët “A hero and liberator” (Schachter Morgenthau 1964, 181) across Côte d'Ivoire. The forced labor regime was one of the major grievances held by Ivorians and other rural populations across French West Africa against the French colonial regime, since it meant that one of the most valuable assets – the labor of young men – could be summoned at almost any time by colonial administrators. As a consequence, Ivorian males often worked as forced laborers instead of on their family farms during critical times in the agricultural season. Tens of thousands of forced workers from the north or from Upper Côte d'Ivoire were used on southern cocoa and coffee farms owned by French settlers every year. This privileged access to cheap labor by French planters also irked Ivorian cocoa and coffee planters. Gaining access to inexpensive labor was one of the main causes pursued by Houphouët and the SAA leadership. Appeals to abolish the

forced labor regime thus had wide resonance with various strata of Ivorian society, southern cocoa farmers as much as northern laborers (Lawler 1990).

Houphouët's role in the abolition of forced labor was the first element and the foundation of a personality cult around the then deputy. Soon after the passage of the anti-forced labor law, "There were Houphouët pictures, perfume, lockets, and cloths on sale in the markets of Ivory Coast. And dances, legends, songs, and plays throughout the territory retold the tale of Houphouët's freeing of the workers" (Schachter Morgenthau 1964, 181-182). This legislative feat also solidified alliances with key ethnic communities that later became core supporters of the PDCI, notably some of the northern communities such as the Senoufo and the Malinké from which much of the forced labor had been recruited.

Houphouët founded the PDCI to support his electoral and political ambitions in April 1946 as a member of the Interterritorial RDA (African Democratic Rally – Rassemblement Démocratique Africain), the umbrella party organization for French West African colonies, to which the Guinean PDG also belonged. Due to Houphouët's popularity after the end of the forced labor regime, the PDCI was seen by many Ivorians as their main channel for expressing their grievances and interests. Its membership grew quickly. It relied on the organizational networks of the SAA among southern cocoa and coffee farmers as well as on those of northern Dioula traders. These traders had become the main party stalwarts in major Ivorian towns, since they could rely on well-established commercial networks across the country (Boone 2003, 260).

Well aware of the importance of appealing to southern and northern electorates equally to win elections, Houphouët early on showed a deft ability to forge ethno-regional alliances with northern

candidates and chiefs and the constituencies they represented. With the help of these electoral alliances and as a consequence of the sudden boost to Houphouët's popularity from his role in the abolition of forced labor, he and the PDCI won subsequent elections unopposed or practically unopposed.<sup>112</sup>

Even after attempts by the French colonial administration to limit the popular support and growth of the PDCI lest it renounced its ties with the French communist party in the early 1950s (see details below), the PDCI remained by far the dominant political force in the country. Due to the first-past-the-post electoral system, the party easily won 28 out of 32 seats in the 1952 Territorial Assembly elections with 73 percent of the vote (Zolberg 1964a, 155). In subsequent elections – for the French National Assembly in 1956 and the Territorial Assembly in 1957 – it almost returned to the overwhelming majorities of the mid-1940s, winning 86 percent of the votes in 1956 and 89 percent in 1957. PDCI candidates held 58 out of 60 seats in the Ivorian Assembly (Schachter Morgenthau 1964, 214). A pattern of mobilizing support was established that would last throughout Houphouët's rule: to turn out the vote, the PDCI relied to a significant degree on Houphouët's popularity and clientelist network of local powerbrokers who represented ethnic communities and who were assured to turn out the vote in return for receiving government favors and other benefits (Zolberg 1964a, 185).

The country appeared largely united behind Houphouët and the PDCI at the time. However, since the right to vote was tied to household income and the ability to pay taxes, many of the voters were

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<sup>112</sup> This included the elections for the French National Assembly of June 1946, the Council of the Republic in June 1946, and the Second Council of the Ivorian Territorial Assembly of November of the same year. Houphouët and the PDCI won 98 percent, 98.5 percent, and 93.5 percent respectively in those elections (Schachter Morgenthau 1964, 396; Zolberg 1964a, 113).

based in urban areas and the numbers that had to be mobilized were quite limited.<sup>113</sup> As a consequence, even though Houphouët achieved apparently impressive electoral victories and the country appeared largely united behind Houphouët and the PDCI, the support was much shallower than it seemed. Houphouët and the PDCI were only ever elected by a relatively small fraction of the population, because the electoral franchise was quite limited until the mid-1950s. Until the 1956 elections to the French National Assembly, only a fraction of Ivoirians was eligible to vote – between 0.7 percent in 1945 and roughly 7 percent in 1952. Houphouët-Boigny was first elected as member of the French National Assembly in 1945 with 0.7 percent of the population being eligible to vote and only 0.5 percent casting their vote. Yet this victory gave him an exceptional platform and opportunities to impose himself as the main political figure, which he used to impose himself as the leading political leader of Côte d’Ivoire and his party as the primary political force. In the 1946 Territorial Assembly elections, the PDCI won all 15 seats reserved for Africans, although only roughly 72,000 Ivoirians out of a population of 2.4 million cast their votes in favor of Houphouët’s party.

As a consequence, when the electoral franchise had expanded to near universality for the 1957 Territorial Assembly elections, the PDCI was already a de-facto single party and had largely crowded out and absorbed most of the other Ivoirian political groupings. The PDCI’s overwhelming electoral victories did not mean that the party had wide support everywhere. Abstention rates rose through the years, reaching 46 percent in the 1957 Territorial Assembly elections (Schachter Morgenthau 1964, 214). Rates were even much lower in some urban areas, notably in Abidjan, where only 21

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<sup>113</sup> Houphouët was re-elected as the Ivoirian member of the French second “Constituante” (Constitutional Assembly) in 1946 with an overwhelming majority of almost 92 percent of the electorate. In absolute numbers, this was quite a small group of people since only 22,995 Ivoirians were eligible to vote, of which Houphouët won the support of 21,099 (Schachter Morgenthau 1964, 181).

percent of eligible voters cast a ballot (Zolberg 1964a, 212). Significant parts of the electorate thus either did not support the PDCI or were not mobilized to turn out during those elections.

There were early patterns of ethno-regional support for Houphouët and the PDCI that would persist over time and resurface with renewed electoral competition in the 1990s. Since the first elections in 1945, the PDCI's electoral tally was obviously strongest in the core Baoulé areas in the center of the country as well as in those of strong Baoulé in-migration in the west of the country. It was very weak in the Krou-speaking circles of the southwest<sup>114</sup> of the country as well as in the extreme east, among the Agni people, and the northwest and northeast (see map of PDCI electoral results of 1951 and 1957 in Annex IV).

The PDCI's organization across the country and Houphouët's role was also influenced by attempts by the French colonial administration to limit the party's growth and influence in the late 1940s and early 1950s. The PDCI's popularity and its association with the interterritorial RDA, the pan-West African political movement affiliated with the French communist party, led to an increasingly hostile stance against Houphouët and his party among French colonial administrators (Schachter Morgenthau 1964, 186; Koné 2003, 31). Systematic repression of the PDCI by the colonial administration started in late 1948. After violent incidents between PDCI and opposition party supporters in Treichville<sup>115</sup> in February 1949, many PDCI leaders were arrested (Kone 2003, 31-32). The colonial regime started an active campaign of suppression of PDCI activities across the country

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<sup>114</sup> In the 1957 Territorial Assembly elections, the two Bété subdivisions of Gagnoa and Issia in the center-west were the only constituencies that managed to elect their own non-PDCI-affiliated candidates (Vignaud 1956, p. 581). Many Bété joined the small socialist party in the early days of electoral politics and remained nominally attached to socialist causes throughout the post-independence period. This ultimately produced Laurent Gbagbo and the Front Populaire Ivoirien in the 1980s.

<sup>115</sup> A suburb of Abidjan in which the PDCI headquarter was located.

in an attempt to limit the party's influence, promote opposition parties, and force a change in power within the African representative institutions (Zolberg 1964a, 132).

In light of the pressure, Houphouët cut ties with the French Communist party and pledged full allegiance to the colonial power in late 1951. Subsequently, Houphouët paid close attention to the interests of the colonial administration and made sure to include French members in every election to the Territorial Assembly and other representative bodies in the country. He was rewarded with France's renewed support, which led to his appointment as government minister in four French cabinets from 1956 to 1959 (Kone 2003, 36-38). Nonetheless, the French repression of the PDCI had greatly weakened the party. It had come at a time when the party had just begun to formalize its structure and organize more seriously across the Ivorian territory. The period of French repression halted the PDCI's efforts to build an organizational structure throughout the territory. Even though party propaganda tried to give a different impression, the PDCI's organization across the country was limited (Zolberg 1964a, 114). It was far less firmly implanted throughout the country than its easy electoral victories seemed to suggest. It still beat out other political groupings, which had all narrow ethnic and regional bases, but the PDCI's party building was done in haste and based on existing relationships and networks. At the local level, this led to a grassroots party structure that was based on ethnic considerations. Instead of creating new structures, the PDCI integrated existing ethnic associations wholesale into the party apparatus as local sub-committees (Zolberg 1964a, 116). As one PDCI official noted, this was the easiest and most effective way to mobilize a larger share of the population during elections:

...the ethnic associations that existed in the city functioned efficiently for electoral purposes...Regardless of where they lived and worked in the city, people of the same tribe came together for social purposes. So, we transformed the ethnic associations into party subcommittees. Where they did not exist, we helped the tribes to organize original ones. (Zolberg 1964a, 116)

Party activity at the local level then relied largely on the co-optation of and bargaining with leaders of ethnic communities. The roughly three years of French repression thus reinforced the party's reliance on Dioula traders outside areas of significant Baoulé settlement in the center and center-west of the country. Since the early 1950s, local party general secretaries in urban areas, the main operating staff on the ground, were largely Dioula. Due their business interests and their role as the main owners of vehicles and transport operators, they were key intermediaries between farmers and foreign merchants and exporters. They could rely on vast trading networks that helped with the flow of information, organizing support and raising funds for the PDCI (Zolberg 1964a, 186-87).

At the leadership level, the three years of political repression led to a concentration of power. The repression had had a unifying effect on the party's most determined loyalists but also created deep divisions within the party between those who had remained loyal to Houphouët and those who had defected or fled the country (Schachter Morgenthau 1964, 202-212). As a result, Houphouët sidelined some former close associates and strengthened early members of the SAA. While the leaders of smaller parties, ethno-regional groups, or socio-professional associations were co-opted, they were treated as clients in a large patronage network. They were not closely associated with decision-making at the top. All decisions by the PDCI were taken within the party's leadership committee (Comité Directeur) made up of Houphouët and trusted lieutenants. Even within this body, Houphouët generally took decisions himself and had them later endorsed by the leadership group (Amondji 1984, 143-144). Houphouët made it clear that he had the final say and, at times, did not feel bound by decisions of the leadership group. When expedient, he appealed directly to the Ivorian population to get his way (Schachter Morgenthau 1964, 211).

These dynamics had a significant impact on the way the party interacted with rural areas in the future: it remained a largely urban-based political organization of elites with limited grassroots structures that were dominated by ethnic interests tied to the center through patron-client links.

### **Post-independence state-building (1960–1980s): Centralized patronage state with weak state-society linkages**

The Ivorian state at independence was thus built upon an implicit “Social and political pact” (Chauveau 2000, 104) that defined the post-independence state and its ruling coalition into the 1990s. This unspoken “pact” had several dimensions that all affected the state’s mobilizational capacity in the longer run. First, it was fueled by an economic model that tied southern cocoa and coffee farmers to the state through the continuous expansion of cocoa and coffee production in the southern cocoa belt and the state’s control of marketing circuits to generate significant rents for the state and its elites. Second, to secure his role as uncontested leader of independent Côte d’Ivoire, Houphouët-Boigny centralized all decision-making in the office of the president and the PDCI senior leadership. He focused on political regulation and integration at the elite level by creating a bureaucratic state elite whose interests were tied to the cocoa economy, with vertical ties from elites adown to rural populations (Médard 1982a, 75-77). Third, it was built on an underlying ethnic logic according to which state elites were supposed to represent and maintain ties with all major ethnic groups in the country, although there was also an unspoken hierarchy among ethno-regional groups, with Houphouët’s co-ethnic Baoulé and a number of smaller southern groups<sup>116</sup> seen as particularly favored due to their connections with Houphouët, as were the northern migrants and foreign immigrants who had settled in the south.

### **An economic success story**

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<sup>116</sup> For example, the Ebrié, a small Akan community prominent in and around Abidjan.

The wholehearted embrace by Houphouët and the PDCI leadership of continuous expansion of the extensive cocoa and coffee production in the southern forest belt in the post-independence period led to breakneck economic growth, attracted significant foreign investment, mainly French, and led to the Ivorian economic “miracle” in the 1960s and 1970s (Hecht 1983). Cocoa and coffee production as well as the number of farmers involved in tree crop cultivation grew at least 30-fold, from 20,000 in 1946 to between 600,000 and 800,000 in the early 1980s. Cocoa production almost quadrupled, from 85,000 tons in 1960 to 412,000 tons in the late 1980. It then doubled again to roughly 800,000 tons by the mid-1990s (Fauré 1982, 26; Sombo et al. 1995, 3). This large expansion of areas under production, coupled with rising or stable world market prices for cocoa in the 1960s and 70s, generated impressive annual economic growth rates of 7.3 percent on average between 1960 and 1979. This growth dwarfed that of any of Côte d’Ivoire’s non-oil producing West African neighbors as well as Senegal, comparable in terms of its close relationship with France, or neighboring Ghana, which had been the largest African cocoa producer until independence (Hecht 1983, 25).

Côte d’Ivoire’s economic success generated great enthusiasm among donors and Western investors. Rents from the agricultural export economy – mainly from paying producers state-guaranteed, but below world market prices for their raw crop through the CAISTAB and keeping the differential for state coffers – generated significant revenue for the state. This revenue was the essential grease for Houphouët-Boigny’s patronage machine and for his vision of state- and party-led development and inter-regional and ethnic social regulation through elite integration. It also allowed Houphouët and his allies to invest in the infrastructure needed to maintain the cash crop economy, through investments in roads, ports, and secondary and higher education, all concentrated in the south of the country (Woods 2003, 646-647).

## *Elite integration*

As shown, taking a lesson from the period of French repression in the early 1950s, Houphouët-Boigny concluded that it was essential to centralize control and forge a consensus and unity among the elites and from the top down. He co-opted former political enemies and developed a system of centralized patronage redistribution that made sure major political, ethnic, and regional interests had a stake in the central government.

At the core of Houphouët's system was a small circle of senior PDCI and government ministers, most of them early members and trusted allies of Houphouët-Boigny, who dominated the government and decision-making from the 1950s into the 1980s. As Bakary (1984) has shown, a mere 320 individuals held the 1,040 posts within the key party and state institutions – the PDCI Board of Directors and Political Bureau, the National Assembly, and Economic and Social Council in the period 1957–1980. Most appointees remained in their jobs for up to a decade. Many of these trusted lieutenants held multiple posts and mandates at the same time (Crook 1989, 213, 216). They often also held additional positions with foreign companies who found this to be a wise investment in getting an inside track with regime. All of the appointments in those institutions, and senior appointments in the parastatal sector, were controlled by the president's office, which took care to ensure that there was ethnic, regional, and generational balance across agencies (Crook 1989, 214).

To shore up support beyond this core circle of allies, Houphouët and his associates build up a cadre of government bureaucrats and technocrats by investing heavily in secondary and tertiary education and offering guaranteed employment in the state bureaucracy. The Ivorian state invested more in the education sector in the years from 1960 to the mid-1980s than any other African state as a share of

GDP. Instruction was in French and a large number of teachers were French<sup>117</sup> (Crook 1989, 218). The World Bank qualified the Ivorian output of secondary school and university graduates as “Too high” and “Not relevant” for the country’s needs in the 1980s (Crook 1989, 220). Ivorian secondary school and university graduates were educated to French standards. Most of them found employment in the large parastatal sector, which was a critical element in Houphouët-Boigny’s patronage system. In the late 1970s more than 40 percent of the Ivorian labor force in the productive sector (those not self-employed or farmers) worked for the state through its parastatal agencies and enterprises<sup>118</sup> (Crook 1989, 210). This system allowed for a semblance of social mobility throughout the 1970s, but as the elite grew and resource rents dwindled, it became more and more a system of the privileged and for the privileged with connections to the party, closed to outsiders without such connections.

The main glue that held these elites together and created the appearance of “unity” at the senior level was the continuous redistribution of rents from export agriculture and all the numerous official and unofficial perks and benefits that the members of the ruling class had access to. While elite integration was successful to some extent, this did not translate to other levels of society.

### ***Ethnic organizing principle***

Although not officially acknowledged, ethno-regional considerations remained critical throughout the state apparatus. At the elite level, ethnic integration was genuine to some point in that select Ivorians from all regions had gone to the same elite secondary schools and universities and worked

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<sup>117</sup> In 1984, 35 percent of all teaching personnel in Côte d’Ivoire were expatriates. A majority of secondary school teachers were French or from other francophone countries.

<sup>118</sup> At that time, there were 78 directly state-owned enterprises in addition to numerous agencies of which the Ivorian state owned a significant share. Many government-owned enterprises had French managers – in 1979 approximately 60 percent of all management positions in private and parastatal enterprises were occupied by expatriates – and all key state bureaucracies had French advisors, particularly in critical state agencies such as the Ministries of Finance and Budget and the agency overseeing public works contracts (Crook 1989, 217-218).

closely together within the state administration and parastatal sector. Although representatives of Akan<sup>119</sup> groups were more numerous than their share within the overall population, occupying slightly more than half (51 percent) of all high ranking government positions between 1959 and 1980, other groups were well represented, even though they were not among the otherwise favored communities (Bakary 1984, 36-37). Many senior party officials or government bureaucrats were selected for leadership positions because they represented ethnic associations. They had generally been handpicked by Houphouët himself, and their loyalty was to the president and the party. Since they also represented particular ethnic or regional interests, they were expected to maintain relationships with their ethno-regional “base” (Zolberg 1964a, 142-143).

However, the emphasis on demonstrating ethnic balance at the center meant that many members of the PDCI and state elite circles had few genuine connections with their home regions. The redistribution of resources was the main mechanism that linked the state elite to local communities. The party and state hierarchy did not have any legitimation with local communities other than demonstrating that they were able to get access to central government development projects and funds and offering members of the local community access to scholarship and good schools or government employment. Some senior party and government officials were appointed by Houphouët simply to demonstrate ethnic balance, although, in reality, they did not represent any wider ethnic community.<sup>120</sup> This was often deliberate since Houphouët-Boigny was skeptical of individuals who could mobilize significant communities and potentially contest his rule.

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<sup>119</sup> The larger family of ethnic groups to which the Baoulé, Agni, and other, smaller groups belong.

<sup>120</sup> One example was Laurant Dana Fologo, a Senoufo from the north. Houphouët went to great lengths to appoint him as PDCI general secretary in 1991 against three Baoulé candidates, mainly to avoid a too open display of Baoulé control of the state. Yet, Fologo was neither the most qualified candidate nor did he have much regional following among the Sounoufo, shown by the fact that he lost his National Assembly seat in the October 1990 elections, an obvious indication of a lack of support among those who were supposed to be his natural constituency (Toungara 1995, 31).

Although all ethnic sub-committees within the party were declared undesirable, and ethnicity as organizing principle was officially outlawed after intra-party challenges to Houphouët in the early 1960s, they continued to play a significant role as the basic units of party organization, in particular in urban areas where they allowed easier and more effective communication of party decisions and mobilization of supporters when needed (Gonnin 1998, 168-169). Over time, they reemerged as local development or “hometown” associations, which came to fill the void left behind at the local level by the weakness of the PDCI and the limited state presence and lack of connectedness in rural areas (Boone 1995). These associations sought to connect urban residents and were vehicles to lobby the government for local investment and patronage distribution. They were parallel channels of influence and communication that provided a critical link for channeling information and resources between members of the state bureaucracy and their home towns and villages. Although Houphouët-Boigny was constantly concerned about any kind of larger mobilizational structure in rural areas that could be used against the regime, hometown associations were small and fragmented enough, and often led by loyal members of the government, that they were not seen as a threat (Woods 1994). The ethnic organizing principle was so engrained in the Ivorian state and society, though, that once intra-party elections for certain party functions and for local and municipal offices was introduced in 1980, electoral mobilization largely occurred along ethnic lines (Bonnal 1986). The same would happen with later ethnic mobilization at the national level, once competitive multi-party elections were introduced in the early 1990s.

These informal strategies that sought to acknowledge and balance ethnic interests were coupled with zero tolerance among the senior leadership for any sign of ethno-regional grassroots mobilization against the regime. The open expression of ethno-regional demands was not accepted. The lack of

competitive intra-party or general elections generally prevented any broader political mobilization along ethno-regional lines (Woods 1994, 479-480), and Houphouët did not hesitate to crack down hard on any such challenges. Internal opponents within the PDCI, many from western and northern ethnic groups, were sidelined and persecuted in 1962 and 1963. The attempted secession by the Agni kingdom of Sanwi in 1961 was crushed with the full force of the state security forces just like the so-called “Bété” uprising in Gagnoa in 1970, which left hundreds ethnic Bété dead and many houses and villages destroyed (Chauveau and Dozon 1988, 744, 746; Boone 2003, 220).

### ***Preferential treatment of regime clients***

Despite attempts to project an image of ethnic diversity and tolerance and integration at the elite level, not all ethno-regional groups were treated as equals. As a result of the early party-building efforts in the 1950s described above, Baoulé and northerner migrants in the southern cocoa belt became the main clients and supporters of the PDCI regime. This was in part a function of their critical role in the tree crop economy. It was also due to Houphouët-Boigny’s origins and an implicit hierarchy among Côte d’Ivoire’s ethnic communities embraced by the president and his entourage.

While Baoulé had started migrating into southwestern parts of Côte d’Ivoire with ample fallow forest land in the 1920s, the government took concrete actions to encourage and support the Baoulé migration in the 1950s, but most actively in the 1970s when the regime provided significant incentives for Baoulé planters to settle further in the southwest through the Government Southwest Development Authority (ARSO – Autorité de l’aménagement du sud-ouest). Since the Krou ethnic groups – mainly Wè, Guéré, Bété, and Krou – considered to be the original inhabitants of the region had not traditionally been supporters of the PDCI regime, these incentives were also seen as a political strategy by Houphouët-Boigny to gain greater influence in those areas (McGovern 2011, 78). The Baoulé agricultural migration and settlement of the southwest went hand in hand with the

arrival of migrants from the north and from neighboring countries, notably Burkina Faso, Mali, and Guinea. In their expansion, the Baoulé in the center and center-west relied to a significant degree on northern migrant and immigrant laborers as their farms expanded. Many northerners subsequently also received land allocations to set up their own farms via Baoulé intermediaries (Chauveau 1987, 134). Although northern migrants and foreign immigrants came originally as agricultural workers, they soon became landholders and farmers themselves in rural areas and also occupied positions in other economic sectors such as in trade, artisanal professions, and in processing industries (Dozon 2000a, 15-16).

These migration movements led to significant demographic shifts within Côte d'Ivoire. First, the immigration of foreigners generated rapid population growth of an average of 4.0 percent annually between 1955 and 1975, and 3.7 percent from 1975 to 1988. While only approximately 5 percent of the Ivorian population was of foreign descent in 1950, their share increased to 22 percent in 1975 and ultimately to 28 percent in 1988, with a slight reduction to 26 percent by 1998 (Brou and Charbit 1994, 36, 38; Beauchemin 2005, 13; Babo and Droz 2008, 745). Second, in many communities or municipalities in the southwest or west of the country, migrant Baoulé or northern Ivorians and foreigners together started to outnumber the local population (Babo and Droz 2008) beginning in the 1950s. The migrants not only had received incentives to settle in southwest and west, but, once established, they also often received preferential treatment to encourage their settlement, acquisition of land, and setting up of cocoa and coffee farms. Baoulé and northerners played a key role in the designation of local party secretaries in areas they had migrated to, which meant that many PDCI officials were either from their own community or at least friendly to their interests.

As a result, local PDCI officials generally interpreted the ambiguous land tenure laws<sup>121</sup> in favor of Baoulé and northern settlers in the south. They pressured traditional chiefs and landholders to welcome migrants and to offer generous land allocations or to accept migrant settlement in protected forest zones (Chauveau 2000, 105-106). State officials, sub-prefects or prefects, regularly intervened in the migrants' favor when allocating fallow farm land or in land disputes between migrants or immigrants and autochthonous landholders (Crook 2001, 39-40). This favoritism led to significant grievances by the local Krou populations, who felt they were being continuously disadvantaged. In contrast, northern migrants and immigrants became critical supporters of the PDCI regime in return for this preferential treatment by the PDCI government. This support became particularly important in the 1980s with Houphouët's gradual shift toward electoral legitimation. Immigrants were given the right to vote, first within the party through primary elections for candidates for the National Assembly and mayoral and town councils in the early 1980s and later in the presidential and National Assembly elections of October 1990 (Dozon 2000a, 16).

This was a reflection of the fact that, although the Ivorian state and Houphouët-Boigny at its helm took great care to publicly demonstrate ethnic balance, the president<sup>122</sup> and many close associates considered there to be an implicit ethnic hierarchy in Côte d'Ivoire. At the top of the hierarchy was the Baoulé and other Akan groups, with some northern groups such as Dioula and Senoufou in the middle, and western groups such as various Krou-speaking communities at the bottom (Chauveau

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<sup>121</sup> The PDCI allowed multiple layers of land tenure regimes to coexist that left room for interpretation but overall encouraged the settlement of migrants and land colonization to establish new cocoa plantations. A new land tenure law in 1963 (Code Domaniale) designated all non-titled land as property of the state, while Houphouët declared that "The land belongs to whoever develops it" ("La terre appartient à celui qui la met en valeur") (Chauveau 2000, 105). This declaration became official policy, encouraging land colonization in the southwest of the country.

<sup>122</sup> This implicit hierarchy had its roots in colonial ethnography and stereotypes about the different ethnic groups and their relative qualities, as well as in the fact that some groups, notably the Baoulé and other Akan groups, came into contact earlier with the colonial conquest (Chauveau and Dozon 1987). Houphouët regularly referred to himself as descendent of Baoulé royalty and as traditional chief to the entire nation. He portrayed himself as representing typical Baoulé virtues and values that he saw as guiding principles for the entire nation (Lesourd 1989, 81; Konaté 1987).

and Dozon 1987). The Baoulé made up less than 20 percent of the Ivorian population, but due to their original settlement in the center of the country, their migration across southern Côte d'Ivoire and favorable government policies, they became influential beyond their mere demographic weight (Chauveau 1987, 124). There was little doubt in most Ivorians' minds that Côte d'Ivoire was primarily an Akan and particularly Baoulé-dominated state and that the regime's policies led to a gradual "baouléization" of Ivorian Society (Chauveau and Dozon 1988, 740).

## Impact on state mobilizational capacity

### *Territorial organization*

Houphouët-Boigny's focus on economic growth and elite integration, his conviction that the nation could only be built from the top down, and his desire to prevent any broader ethno-regional mobilization against the regime made the Ivorian state a "Technocratic-administrative agency devoid of structures of representation or participation" (Jackson and Rosberg, 1982, 149). There was little investment in local state and party structures after independence. All investment focused on the central government apparatus and Abidjan: "Houphouët built a ruthlessly centralized and highly concentrated party-state that gave rural interests few sites of access to the state... all top-down controlled" (Boone 2003, 208). Ivorians witnessed the "Progressive *deinstitutionalization* [italics in original] of the territorially structured political apparatus" (Boone 2003, 208). In the 1960s and 1970s, the PDCI focused almost exclusively on balancing elite interests and neglected local party structures. By the late 1960s, the party apparatus in rural areas had "atrophied" (Stryker 1971b, 136). Although the party was supposed to have committees down to the village level, these rarely existed. The basic unit of the party remained the secretary generals at the sub-prefectural level, the lowest level of centrally controlled administration. In some parts of the country, local party officials often continued to be migrants or outsiders with no local power base. In others, they were local

strongmen who used the party mainly to further their own personal interests. There was no broader party ideology that local PDCI members adhered to. In the absence of elections or other regular political activity, party leaders never had to develop any genuine local following, since they were protected through their links to the PDCI leadership or even the president himself (Stryker 1971a, 87). The local state offices, apart from the agricultural extension services in the cocoa growing areas, were generally ineffective and deprived of resources. Civil service posts in Abidjan were plentiful for high school and university grads in the 1960s and 1970s. It was difficult to find qualified personnel to be posted in rural areas (Stryker 1971a, 93).

There were no intra-party elections, and the local party personnel often remained the same from 1950 up to 1980. The 1957 Territorial Assembly elections, which cemented the PDCI's stranglehold on power, were the last territory-wide competitive elections in Côte d'Ivoire for 33 years. After independence, the PDCI was declared the only legal party and elections became mere referenda to sanction lists of intra-party candidates, which had all been pre-vetted by the leadership. Even though there continued to be a National Assembly, electoral districts were abolished in 1960. Candidates for a seat in the National Assembly all ran on one national candidate slate approved by the president (Boone 2003, 208-209). Instead of campaigning locally, all the candidates for National Assembly had to do was to curry favor with the president and the party leadership (Boone quotes Bakary 1971, 76). Political and state personnel at the local level were appointed by the center, and there was practically no political competition. Election campaigns were public spectacles and displays of support for the PDCI, often on the occasion of visits by Houphouët or other high-ranking party and state officials; they had no genuine mobilization effect. Voter interest was limited, and turnout was as low as 25 percent, since election outcomes were preordained (Médard 1982a, 67-68).

The PDCI regime's desire to prevent any kind of local political power base or counterweight to develop that could undermine the uncontested authority of the central regime meant that it attempted "To reproduce the dispersion, fragmentation, and extreme localism of rural social networks, communities and identities" (Boone 2003, 207). Although the French colonial rulers had introduced elected municipal government with some autonomous powers in Côte d'Ivoire's main cities and somewhat representative general councils as representative bodies in rural areas in the 1950s, these structures were first neglected and then dismantled by the Houphouët regime in the 1960s. Representative councils at the sub-prefecture level were supposed to replace them, but they were not elected and never really saw the light of day (Stryker 1971a, 96-100).

Instead, the PDCI regime maintained the centrally controlled territorial administrative structure from colonial times. In the early 1960s, it converted the 19 French "cercles" into "departments," but introduced an additional layer of bureaucratic control by adding 4 prefectures on top of the 19 departments. All throughout the 30 years of PDCI single party rule, this territorial structure was gradually expanded by adding new subdivisions and by introducing new prefectures and sub-prefectures. By the late 1970s, the country was governed through 34 prefectures and 164 sub-prefectures, at the head of which were "prefects" and "sub-prefects," all of whom were appointed by the central Ministry of the Interior. This was partly an expression of the desire to tighten the control of the population, but was also a mere expansion of the government's patronage network as well as a response to demands by ethnic and regional interest groups to have "their" sub-region recognized within the state administrative structure in order to gain better access to central state patronage (Médard 1982a, 71-72). Tice concluded that at least during the 1960s "The spatial structure of the Ivory Coast's administration...correlates quite well to generalised ethnic and culture cluster boundaries at the levels of the départements and the sous-prefecture" (Tice 1974, 224). This

increasingly fine-grained administrative structure at the local level was largely a means for the regime to fragment any kind of local mobilizational capacity rather than any attempt to increase local political expression or build genuine linkages with rural areas (Tice 1974, 219).

### **Security apparatus**

These fundamental structuring elements of the Ivorian state – centralized decision-making, patronage distribution with ethnic undertones, and local state absence – also left an imprint on the security apparatus. A defense agreement with France,<sup>123</sup> signed shortly after independence, and a lack of external threats allowed Houphouët to keep the security forces small and in check. Defense spending in Côte d'Ivoire all throughout the independence period until the breakout of the 2002 war was at the lower end of the spectrum among African countries, with only roughly 1 to 1.5 percent of GDP going to defense (Bangoura 1992, 175)

Houphouët's focus thus could be largely on internal security. To disperse power within the security forces, he created several parallel forces to counterbalance each other. The Ivorian security sector was structured following the French model with a strong gendarmerie as an internal paramilitary force in charge of domestic security, with a smaller national police responsible for preventing and fighting crime. After internal contestation of Houphouët's policies in the early 1960s, which included rumors of a coup attempt led to a significant number of arrests of regime critics and purges in the

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<sup>123</sup> The defense agreement with France was signed less than a year after independence in April 1961. It led to the establishment of a permanent base of one battalion of 400 French troops at Port Bouet near Abidjan and a heavy involvement by the French military in the management of Ivorian security through numerous military advisors. France provided most of FANCI's arms and training. Almost the only times that the Ivorian forces practiced their skills in the field was during joint exercises with the French military. French political leaders made it clear from the start that they considered Côte d'Ivoire of strategic importance and that they would not hesitate to intervene (Ndiaye 2000, 253). They officially had to intervene, although French troops were allegedly involved in the repression of the "Bété uprising" in Gagnoa in the center-west of the country in 1970 (Welch 1987, 186, 193, FN 51). The French security commitment was largely to Houphouët-Boigny himself rather than to Côte d'Ivoire as a state. This commitment to an individual rather than to the state as a whole became clear in the 1990s when France refused to intervene in favor of Houphouët's successors Bédié in 1999 and Gbagbo in 2002.

ranks of the PDCI, Houphouët reduced the military forces from 5,000 to 3,500 and created parallel forces directly under his control (Welch 1987, 180-181). He separated the command of the gendarmerie from the command of FANCI and created a National Defense Secretariat within the President's office in charge of coordination of all security forces (Bangoura 1992, 127-128). He thus ensured that ultimate authority for territorial and internal security would lie with the president rather than with the minister of defense. While there were numerous members of FANCI (Forces Armées Nationales de la Côte d'Ivoire) from ethnic groups that were not among the close regime clients, including the southwestern Krou communities (N'diaye 2000, 255), members of the presidential guard were largely Baoulé to ensure their loyalty to the president (Welch 1987).

Under Houphouët-Boigny's rule, the security forces were generally well looked after and fully integrated into the state patronage machinery. Starting in the early 1970s, many senior military officers were integrated into the civilian state apparatus, through appointments as prefects and sub-prefects in the territorial administration as well through lucrative spoils appointments in parastatals involved in the cocoa and coffee trade and export. In the 1980s, approximately one-third of the Ivorian prefectures were headed by former military officers, indicating the significant degree of civil-military interpenetration. Military officers were anchored within the civilian state to prevent any attempts by the military to organize against the state. Just like other senior government officials, senior military officers were also given perks such as land allocations for the establishment of export crop farms to root them in the country's agricultural export economy. All senior military appointments were directly approved by the President and his entourage, which assured that only loyal military officers were promoted and created a personal fealty of senior military personnel to the president and the PDCI leadership (Welch 1987, 182-183).

Just like the other sectors of state activity, the Ivorian security sector was thus to a large degree under Houphouët and the state leadership's direct control, with FANCI in addition being under the watchful eye of the French military advisors. Power within the security apparatus was dispersed. This "Divide and rule strategy" (Welch 1987, 181) was successful in preventing any challenges to Houphouët from within the military during his rule, but sowed the seeds for later disintegration.

### ***Symbolic mobilization: Lack of overarching identity***

If "Nation-building indicates a movement from simple interaction, through varying degrees of systems integration, to an ultimate awareness of membership in a common polity" (Tice 1974, 211), Côte d'Ivoire fell far short in developing a broader inclusive identity that all Ivorians could identify with. National unity in Côte d'Ivoire was understood by its leaders as "political unity" in terms of all elites adhering to the same organization and fundamental philosophy of state development (Zolberg 1964a, 326). This political unity was shallow and had largely personal and economic underpinnings. It was built on two main elements that proved relevant for some time but rather ephemeral in the end.

The first of these two elements was the person of Houphouët-Boigny. From the early days of Houphouët's rise to prominence by leading the battle in the French National Assembly for the abolition of forced labor in 1946, a cult of personality was built around the president, reflecting the dominant role he played within the state and party apparatus. This personality cult portrayed him in the early years as the hero of the struggle against the French colonial administration and forced labor. Later, literally, symbolically and mystically, he was seen as the father of the nation, the omnipotent guarantor of peace and stability in the country. Common monikers used by PDCI officials and state media to describe Houphouët played on the African cultural reverence for the elderly and the association of age with greater knowledge and wisdom. He was most commonly

referred to as “le vieux” (the old man), as the “le sage de l’Afrique” (the wise man of Africa) and even compared to biblical figures as “King Solomon of our times” (Memel-Fotê 1997, 614). To justify this claim, Houphouët regularly referred to Ivoirians as his children and grandchildren when addressing the population (Chappell 1989, 672). Government Minister Laurent Fologo, in 1984, called Houphouët “the only Ivorian fetish that is worth being adored.”<sup>124</sup> He was not only the father of the nation, but he embodied the nation, or he was the nation: ““Houphoet [sic] not only runs the country, he also symbolizes it. He is George Washington, Abraham Lincoln, the flag, the constitution, the national anthem all in one. He is the glue that holds the Ivorian system together and the prime symbol of what is unique in Ivorian culture” (Vogel 1991, 453). This was reinforced by government propaganda and government or party-sponsored slogans and praise songs.<sup>125</sup>

Houphouët fully embraced and used this role and rhetoric. He constantly reminded Ivoirians of his many origins and talents, his role in furthering the development of the country, and his indispensability as the embodiment of the nation and as the chief arbiter of all disputes, a doctrine that was at least officially embraced by his acolytes in government. Houphouët alone, this rhetoric suggested, could guarantee social peace and hold the country together.

As a result, the second aspect that defined an Ivorian identity since independence was the focus by Ivorian leaders on “modernizing” the country and on generating and redistributing rents at the expense of other aspects of state- and nation-building (Amondji 1986, 10). Since his early rise to power, Houphouët-Boigny was mainly concerned about stability and economic development. He

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<sup>124</sup> “Le seul fétiche ivoirien qui mérite d’être adoré,” quoted in Amondji 1986, 28.

<sup>125</sup> A praise song from the early 1960s suggested the following: “You are the master; It’s you who plants the rice; It’s you who works the wool; It is you who builds the mansions; It’s you who dies of hunger; It is you who walks on knees; It is you who sleeps under the stars; To each; I clamour; You are the king of the factories; You are the king of the fields; You are the people; You are the master!” (Schachter Morgenthau 1964, 212).

made it clear that the only goal for Côte d'Ivoire was to emulate Western nations: "Our ambition is and remains to make the Ivorian citizen equal to the citizens of the most advanced countries."<sup>126</sup> As Vogel suggests, "The sense of economic success and prosperity has become an important element of the national identity [for Ivorians], something that sets them apart from their neighbors" (Vogel 1991, 452). As Houphouët said explicitly, the rapid expansion of cocoa and coffee plantations became the main national project for the country. The central message was that hard work and the pioneering of new areas of forest for cocoa and coffee cultivation would ultimately be rewarded and was the main avenue to rural growth and that this attitude and the economic success set Ivorians apart from other West African countries.

There were indeed few other sources of national pride in Côte d'Ivoire. Other than popular musicians and the national soccer team, there were few true symbols or situations that could unify Ivorians. This lack of national symbols is why the central government invested heavily into the "Elephants," Côte d'Ivoire's soccer team: "Much more money is spent on sports than on other manifestations of the national spirit, and this is quite simply because sporting events unify the population behind a national team in a way that nothing else can...Nobody questions what it means to be an Ivorian when the national soccer team is competing..." (Vogel 1991, 454).

Although Zolberg has claimed that "Africans in the Ivory Coast have not found within their past a source of myth for contemporary unity" (Zolberg 1964b, 16), there was potential for genuine nationalist mobilization in Côte d'Ivoire before 1951. There were enough moments during the struggle for emancipation of Africans during the late colonial period, and enough rich cultural material among Côte d'Ivoire's numerous ethnic and regional communities, to draw on for building

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<sup>126</sup> "Notre ambition est et demeure de faire du citoyen ivoirien l'égal des citoyens des pays les plus évolués," quoted in Amondji 1986, 8.

a deeper notion of national belonging. This dynamic was halted by Houphouët and his sudden alignment with the French colonial power after 1952. His subsequent focus on the economy and patronage redistribution required stability and relative acquiescence by Ivorians for the close collaboration with France to flourish. Subsequently, occasional references to the anti-colonial struggle in Houphouët's public pronouncements had the main goal of highlighting Houphouët's exploits rather than framing them as accomplishments by the Ivorian people. There was little effort to use that period to build a genuine national consciousness. None of the pro-independence leaders other than Houphouët-Boigny were honored or received special distinctions, and none of the historical dates or events related to the anti-colonial struggle were officially celebrated.<sup>127</sup>

In short, there was thus no deeper regime ideology that made use of the country's history or created unifying myth for the nation other than its economic success. The emphasis on economic growth was an elite vision. It left out large parts of the country that did not benefit from the southern cocoa boom. It was a vision of national pride that worked as long as the economy grew and the material means for wide redistribution were available. It clashed with some of Houphouët's pronouncements in which he emphasized his descent from Baoulé royalty and extolled Baoulé or Akan cultural values as being superior to those of other groups in the country (Dozon 2000a, 20-21). It clashed even more with the felt reality of many Ivorians, notably those in the southwest and west of the country, who had seen Baoulé, northern, and foreign migrants acquire more and more land and become wealthy, often under the patronage of the PDCI, while their own income stagnated over time. Also left out were those in the north of the country, who earned only a fraction of what their fellow

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<sup>127</sup> In the eyes of critics, it was telling that December 7 was decreed to be the main Ivorian national holiday ("fête nationale"), although this date is not related to any special event in the history of Côte d'Ivoire. Notably, neither the day on which the country first received its autonomous status within the French African "Community" (December 4, 1958) nor the actual Independence Day, August 7, 1960, were chosen as Ivorian national holiday (Amondji 1986, 11). Nor did the day on which the PDCI was founded, April 9, 1946, or the date of the founding of its predecessor, the Syndicat Agricole Africain (July 10, 1944).

countrymen in the south did and whose social development indicators were always significantly lower.

Outside of the economic project, the state's rhetorical tools to mobilize the broader population were in short supply. This combined with state-controlled media that continued to extol the virtues of the president and PDCI rule even in the face of rapid economic decline in the 1980s. The lack of political life and competition in rural areas led to widespread political disillusion and apathy in rural areas. By the late 1970s, the PDCI and the Ivorian state had lost much the support among the Ivorian population outside its core constituencies. This was occasionally acknowledged by Houphouët-Boigny himself, who deplored in 1980 that,

Our party...had the commitment to rally the entire Ivorian people without distinction of social classes, race or religion...During the struggle for independence, it remained loyal to this ideal...The population was mobilized and stood united behind the party and its leaders...I regret to have to say that once independence was achieved we have not found the same enthusiasm, the same cohesion, and the same mobilization of hearts and minds...The...ideal got lost in the swamps of personal interests and egoistic ambition.<sup>128</sup>

Ivorians did maintain their loyalty to their president to a large degree and Houphouët's declining health in the 1980s led to considerable anxiety, concern, and speculation about who his successor should be. Since the leaders who followed Houphouët neither had his charisma and stature nor the same broad network of relationships, they had little material to work with and instead appealed to much narrower ethnic and regional interests.

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<sup>128</sup> "Notre parti...avait pour vocation...de rassembler tout le peuple ivoirien sans distinction de couches sociales, de races ni de religions. Pendant toute la durée de la lutte pour l'indépendance, il est demeuré fidèle à cet idéal...La population était mobilisée comme un seul homme au sein du parti et autour de ses responsables...J'ai regret de devoir dire qu'une fois l'indépendance acquise, nous n'avons pas retrouvé le même dynamisme, la même cohésion, la même mobilisation des esprits et des cœurs...Le pur courant de l'idéal se perdait dans le marécage des intérêts personnels et des ambitions égoïstes." From a speech given by Houphouët-Boigny before the VIIIth Congress of the PDCI in 1980, quoted in Amondji 1986, 26-27.

## **Developments post-1990: Democratization, deinstitutionalization, and narrowing of the state**

Cracks in society and the Ivorian model of socio-economic and political regulation that emerged in the 1970s and 1980s escalated in the 1990s as a prolonged economic crisis worsened social tensions. Political competition for control of the state became increasingly fierce and violent after Houphouët's death in 1993. With ethno-regional divisions already built into the Ivorian state and the lack of an overarching national identity, the Baoulé-migrant alliance broke apart. Two southern parties, the Baoulé-dominated PDCI and the Krou-dominated FPI, went to great lengths to sideline northerners and immigrants. A coup d'état in 2000 and a series of illegitimate elections deepened rifts and ultimately led to the coup attempt and insurgency of September 2002.

### *Ivorian model under pressure: Economic decline in the 1980s and 1990s*

Multiple economic pressures combined from the late 1970s on to reveal the weaknesses of the Ivorian development and state-building model. World market prices for cocoa plummeted to half their value in the early 1980s, at around the same time that the Ivorian economic model started to run out of its most essential resource: fertile and unoccupied forest land. Almost all of the growth in export crop production had come from the continuous expansion of areas under cultivation. There had been little investment in the intensification of production (McGovern 2011, 145-147).

Declining cocoa revenues had a significant impact on the country's economy and political system. Cocoa culture and exports still made up 40 percent of all exports in the 1990s. Approximately 600,000 households in southern and western Côte d'Ivoire were involved in cocoa production. Up to half of all public sector jobs were related to the cocoa economy in the 1980s (Dozon 2000a, 18; McGovern 2011, 144). While the Ivorian government could still borrow in the international financial

markets and received considerable development assistance from France and Western donors, declining revenues and a growing debt burden increasingly limited the government's ability to maintain its lavish patronage system. While the regime tried to maintain stable prices as long as possible, it was finally forced to cut producer prices in half in 1989 (McGovern 2011, 145-146). This led to a drastic erosion of household income. Average incomes dropped by 45 percent between 1979 and 1993. The share of Ivoirians living below the poverty line rose from 11 percent in 1985 to 37 percent in 1995. Urban public sector workers and rural food crop producers were the most severely affected, but all lower income groups felt the squeeze (Sindzingre 2000, 33). The devaluation of the CFA Franc, the local currency, in 1994 further accentuated socio-economic inequalities. Elites were able to largely shelter their savings by moving them abroad and then reinvesting them after the devaluation (Sindzingre 2000, 34), while the middle and low income earners suffered more (Widner 1991, 32). Social mobility ground to a halt as the urban elites defended their privileges. Public sector employment was not guaranteed anymore, and distributional conflicts within elite circles and between the privileged and underprivileged increased. This situation prompted many educated young people to return to their rural towns and villages of origin from Abidjan and other urban areas. They expected to at least find stable sources of income in the rural cocoa and coffee economy. Instead, they found that their family land holdings had considerably shrunk over the years and that rural cocoa and coffee farmers were less and less able to make ends meet. Generational tensions thus increased in both in rural and urban areas. The redistributive formula that had held society together, and upon which the post-independence state had been founded, eroded (Chauveau 2005).

### ***The end of the one-party system***

While the regime had always kept a relatively tight grip on the core state apparatus as well as on socio-economic classes through the patronage state and party-controlled socio-professional organizations and unions, the ongoing economic crisis led to cracks in the elite consensus. Since the

early 1980s, internal criticism of Houphouët and his old PDCI stalwarts grew. In response, the president gradually allowed for more intra-party competition through primaries and elections at local level to diffuse this criticism, to renew the political personal, and to co-opt critical younger generations into the party apparatus (Crook 1996, 700).

As Houphouët-Boigny continued his personal prestige projects of converting his home town Yamoussoukro into the nation's capital and building the largest church on the African continent modeled after St Peter's Basilica in Rome at the cost of hundreds of million dollars (McGovern 2011, 152, 157), state expenditures continued to be cut. External contestation of his and the PDCI's rule grew among critical socio-professional groups – students, teachers, transport operators, public sector workers, and even the military and police – in the late 1980s and early 1990s (Minangoy 1990a, 1990b; Daddieh 2001). Houphouët realized that he had lost the support of key groups within the state apparatus and that his old repertoire of responding to crisis through his personal intervention and through the dispensation of patronage had reached its limits. To head off the pressure on the regime, he felt compelled to open up the tightly controlled political system, abandoning the PDCI's monopoly on political organization and allowing for multi-party elections for the first time since independence (Memel-Foté 1997, 614).

### ***The crucial early 1990s***

Three political events during the early 1990s signaled an end to the state that Houphouët-Boigny had built. These events reinforced dynamics that had been deeply rooted within the Ivorian state system and that ultimately led to a splintering of the state and increasingly violent political and ethno-regional competition for control of the state. The three events were: the organization of multi-party elections starting in 1990; the nomination of Alassane Ouattara, a northerner, as Prime

Minister in Houphouët's last government from 1991 to 1993; and the death of the father of the nation himself.

First, the decision to organize multi-party elections, while inevitable given internal and international developments at the time, quickly demonstrated the limitations of the state's mobilizational capacity and provided an opening for the opposition to grow its support and to mount a serious challenge in a bid to take over the state. President Houphouët-Boigny legalized political parties other than the PDCI in May 1990 and announced that multi-party elections would be held in October (presidential) and November (parliamentary) of that year. Houphouët, in his eighties, gave opposition parties little time to organize and calculated that he would easily win the elections since he still controlled the state and PDCI party apparatuses. Houphouët's calculus seemed to work. He clearly won the October 1990 presidential elections with 81.7 percent of the vote against Laurent Gbagbo's 18.3 percent. The PDCI also largely swept the National Assembly elections, winning 163 seats out of a total of 185. Houphouët still had wide support among his traditional electorate, the southern Baoulé and affiliated smaller southern and coastal groups, and among the northern Malinké and Senoufou communities. Houphouët also made sure that northern immigrants were allowed to vote. He secured a clear majority in areas of the south and southwest of the country, where immigrants and Baoulé migrant farmers together outnumbered local ethnic communities (Dozon 1997, 783-84). Nonetheless, the 1990s elections provided an opening for long-time opposition candidate Laurent Gbagbo to mobilize his own supporters among the southwestern Krou people, but also among others affected by the economic crisis and disaffected with the regime. To mobilize his southern and southwestern supporters, Gbagbo actively campaigned against privileges given to immigrants, publicly describing immigrants as the PDCI's "electoral cattle"<sup>129</sup> (Banégas 2008, 224). Gbagbo thus

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<sup>129</sup> "Bétail électoral" in French.

became the champion of all those who felt that immigrants had unjustifiably usurped fertile land from the originally indigenous groups, a theme that would dominate public discourse from then on.

A second critical change in the early 1990s was the appointment of a prime minister from the north of the country. To create distance between himself and the painful economic reforms required by the International Financial Institutions, Houphouët-Boigny appointed Alassane Ouattara, an economist and former IMF official from the north of the country, as prime minister. Ouattara was a technocrat. The President did not see him as a political threat (Daddieh 2001, 16), an impression that would quickly change, however. Ouattara naturally embodied the yearnings of northerners for a greater say within the Ivorian state and for a fairer distribution of resources. Similarly, Ouattara was seen as a protector by northern migrants and immigrants in the south who felt less and less at home in the PDCI and ill at ease in light of the anti-immigrant rhetoric expressed during the 1990 election campaign. Muslims outnumbered Christians and those of other beliefs in the country and northerners and immigrants together made up approximately half of the population and, due to immigration, between a quarter and half of the population in many of the southern and southwestern departments and towns (Touré 2000). Ouattara's emergence as a political actor with the ability to mobilize and unify northerners fundamentally reshaped political competition in Côte d'Ivoire (Coulibaly 1995).

The third element that significantly altered Ivorian political was the death of Houphouët-Boigny himself in December 1993, which formally brought to an end the state and the regulation of political interests as Houphouët had conceived them. The only ruler that Côte d'Ivoire had ever known in 33 years of independence, Houphouët-Boigny was 84 years old at the time of his reelection in 1990 and increasingly in ill health. Houphouët never announced an official successor, but made former

Finance Minister Henri Konan Bédié Speaker of the National Assembly, the constitutional second-in-line of the succession in case of a vacancy in the presidency. Upon Houphouët's passing on December 8, 1993, Bédié quickly took over the presidency, against protests by Prime Minister Ouattara, who had harbored hopes of being groomed as successor to the president. Ouattara subsequently resigned from his post and returned to his former job at the IMF in Washington (Daddieh 2001, 16-17), but the hopes of northerners to see one of theirs in the presidency one day were stirred, as were concerns by Bédié and many in the PDCI establishment that Ouattara would in the future easily win elections and ultimately eclipse the old PDCI dynasty.

### ***Narrowing of the state and escalating political competition***

The conjunction of two decades of economic crisis, the death of Houphouët-Boigny, and open political competition laid bare the limited mobilizational and integrative capacity the Ivorian state had beyond the redistribution of rents and the integrative influence of its larger-than-life president. Strong, historically grown grievances by different groups and parts of the country against the PDCI's single party regime produced an increasingly violent "Politics of resentment" (McGovern 2011, 85) came to dominate Côte d'Ivoire from shortly after Houphouët's death (Vidal 2008). The Ivorian state had neither the organizational nor symbolic means to counter the disintegration.

After succeeding Houphouët-Boigny, President Konan Bédié's challenge was to consolidate his rule and to win the 1995 presidential elections while facing two significant political challengers: Laurent Gbagbo, who was popular among southern urban young and southwestern autochthonous populations; and Alassane Ouattara. Although Ouattara was out of the country and remained on the sidelines, a group of northern deputies and PDCI members defected from the ruling party and formed the Rassemblement des Républicains (RDR) in 1994, which openly championed Ouattara's candidacy in the 1995 elections (Bayer 1994, 67; Crook 1997, 225).

Bédié was an economist and more of a technocrat. He neither had the same charisma nor could rely on the same extensive political networks as his political mentor. His popularity outside core PDCI and Baoulé circles was limited (Dozon 2000b, 46-47). To secure his reelection, he decided to compete with Gbagbo for southern voters and to bar Ouattara from the contest and minimize the participation of northern voters. In late 1994, Bédié started to champion the concept of “Ivoirité” or “Ivorianness,” which he claimed was needed to lay the foundations for a “New social contract” (Dozon 2000a, 15) by reconsidering who was a legitimate resident and belonged to the Ivoirian state (Bredeloup 2003). This purported new social contract was rooted in a view of the southern Akan peoples, and in particular the Baoulé, as the natural leaders of Côte d’Ivoire and of southern Ivoirian peoples as the true core of the country (Dozon 2000b, 52-53). It referred to an idealized notion of a former Côte d’Ivoire organized according to “territorialized autochthony” in which each ethnic group had control over the region that it originated in and clear distinctions between strangers and autochthones could be drawn and social hierarchies were respected (Dembélé 2002, 166-68; Marshall-Fratani 2006, 22-24). This concept resonated with many of the southern social groups and populations that had not benefited from the Ivorian economic “miracle.” For Bédié, it was a bid to expand the popular support base of the PDCI and to compete head-on with Laurent Gbagbo, who had expressed similar views before. It also allowed him to redefine economic relationships and access to resources in favor of his core Baoulé constituency in a context of a continuously shrinking resource base (Akindès 2000, 140).

As a consequence, Bédié had the electoral code changed to bar Ouattara<sup>130</sup> from the 1995 elections, which prompted other parties to withdraw and assured that Bédié won almost unopposed with 96.5 percent of the votes. Although Bédié had achieved his goal of becoming only the second elected post-independence president of the country, the circumstances of his victory had seriously undermined his legitimacy. There was significant electoral violence by both the opposition and the ruling party. Abstention rates reached record levels, with only between 12 and 45 percent participation rates in opposition areas and bigger cities (Crook 1997). The decline of the Ivorian state was further accelerated, as an authoritative actor took over and normalized political violence by the opposition and the government became normalized (Vidal 2008).

As a result, during the second half of the 1990s Bédié's state became narrower and narrower and his rule less and less secure. With every additional challenge, Bédié intensified his anti-northern and anti-immigrant rhetoric. As the country continued to face economic hardship and stricter conditionalities by the International Financial Institutions, Bédié blamed economic woes on immigrants and foreigners and on a political ploy engineered by Ouattara through his position at the IMF (Sindzingre 2000, 31). Bédié replaced many northerners in the government whom he suspected of being sympathetic to Ouattara. His government became more and more southern and Baoulé-dominated, since those were the natural and trusted political networks that he could count on (Dozon 2000b, 53). Corruption and nepotism became more visible under Bédié as he relied on more narrow relationships among a few PDCI stalwarts, close relations, and Baoulé networks of influence (Africa Confidential 1998; Sindzingre 2000, 29-30).

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<sup>130</sup> Among others, changes to the electoral code of November 1994 required candidates running for president to have lived in the country continuously for five years prior to the elections. This excluded Ouattara from the contest, since he had worked at the IMF in Washington since December 1993 (EIU 1997, 6).

Encouraged by the exclusionary rhetoric of *ivoirité*, relatively open discrimination of and violence against northerners and immigrants in the southern half of the country had become common from the mid-1990s on, including harassment by security forces at checkpoints as well as the “enforcement” of new discriminatory laws by local vigilante groups (Banegas and Marshall-Fratani 2007, 86). To further satisfy his southern constituencies, the Bédié government took steps to institutionalize the concept of *ivoirité* in the country’s laws in the hope of making minority rule of the Baoulé and southern allies permanent. A new land tenure law of December 1998 allowed only Ivorian citizens or the state to legally own land (Boone and Kriger 2010, 188-190). In combination with more restricted citizenship standards introduced through constitutional amendments in 1998 (Cook 2011, 41), these stipulations were an attempt to wrest land from northern migrants and reverse land ownership relations in favor of autochthonous farmers in southern Côte d’Ivoire, which led to an escalation of local land conflicts in the rural southwest and west (Babo and Droz 2008, 752-753; Chauveau 2000, 115-117).

Bédié and his associates also continued their drive to legally shut out Alassane Ouattara and northerners from electoral competition. When Alassane Ouattara himself returned to Côte d’Ivoire in July 1999 and announced his plans to run for president in the 2000 presidential elections, the Bédié government started to harass and arrest RDR party leaders and disrupt RDR meetings. The government opened legal proceedings against Ouattara for allegedly having obtained Ivorian citizenship illegally (Cook 2011, 42). As a consequence, while trying to consolidate his own rule, Bédié alienated large parts of the population by stirring up resentment against immigrants, northerners, and Muslims and encouraged this large share of the population to mobilize around Ouattara and the RDR (Bassett 2003, 16-23).

Bédié's retrenchment and ethnic favoritism also affected the security apparatus. Bédié had never trusted the military. He considered its senior officers, many of them from the north and west of the country, either too close to Houphouët-Boigny or to ex-Prime Minister Ouattara. Bédié relieved army chief of staff General Robert Gueï of his duties after Gueï refused to use his troops to intervene against opposition protestors during the 1995 election campaign (C.D.R. 2000, 10). He then gradually replaced those he did not trust with Baoulé or other loyalists. In light of shrinking resources for clientelist redistribution, he also sidelined many of the former military officers who had been promoted to civilian positions within the government and parastatal sector. Bédié was thus able to temporarily tighten his control of the security forces, but disaffection among the rank-and-file troops grew (Kieffer 2000; Banegas 2006, 231). Widespread indiscipline and corruption within the police and internal security forces had already led to the emergence of numerous private and parallel security arrangements by traditional hunters or local militias across the country (Bassett 2003; Hellweg 2004).

### ***State breakdown and minority rule under Gueï and Gbagbo***

The 14-month period from December 1999 to late 2000 accelerated the breakdown and deinstitutionalization of the Ivorian state. Côte d'Ivoire experienced a military takeover of government for the first time in its post-independence history on December 24, 1999. Mutinous soldiers led by former army chief of staff Robert Gueï took over power in Abidjan, declared Bédié dismissed and the constitution suspended. They established a military-dominated National Committee of Public Welfare (Comité National de Salut Public – CNSP (Côte d'Ivoire: C'est Houphouët Qu'on Enterre 1999). While Gueï's military regime was initially composed largely of former military officers from the north, he soon decided to run for president in elections planned for October 2000. Being from a minority Western ethnic group, the Yacouba (also known as Dan), which only make up approximately 6 percent of the Ivorian population (Chelpi den Hamer 2011,

109), Gueï knew that he would not be able to mobilize the popular support required to win the presidential elections he had agreed to hold in October 2000. Consequently, the military leader adopted a strategy very similar to his predecessor by preventing Ouattara from competing in presidential elections and narrowing his rule to rely on loyalists and allies from friendly ethnic groups (Orjollet 2000; Dembélé 2003, 41). Taking a page from Bédié's rulebook, Gueï prevented Ouattara or any PDCI candidate from running in the October 2000 elections. In another violently contested election with record-low voter turnout of 37 percent across the country, Laurent Gbagbo prevailed easily over Gueï because he had a larger ethno-regional base and a significant organizational network through the FPI in the southwest and south of the country.

In the wake of the October elections, violent persecution of Ouattara supporters was perpetrated by formal and informal security forces and youth gangs loyal to Laurent Gbagbo. Other anti-northern actions<sup>131</sup> were taken by Gbagbo and his loyalists to consolidate their minority rule (Daddieh 2001, 18). This situation ultimately provided the backdrop against which the September 2002 insurgency broke out and northern and southern populations were quickly mobilized for larger-scale civil war and a nine-year division of the country into a northern rebel-controlled and southern government-controlled territory.

## Conclusion

The Côte d'Ivoire case adds interesting insights to this study. It demonstrates that neither relative economic prosperity nor a dominant and relatively popular leader make for greater state capacity to deal with armed challenges in the long run. Compared to Sierra Leone, which had always been much poorer in terms of GDP per capita and had more open political conflict throughout the

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<sup>131</sup> This included the discovery of a mass grave of 57 northern young men in the Abidjan suburb of Yopougon. They were apparently executed by Gbagbo-friendly security forces.

independence period, Côte d'Ivoire followed a very different trajectory to civil war. It was hailed as the West African success story and showcase country for economic growth and political stability under Houphouët-Boigny. This chapter has shown that the seeds for its disintegration in the 1990s were sown long before. Despite the appearance of stability and integration at the top of the state, Ivorian leaders, just like their colleagues in Sierra Leone, never had any incentives to mobilize the larger population in the late colonial period.

It rather seems that it was Houphouët-Boigny's early dominance of Ivorian politics that prevented the state from developing effective mobilizational structures and practices that would have helped in dealing with future challenges. A combination of factors during the critical juncture period from the mid-1940s to the early 1960s allowed Houphouët Boigny to become the dominant political actor in Côte d'Ivoire for almost 50 years, from his election to the French National Assembly in 1945 to his death in 1993, and to build the state around him. Houphouët's high popularity at the time allowed him to get elected early on by a small fraction of the Ivorian population, to crowd out other political players, and to establish the PDCI as the dominant political force. The appearance of a strong emerging state was created. In reality, however, due to his early popularity, Houphouët never had any incentive to build an infrastructure or develop a broader narrative to mobilize larger parts of the population.

Houphouët relied early on specific ethno-regional groups that became the main regime clients. They were tied to an economic model that generated significant economic growth and secured the maintenance of a system of political and social relations built on rents from the cocoa and coffee economy. In this sense, material mobilization was, implicitly, a much more important variable through Côte d'Ivoire's history than in the poverty-stricken Sierra Leone. Once the material

resources dwindled since the 1980s, alternative modes of political regulation that were broad-based and could unite the country in terms of the organizational and symbolic tools of the state were lacking.

With respect to the organization of the post-independence state across the territory, Houphouët-Boigny's Côte d'Ivoire was one of the African states described by Hyden as "Suspended in mid-air above society" (Hyden 1983, 36). Houphouët's emphasis was on building a strong state elite at the center and on decision-making concentrated in the president's office. Its reach in rural areas was limited and, beyond ethnic alliances and patronage ties through central-level politicians or party members, its ties with rural populations were tenuous. Organizationally, the state's ability mobilize popular support was limited due to a relatively thin network of state offices in rural areas and few occasions to turn out the population for common causes or joint action. Elections for single-party slates with low turnouts and occasional party rallies to cheer on high-level government officials or Houphouët himself during his tours across the country generated little public enthusiasm for the state. Mobilization of people and investments was focused on economic activities related to the tree crop economy. State action and policies remained focused on the continuous expansion of the cocoa economy. The PDCI's goal as a party was always to control and limit political participation rather than to mobilize the rural masses (Médard 1982a, 65). That way, Houphouët and the PDCI managed to disperse any budding political opposition and, by controlling political appointments and resource rents at the center, to prevent any mobilization against the regime (Crook 1989, 223). At the same time, society remained segmented, with an implicit social hierarchy in which Baoulé benefited most, as did northern migrants to the south and immigrants. This coalition was fragile, though, built on economic interests and privileges for immigrants whose legal status otherwise was precarious.

At the same time, the Ivorian state had little symbolic mobilizational capacity. Ivorian identity was weakly developed. It remained intimately tied to country's economic prowess and to the figure of Houphouët-Boigny himself, as the all-influential patriarch and "uniter" of the nation. In terms of symbolic mobilization, the Ivorian state and leaders never forged a broader Ivorian identity that would have been able to rally the entire nation around a joint project or a discourse and a set of symbols that all Ivorians could identify with. Instead, the Ivorian state was built around the person of Houphouët-Boigny. He embodied the nation, and large parts of the Ivorian elite depended on connections to the networks of power around the patriarch for their careers and income. Côte d'Ivoire remained a collection of individual ethno-regional communities joined by economic interests and by the strength of Houphouët's personality.

As a consequence, Côte d'Ivoire became a state for certain groups only, and the state was mainly able to mobilize those groups. Favoritism toward Baoulé, northern migrants, and immigrants in the allocation of land in the southwest of the country generated grievances among local autochthonous communities. The Ivorian state's limitations became obvious as revenue from cocoa and coffee exports dwindled throughout the 1980s. The weakness of the central state was fully exposed by two events: first, after open political competition was introduced in 1990; and finally, after Houphouët's death in 1993. As resources to pay for the large state apparatus and for patronage distribution got scarcer, the state had few other mechanisms of social regulation at its disposal and increasingly used force to attempt to limit opposition mobilization and protests.

## Guinea: Anti-colonial mobilization, social revolution, and constant mobilization

While there was significant continuation in central and local political and state structures between colonial times and independence in countries such as Senegal or Sierra Leone, events in Guinea converged to completely upend the colonial state and power structures and construct a radically different, “revolutionary” party and state apparatus. Considerable abuse by the French colonial authorities against Guinean rural populations, in combination with very active trade unions and an emerging young, ambitious, and talented African leader, led to a genuine grassroots movement against the old order of the colonial powers in collaboration with traditional African rulers and a mandate for a true social revolution.

### Abusive colonial rule and the undermining of traditional authorities

Due in part to the French metropolitan state model and in part to the strict requirements of setting up an effective extractive structure, the French colonial state in Guinea was highly centralized and relied on local chiefs only at the two lowest levels of administration – the canton and the village. French colonial rule reshaped local authority structures and imposed its own administrative delineation of the country into regions, circles, and cantons to assure its full control (Schachter Morgenthau 1964, 7). All decision-making in the French colonial state was top down and heavily centralized. It grew out of military conquest and had a distinct, hierarchical, and military character to it, where subordinate units, in particular the lower rungs that were occupied by African chiefs, were the main enforcers of French rule and had to unconditionally follow orders from above (Alexandre 1970, 36).<sup>132</sup>

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<sup>132</sup> This military character left its traces not only in the top-down hierarchy and administrative culture, but even in the designation of certain posts, such as “commandant de cercle” (circle commander), who was the lowest French administrator within the colonial hierarchy. A “cercle” was an administrative unit roughly corresponding to French departments or U.S. counties.

Originally, Guinean chiefs across regions and ethnic groups had significant traditional, moral, and spiritual authority and thus legitimacy with their people. However, the colonial administration selected chiefs according to obedience. In areas with strong traditional institutions, French colonial officers interfered in succession disputes, played ruling families off against each other, and broke up existing kingdoms or administrative regions into smaller units to undercut the power of the traditional authorities (Suret-Canale 1992). In the eyes of the French colonial administrators, traditional chiefs were mere handmaidens of French rule. In the words of then French Governor von Vollenhoven, the African chief was “An instrument” or “An auxiliary” to the French and “Must have no real power of any kind.”<sup>133</sup>

Local chiefs became the main enforcers of unpopular and coercive French policies – a local tax regime and punishing agricultural production quotas, which had significant consequences for the legitimacy of colonial and co-opted local authority structures. Under orders to make the colonial venture self-financing, the French colonial administration imposed a strict tax regime on the Guinea population from the early days of the colonial administration. Punishing tax and agricultural production quotas were imposed on a society of mainly rural smallholder farmers. In this way, the French administration ensured that colonial rule paid for itself. Taxation of Guineans was so significant that it enabled the French Administration to record a large budget surplus in its early years (late 1800s and early 1900s). By the mid-1940s, poll tax receipts made up more than 50 percent of the colonial budget (Johnson 1972, 232-237).<sup>134</sup> This extraction strategy was complemented by

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<sup>133</sup> Quotes from a Circular from the Governor-General of French West Africa 15th August, 1917, cited in Alexandre 1970, pp. 63.

<sup>134</sup> The French administration in Guinea was in that respect unusually successful in extracting resources. Generally, the direct individual tax burden was on average twice as high in French West Africa as compared to that of British West Africa. British colonies relied more on the taxation of imports and exports, which disproportionately affected urban consumers and was not felt as much by rural populations (Cartwright 1970, 33, citing Buell, *The Native Problem I*, pp. 1037-1044; also Suret-Canale 1966, 461).

repressive administrative and judicial practices. In addition to the head tax, there were a number of additional and overlapping levies and forced labor requirements.<sup>135</sup> French administrators through local chiefs made liberal use of various laws to recruit forced laborers, if needed. Idle men could be arrested simply for “vagrancy” or for defaulting on their tax obligation and be pressed into forced labor (Schachter Morgenthau 1964, 2).

These abusive practices led to large out-migration of able-bodied men and many acts of subtle local resistance. They generated significant grievances among Guineans against the French and deeply discredited the Guinean chiefs (Alexandre 1970, 40). Due to increased French resource needs during World War II, taxation and resource extraction were particularly severe during the late 1930s and early 1940s, which led to growing resistance and contestation of chiefly rule and of the colonial system by the 1940s (Suret-Canale 1966; Schmidt 2005a). It was this context that allowed the first trade unions, and soon after Sekou Touré and the Parti Démocratique de Guinée (PDG), to capitalize on these dynamics (Johnson 1972, 241).

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<sup>135</sup> The numbers of forced laborers were significant all throughout the colonial period. Fall suggests that up to 55,000 men were used as porters by the French administration and military and for the construction of the Conakry-Kankan railway in the late 1800s and early 1900s alone (Fall 1993, 78).

## **Political openings, contestation, and mass mobilization**

While the French colonial administration's laws and their application were often abusive and deeply unpopular with large parts of the colonized populations, beginning in 1945 they also offered growing opportunities for political involvement by Guineans. Between 1946 and 1958, the political order in Guinea would be completely turned upside down. Less than 15 years later, the bulk of the population had overthrown abusive traditional authority structures and had forced the departure of the French colonial overlords.

### ***The rise of trade unionism***

As one of the first steps toward liberalizing political life in French colonies, the metropolitan government allowed the creation of trade unions in 1944. Trade union activism was one of the few domains of public life that allowed organized resistance to colonialism and the only way for ambitious young Africans to influence colonial decision-making. In fighting for better working conditions, their demands quickly expanded to include better conditions for all salaried and paid workers and ultimately took on political demands related to equal participation for Africans in political institutions and an end to abusive legal and administrative practices (Schmidt 2005a, 59).

Seventeen trade unions were formed in French Guinea in 1944 and 1945. Trade union umbrella organizations, with heavy support from French unions and the French left-wing parties, came into being in 1946. Sékou Touré, then a postal worker with a primary school degree and some secondary education at a technical college, was among the founders of the first Guinean trade union, the postal workers union. He was also among the first functionaries of the Guinean section of the French umbrella union CGT (Confédération Générale de Travail —, General Labor Confederation) in 1946 and became its secretary general in 1950. With training and support in union organizing and frequent travel to France and all over Western and Eastern Europe, Touré and a few fellow Guinean

union officials became exposed to socialist ideology and state organization (Johnson 1970, 350-351). The abolition of forced labor across the French colonial empire in October 1946 gave a significant boost to the union movement, since thousands of quasi-indentured workers walked out of their jobs with the colonial administration and could be mobilized to join organized labor unions. A West Africa-wide political and union movement, the Rassemblement Démocratique Africain (RDA or African Democratic Rally) was formed in 1947 with support from the CGT and the French communist party. The Guinean chapter of the RDA was officially constituted in 1947 and called the Parti Démocratique de Guinée or RDA-PDG.

Several successful strikes by postal and railway workers demonstrated the effectiveness of strikes as a tool for the new Guinean union leaders and members to pressure the French administration. A series of railway worker strikes paralyzed parts of inter-territory transport in 1947 and 1948. A two-month general strike in late 1953 brought Guinea's economy to a standstill. With each strike, the colonial authorities made significant concessions to the workers, gradually improving working conditions and bringing the salaries and benefits of colonial workers closer to those enjoyed by French workers (Schmidt 2005a, 55-90). Labor organizing increased the popularity of union leaders. It established the unions, and ultimately the RDA-PDG, as organizations that stood up for the broader population against the colonial government and its local allies. It also gave the union leaders significant grassroots contacts. Cross-ethnic and cross-class alliances between educated urban Africans and uneducated workers were created that could be leveraged for later political mobilization. Sekou Touré himself gained popularity among Guinean workers and their families due to his leadership in the early strike action and his regular public speeches criticizing the colonial administration.

### ***Expanded political participation, grassroots mobilization, and the rise of the RDA-PDG***

In the early days of electoral politics in Guinea in the mid- to late 1940s, political parties had been groupings of small elites and were almost entirely ethnically based, by the Peulh (Amicale Gilbert Vieillard), the Soussou (Union de Basse Guinée), and the Malinké (Union Mandingue). The first Guinean elected to the French National Assembly was Yacine Diallo (1945 to 1954), a Peulh, the largest ethnic group at the time, who was joined in 1946 by Mambo Sano, a Malinké, the second largest group (Schachter Morgenthau 1964, 221-223). It became soon obvious, though, that the ethno-regional parties were not competitive against parties with a national organization.

For the first elections for Guinean representation in the French National Assembly in 1945, only 16,233 Guineans, out of a total population of 2 to 2.5 million, were allowed to vote. They were mostly members of the traditional chiefly and newly educated elite of lower-ranking Guinean workers in the colonial administration. The candidates they elected were beholden to the French (Schachter Morgenthau 1964, 5). Subsequent reforms all across French West Africa gradually increased the number of eligible voters to 400,000 in 1951 (including all heads of tax-paying families), but most uneducated and less-privileged Guineans would have to wait until 1957 to be able to vote.

Three main political groupings emerged in the 1950s, each one with a different social base. The main constituency of the social-democratic Social Democrats (Défocratie Socialiste de Guinée – DSG) was the limited but influential group of “évolués,” the newly educated elite. The Bloc Africain de Guinée (BAG) represented those affiliated with and loyal to the colonial administration: traditional chiefs, their families, and those under their control, and the RDA-PDG workers and rural lower classes. The expansion in the numbers of eligible voters gradually favored candidates and parties that

had broader popular appeal and could mobilize voters in rural areas. The PDG systematically built a wide network of supporters across the country.

The traditional leaders and the French administration, by controlling the means of coercion, could mobilize significant numbers of individuals across the country through chiefs' family and patronage networks. They could coerce populations in areas under their control to vote for them. However, those methods were increasingly ineffective. Trained in mass organizing by the French labor movement CGT and during stays in Eastern Europe, Sékou Touré and his comrades in RDA-PDG realized that the deep-seated grievances against colonial rule and their local enforcers, the canton and village chiefs, and the spirit of resistance against existing power structures, could be harnessed for political action (Johnson 1970). Touré and his comrades personally shared those grievances, since they or their family had suffered from colonial abuse. Sékou Touré himself was arrested numerous times due to his trade union activism and leadership in the various strikes of the late 1940s and early 1950s (Suret-Canale 1992). A synergy developed between the PDG and the numerous groups that more and more frequently stood up to abusive colonial rule. The PDG provided a nation-wide organizational platform for fragmented grassroots efforts, which allowed the PDG to quickly build networks of militants across the country. Sékou Touré and the RDA-PDG first focused their political message on concrete demands for life improvements among union and colonial workers – increased salaries, better benefits and working conditions – and on the thousands of Guinean ex-soldiers who had fought with the French military in World War II. They then extended their message to cover the grievances of rural populations and finally started attacking the entire system of colonialism and its Guinean collaborators. Guinean war veterans, urban market women, and rural peasant women soon became critical pillars of their mobilization efforts in rural areas (Schmidt 2005b). Since women were in charge of managing households and feeding their

families, they bore the brunt of colonial abuses and taxation and harbored deep grievances against colonial and traditional authority structures. Among the ethno-regional groups, the PDG was most popular among Soussou and Malinké, because Sekou Touré, a Malinké himself, was familiar to and popular among both groups. However, by standing up against colonial abuse and through its grassroots appeal, the PDG also managed to associate the large group of descendants of slaves and indentured families that had been “owned” by or tied to ruling Peulh families in the Fouta Djallon, the home region of the Peulh (Schmidt 2005a, 46-54).

The French administration actively tried to thwart the growth of the PDG due to its socialist leanings and its anti-colonial stance. Despite repression by the colonial authorities and affiliated chiefs, by 1951 the PDG already had 20,000 members in 22 sub-sections across the country, and it grew rapidly thereafter. The PDG’s mobilization effort did not immediately translate into electoral success. The franchise was limited and the administration manipulated electoral results and coerced people to cast their vote for the BAG. After receiving only 14.5 percent of the votes in the 1951 French National Assembly elections, Sékou Touré first won elected office, a seat in the Territorial Assembly, in a by-election in the town Beyla in the Forest Region in 1953. The PDG grew in popularity, notably in the Forest Region<sup>136</sup> where abuses by chiefs had been severe and from where many forced laborers had been recruited (Suret-Canale1992, 133). After the death of one of two Guinean deputies in the French National Assembly in 1954, Sékou Touré ran for the National Assembly seat, but came in second with 34.6 percent, thanks to the colonial administration’s support for the BAG candidate and possible manipulations (Suret-Canale1992, 134). As a result of Touré’s defeat, tens of thousands took to the street in protest. Touré and the PDG leaders became more unyielding in their opposition. The RDA-PDG started to organize larger demonstrations specifically

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<sup>136</sup> It had already won more than 50 percent of the vote in 1951 and 1952 in some towns in the Forest Region, such as Beyla and Nzérékoré.

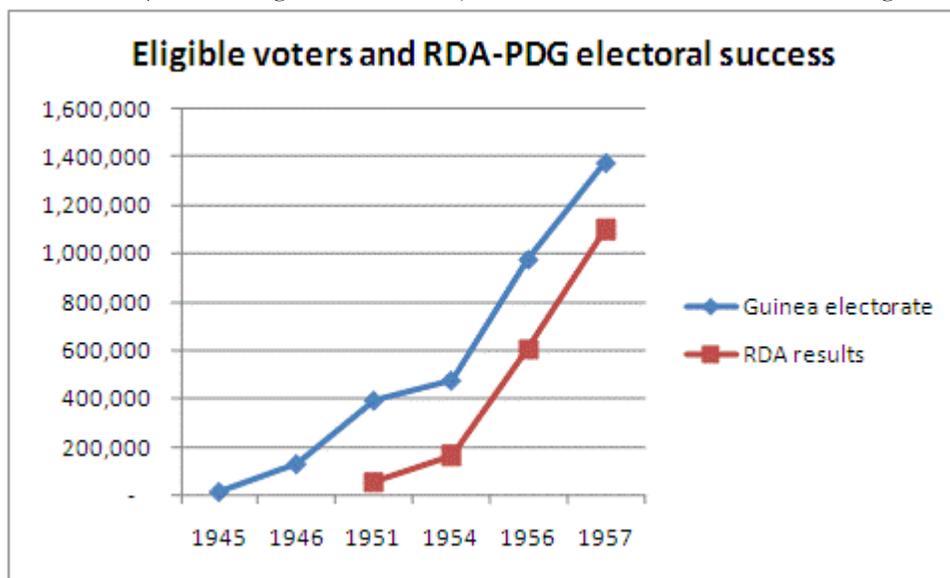
targeting chiefs and abusive behavior. There were violent clashes between PDG supporters, government troops, and those loyal to the BAG between 1955 and 1958. These produced large-scale arrests, several dozen deaths, and many injured among PDG supporters (Suret-Canale 1992, 135; Groelsma 1998, 67).

The political incidents and violence often took on ethnic dimensions as many of the violent incidents in Conakry pitched Soussou PDG supporters against Peulh BAG supporters. Touré and senior PDG officials were genuinely concerned about the escalating violence. It threatened to undermine the cohesion of party and their ambition to build a broad nationalist movement. Consequently, the PDG leadership was very deliberate in its choice of candidates and appointments to leadership positions. The three PDG candidates for the three French National Assembly seats in 1956 were Touré, a Malinké from Upper Guinea, Saïfoulaye Diallo, a Peulh from Central/Middle Guinea, and Lansana Béavogui, a Forestier. Those three senior leaders made up the PDG leadership committee, together with Bengaly Camara, a Soussou from Lower Guinea, to make sure all major ethno-regional groups were represented within the party (Schmidt 2005a, 165-167).

The violent clashes worked in the RDA-PDG's favor, since each violent incident increased the sense of grievance and repression among rural and urban underprivileged populations. The PDG had built a formidable party machine at that stage geared toward turning out large numbers of their voters. They organized voter registration and voter education drives, significantly increasing the voter rolls and participation in elections in rural areas (Schmidt 2005, 162-163). Touré and his fellow party leaders were avid campaigners – they constantly crisscrossed the country to motivate supporters, mobilize new members, and mediate in local intra-party squabbles.

In the end, the PDG’s grassroots mobilization efforts paid off. French reforms allowed the electorate to almost double in 1955, from roughly 500,000 to almost one million eligible Guinean voters. As a result, Sékou Touré handily won a seat in the French National Assembly in 1956, garnering 62 percent of the vote, while Saïfoulaye Diallo won the second out of three Guinean seats for the PDG (569,000 Guineans actually voted). A further extension of the electoral franchise to include all Guinean adult citizens – almost 1.4 million voters over the age of 21 – translated to a complete dominance by the RDA-PDG in the November 1956 Municipal Council elections and the March 1957 Territorial Assembly elections. As shown in the below table, the expansion of the voting franchise coincided with the growth of the PDG and its electoral success. The electoral reforms were a necessary condition for this growth to happen, but the PDG’s own exceptional mobilization efforts were critical for the electoral success.

**Table 6:** The concomitant expansion of the Guinean electorate and increasing electoral success of the RDA-PDG (based on figures from Beaujeu-Garnier 1958, and Schachter Morgenthau 1964).



By 1957, the PDG controlled 74 percent of all municipal council seats in the country and 93 percent of the Territorial Assembly seats and had achieved its goal of becoming the dominant political force, with significant support in all four regions of the country (Beaujeu-Garnier 1958, 313; Schmidt 2005,

175). Sekou Touré was elected vice-president of the newly constituted Government Council, an African shadow government next to the French Governor, with significant authority in governing the internal affairs of the country.

### ***Pro-independence mobilization***

On the eve of independence, the Guinean RDA-PDG was firmly implanted across the territory with by then 43 subsections and 4,300 local committees. It again demonstrated its mobilizational prowess in the referendum on the new French constitution in 1958, which proposed France's colonies membership in a "French Community." The Community would be a loose federation under French tutelage in which France would continue to oversee foreign relations, internal and external security, and certain aspects of foreign trade in the colonies, while giving them relative autonomy to govern their internal affairs. The 1958 constitution for the first time offered French colonies the opportunity to opt for independence right away or in the near future. Most West African colonies and all other national sections of the interterritorial RDA were in favor of maintaining the colonial ties with France. Sekou Touré also seemed to lean in that direction, although the RDA-PDG's grassroots supporters were keen on cutting ties with France. After Sekou Touré openly defied French Prime Minister Charles de Gaulle during his visit to Conakry in late August 1958 and sensing that his leadership role would be threatened if he went against the pro-independence mood within his party, the PDG officially campaigned for a "no" vote in the September 28, 1958 referendum. The pro-independence campaign galvanized the PDG grassroots and demonstrated its superior organizational capacity. A true nationalist groundswell swept the country. The "no" vote on September 28, 1958 was overwhelming, with 94 percent of Guineans voting in favor of independence. Voter turnout was 86 percent (Schmidt 2005a, 171-192).

## **The PDG state: Centralized rule, social revolution, and permanent mobilization**

In the first decade of independence, Sekou Touré and his allies built a centralized, top-down, socialist-inspired one-party state with a strong sense of nationalism and organized party sections at multiple levels of society that were able to mobilize people to demonstrate their support to the state and the revolutionary project. Although the authoritarian features of the regime soon became dominant and led to widespread abuses against suspected or real regime opponents and the socialist project was economically a failure, the practices established at the time would survive and contribute to Guinea's future mobilizational capacity.

Guinea was the only country in French West Africa to vote against de Gaulle's constitution. As a consequence of this affront, as the French saw it, de Gaulle immediately severed all ties with the country and Guinea gained independence on October 2, 1958. Within weeks, the French Government withdrew all of its personnel, including the significant number of French teachers in Guinean schools, and dismantled offices and in some cases even French-constructed buildings and infrastructure.

Strengthened by its popular mandate and driven by socialist fervor, Sekou Touré and his collaborators saw themselves as the vanguard of modernization and enlightenment. They had won a victory over the forces of conservatism that wanted to maintain colonial rule and the old order. They wasted no time in realizing the state-building project for which they had started to lay the groundwork since taking control of the Territorial Assembly and part of the colonial government in 1957.

## Construction of the party apparatus and primacy of the party

Strengthened by the PDG's crushing electoral victory in the 1957 Territorial Assembly elections, Sékou Touré and the PDG quickly moved to sideline their political opponents by abolishing the institution of the traditional chieftaincy in December 1957. Although elected district and village councils were supposed to assure the local administration (Schmidt 2005a, 177), in practice it was PDG party committees at the village and canton level that filled the void until a new constitution was adopted in November 1958 (Suret-Canale 1966). The remaining political parties were then absorbed into the PDG. Their leaders were co-opted through ministerial appointments. Guinea became a one-party state in which the PDG was the dominant organization, and all state offices at all levels of government were subjected to PDG direction (DuBois 1964).

Although, according to official PDG propaganda, all power emanated from the people,<sup>137</sup> the PDG was a top-down, centralized organization modeled after Eastern European socialist parties. As PDG doctrine suggested, "No national, regional or local state institution escapes the party's guiding authority and control."<sup>138</sup> Sekou Touré, as the dual-hatted president and head of state of Guinea and General Secretary of the party, was the uncontested leader and centralized all decision-making in his hands. The president himself had the final say on all appointments of state and party functionaries down to the district level. No major policy decision could be taken without his consent (Barry and Duchastel 2003, 59). Formally, the state was led by its all-powerful 17-member National Political Bureau, made up largely of Sekou Touré's close allies and confidantes. In later years, as Touré grew

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<sup>137</sup> According to the doctrine of "democratic centralism" (Barry and Duchastel 2003, 60), the PDG insisted that all power lies with the people and Touré cast himself as "homme peuple," or the "man of the people." Official lore had it that all decisions were made by the party members during their regular party conferences and then fed up for approval by central party instances. In reality, of course, like in other socialist and communist countries, all decisions were made at the top and dissent at lower levels was not tolerated.

<sup>138</sup> "...Aucune institution nationale, régionale ou locale de l'Etat n'échappe au pouvoir d'orientation et de contrôle du Parti," cited in Barry 2003, 58.

more concerned about his security and regime survival, the number of its members was reduced to 7, most of whom were Touré's family members. The Political Bureau received all reports from the different party offices at all level and was the central decision-making and oversight body. It directly oversaw the body responsible for communications and the organization of public events and spectacles, the leadership of public enterprises and joint ventures in the mining sector, and the party school, as well as continuing education for party members. It also supervised technical committees, each of which shadowed and oversaw a government ministry.

### Broad ethnic and social base

Despite its authoritarian and increasingly violent character, the Guinean state was supported by a broad cross-ethnic and regional coalition and previously disadvantaged social groups.

Sekou Touré built the Guinean state on as broad a popular base as any political leader could wish for. With its clear 1957 election victory, the PDG had overwhelming support across the country with the exception of parts of the Peulh heartland of the Middle Guinea/the Fouta Djallon. This area had been the stronghold of the DSG and BAG parties, although these two remaining opposition parties formally joined the PDG in November 1958. Touré's former opponents from those two parties joined his first government. Official government and party pronouncements and materials all emphasized the importance of national unity. Touré and other senior government officials kept emphasizing the dangers that an affirmation of ethno-regional identities presented to national unity. Ethnic favoritism was seen as anti-revolutionary, playing into the hand of the country's numerous real and imagined external enemies. Touré also specifically painted ethnic identities as backward and anti-modern:

The Guinean is no longer prehistorical. He knows that as for values, people do not divide themselves into ethnic groups like varieties of rice or cattle; he knows that the only values that distinguish people are that (sic??) which take into consideration the qualities of the revolutionary conscience, social utility, unconditional commitment to serving the people, the absence of all irrational tribal or caste practices. (cited in Rivière 1971, 64)

This rhetoric was backed up by measures to outlaw ethno-regional preferences. “Racism,” which was a code word for expressing ethnic preferences, was made a criminal offense in the Guinean penal code of 1959, with prison sentences of up to five and later (1965) ten years. Mentioning the ethnic affiliation of individuals in public meetings was not allowed, and national census forms from 1967 onward could not include any questions related to individuals’ ethnic identity (Groelsma 1998, 68-89).

Loyalty to Touré and the PDG trumped all other considerations under Sekou Touré’s rule (DuBois 1964, 199). The Guinean state was not only based on a broad ethno-regional alliance, but also bolstered by the empowerment of previously disadvantaged social classes. In fact, at least during its initial phase, roughly from independence to the early 1970s, the Guinean state-building project had aspects of a **social revolution** – “Rapid, basic transformations of socio-economic and political institutions... accompanied by...class upheavals from below” (Skocpol 1976, 175) – as the new Guinean leadership did not only turn existing power structures upside down but also brought large numbers of members from lower social classes into the state.

The newly independent Guinean state apparatus saw a massive expansion in terms of functions, responsibilities and personnel in the early 1960s. It grew from 6,000 staff in 1958 to almost 25,000 in 1965. This expansion happened at the central and at the local level, with the number of local government agents doubling from roughly 3,000 to 6,600 (Rivière 1978, 75). In part driven by the need to quickly fill the jobs left vacant after the sudden departure of French personnel and the

dearth of educated Guineans at independence,<sup>139</sup> the PDG leadership as able to make good on the hopes and promises of their early election campaigns of the 1950s. The new Guinean state thus became populated by groups who had been the most ardent supporters of the independence struggle – lower-ranking former colonial clerks and trade union members, military veterans, and small traders (Guillemain 1959, 669). They were joined by significant numbers of young people with often limited education. The empowerment and systematic integration of young people into the state and party apparatus was a critical aspect of the renewal of Guinean elites in the 1960s and 1970s. Sekou Touré considered youth to be a true revolutionary force, and youth played a significant role in reshaping of Guinean society. Many new state and party officials, and even government ministers, were in their 30s (including Sekou Touré himself). High school or university graduates in their 20s could quickly rise to senior local party positions (Rivière 1978, 81; 89). By 1967, half of all Guinean state employees had no formal education, or only a primary education (13.5 percent) (Rivière 1978, 76). These new party and state elites and beneficiaries were deeply loyal to the party and to Sekou Touré himself. They became the backbone of the PDG system, despite all of its subsequent abuses.

### **Organizational capacity**

#### Territorial administration and mobilization

The PDG had party committees in approximately 10,000<sup>140</sup> villages and wards<sup>141</sup> and was much more deeply implanted across the country than the official government institutions. Village or ward committees were coordinated by so-called “section” committees at the district level whose

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<sup>139</sup> France only started offering scholarships for Guineans to attend French universities in 1953. At the time of independence, only 11 Guineans had a university education (McGovern 2004, 11).

<sup>140</sup> The “comités de base” were relabeled revolutionary committees (“pouvoir local révolutionnaire”) in 1967. Information on how many there were varies widely from 7,000 (Charles 1962, 334) or 8,000 (Dumbuya 1974, 136) to up to 25,000 (DuBois 1964, 202).

<sup>141</sup> A ward was equivalent to a neighborhood in a town or city. It was the lowest administrative subsection in urban areas.

representatives formally elected the members of the National Political Bureau every other year. Although in theory this structure assured the democratic legitimation and decision-making from the bottom up, in practice most appointments and all policy decisions were controlled or coordinated by the National Political Bureau. Only trusted loyalists could be “elected” party secretaries at the section level. The party had established parallel structures and bodies at every level of the state administration, which assured political control of all state offices and actions: PDG “federal bureaus” (“bureau fédéraux”) at the regional level and “comités directeurs” at the district or arrondissement (in urban areas) level.

In addition to these territorial party structures, there were country-wide organizations for workers, women, and youth. Each had a similarly hierarchical structure with village-level worker, women, and youth committees and intermediate bodies at every administrative level. All these bodies were coordinated by national committees or unions such as the National Confederation of Guinean Workers (Confédération Nationale des Travailleurs de Guinée – CNTG), the Revolutionary Union of Guinean Women (Union Révolutionnaire des Femmes de Guinée – URFG), and the Youth of the African Democratic Revolution (Jeunesse de la Révolution Démocratique Africaine – JRDA) (Camara 1996, 107).

From 1964 on, Touré placed significant emphasis on party discipline. Sanctions were imposed on those who strayed from the party rules, including exclusion from all party decision-making bodies. At times, entire sub-sections could be suspended if their members were found to have violated party principles. A parallel, informal system of adjudicating disputes and imposing order and discipline, supplanting the formal state justice system, had already been put in place in the late 1950s. Ad hoc party committees, often with the involvement of a senior party member or even members of the

National Political Bureau, started to adjudicate cases of alleged violations of the country's or the party's rules. As early as 1959, these ad hoc committees meted out severe sanctions to transgressors including death by public firing squad (Charles 1962, 331-332). The tone was set for what would become an increasingly authoritarian, centralized system, controlled by a small group of loyalists around Sekou Touré and the Political Bureau.

### Permanent mobilization and indoctrination

Under the rule of the PDG, Guineans were in a constant state of mobilization. Every Friday evening all local party committees, called PRL (Pouvoir Révolutionnaire Local – Local Revolutionary Power) since the mid-1960s, across the country had to hold general meetings during which all members had to listen to Touré's latest speech and other important party and state communications (Camara 1996, 203-205).

A large party machinery was set up to oversee the “revolutionary” education system, to organize children and youth from their early days for the benefit of the party, and to ensure continuous training and indoctrination of party and state officials throughout their career. Guinean children were from their earliest childhood raised to be party activists. In Sekou Touré's words, “In Guinea, as soon as a baby is born, from its first breath, the air it breathes turns her into a political activist”<sup>142</sup> (cited in Barry and Duchastel 2003, 129). From the age of 7, children entered the party apparatus as part of the Pioneer Movement (Mouvement des Pionniers). The PDG outlawed all private education and, at least in the 1960s, children from an early age on were indoctrinated in the unifying message of the PDG. Guinean schools were converted into “centers for revolutionary education” that focused on teaching children evolutionary ideology rather than science and facts (Barry and Duchastel 2003, 168-186). In their off-time, young people were supposed to be members of civic

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<sup>142</sup> “En Guinée, dès que le bébé naît, dès son premier soufflé, l'air qu'il respire fait de lui un militant politique.”

work brigades (brigades civiques) to conduct community work. Starting in the late 1960s, youth had paramilitary training as part of the youth militias. All these bodies operated under the umbrella of the JRDA (African Democratic Revolutionary Youth – Jeunesse de la Révolution Démocratique Africaine) (Rivière 1978, 85). Ideological instruction was obligatory in all schools, high schools, and colleges or institutes of higher learning. Students at the elite Politechnical Institutes (Instituts Polytechniques) of Conakry and Kankan had to take an additional class in civic and ideological instruction at the School for PDG Party officials. Even students who were sent abroad had to be in constant contact with the party apparatus and return home during school breaks to contribute to work campaigns (Rivière 1978, 86). In return for scaling the echelons of the youth party apparatus, all university and secondary school graduates were guaranteed employment in government or the public sector throughout the 1960s and 1970s, which ensured a steady supply of fresh recruits, newly formed and indoctrinated in the ways of the PDG.

#### The security apparatus and popular militias

The PDG leadership constantly had to balance the often contradictory goals of national and regime security. Guinea needed relatively effective armed forces to defend the country, mainly against France and its allies in the region, who at times conspired to overthrow the Touré regime (Chaffard 1965, 236-245), while ensuring the military's loyalty and preventing any potential of a military challenge to Touré's rule. To strike this balance, Touré and his close allies used many of the mechanisms described above to ensure loyalty and political control of the military and engineered a constant state of insecurity to keep troops and the population in general alert and ready to mobilize.

The Guinean military was formed right after independence in November 1958 and after the French departure. Its officer corps was entirely made up of Guinean veterans of the French army. Due to the break in relations with France, it received equipment and training from the Soviet Union and

other Eastern Bloc countries (Bangoura 2011, 104). Just like in other government institutions, high-ranking members of the military had to be faithful party members. Many were from modest and underprivileged backgrounds. Those who had played a role in the anti-colonial struggle were appointed to senior military positions. Toya Condé, the first military chief of staff, was illiterate but was a trusted Touré ally (Camara 2000, 317-318). At the helm of the armed forces and the ministry of defense were close allies of Touré, such as left-wing playwright and choreographer, Fodéba Keïta, minister of defense from 1961 to 1969,<sup>143</sup> and later many members of the extended Touré family (Selhami 1985).

Just like other government institutions, the military was under the close political control of the PDG. There were local PDG cells within each military unit, so-called Military Unit Committees (Comités d'Unités Militaires or CUM), elected from the military rank-and-file. The CUM reported to the party hierarchy and were an excellent mechanism of political surveillance of the military. Lower-ranked soldiers could at times wield significant influence over senior officers through their political connections within the party. Increasingly, food and basic goods were distributed through party channels, which gave the CUM members additional leverage (Camara 2000, 319). While these measures assured a fairly close political control of the military, Sekou Touré remained generally skeptical of the institution and kept it at arm's length. After the successful coups against Touré's close allies, Kwame Nkrumah in Ghana in 1966 and Modeibo Keïta in Mali in 1968, he focused efforts to realize the vision of a genuine "revolutionary" security force. In his rhetoric, Touré since the mid-1960s had emphasized that the military should represent "The people in arms" (Camara 2000, 317). In 1968, mandatory military training was introduced for all secondary and university students. A National and a People's Militia ("Milice Nationale" and "Milice Populaire") was created.

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<sup>143</sup> He was later imprisoned at the notorious prison at Camp Boiro, though.

From then on, all Guinean secondary students had to go through paramilitary training as part of their education. They were automatically enrolled in the equivalent of the Boy and Girl Scouts, the National Pioneer Movement (Mouvement National des Pionniers de Guinée (MNPG)), where they not only were indoctrinated with revolutionary rhetoric that highlighted the constant threat to the Guinean nation from internal and external enemies but also conducted drills, learned about cleaning and handling Soviet or Chinese-made guns, and had shooting practice, all under the instruction of military officers (Camara 2000, 320). The students formed the core of the People's Militia, although they were supported by other party members who supplemented militia units in towns and villages across the country.

The second national “popular” force was established as a Special Forces unit to guarantee Touré's and the regime's security. The **“National Militia”** was made up mainly of college students who had distinguished themselves through performance and revolutionary fervor. They were well trained and equipped by Cuban Special Forces and had special privileges such as better living quarters and access to Western-made imported goods. Since Sekou Touré was at the same time the constitutional Commander in Chief of the armed forces and the “Supreme Leader of the Revolution” (“Responsable Suprême de la Révolution”), the People's and National Militias reported directly to the presidency and were fiercely loyal to Touré and the party (Camara 2000, 319-320).

The usefulness of the popular defense militias seemed to be validated by two significant incidents in 1969 and 1970. In 1969, members of the elite parachutist military unit allegedly plotted a coup and, when they were discovered, hijacked a military plane and tried to escape across the border to neighboring Mali. After the plane touched down in eastern Guinea, people's militia units intercepted and arrested the alleged coup plotters (Lewin 2010). In November 1970, a major attack by French-

supported Portuguese and Bissau-Guinean mercenaries against Conakry almost succeeded in toppling Touré's regime and provided a significant test of the effectiveness of the "people in arms" concept. Early in the morning of November 22, 1970, several hundred Portuguese commandoes together with Guinean and Bissau-Guinean irregular forces, landed onshore in Conakry in an attempt to dismantle the headquarters of the Bissau-Guinean pro-independence PAIGC<sup>144</sup> movement, free Portuguese prisoners of war, and topple the Guinean regime to prevent it once and for all from supporting PAIGC. The Guinean regime was initially surprised by the attack. The invaders took over military barracks and set Sekou Touré's official residence on fire. They quickly ran into opposition, though, and failed to take the national broadcasting corporation and other strategic points. This allowed Sekou Touré to call upon all Guineans to mobilize against the attackers, which allowed the regime to strike back. Arieff offers the following account of the events:

Fighting was brief. By 9 a.m. on the morning of 22 November, Touré was able to broadcast a "Call to the Nation" on national radio, announcing that Conakry had come under attack by "imperialist forces" led by the Portuguese colonial regime, and proclaiming that the Guinean people would "defend itself down to the last survivor." Deciding that the mission could not proceed...the Portuguese commander ordered a withdrawal...Several dozen fighters...,Guinean exiles and Bissau-Guinean troops, were captured by Guinean military and...the milices populaires, neighbourhood civilian militia organized by the PDG...The mobilisation of the milices populaires in...rounding up "mercenaries" rallied ordinary Guineans... to the PDG cause; many participants continue to express giddy excitement when remembering taking shifts to guard the neighbourhood milice headquarters, where weapons were distributed to civilians. (Arieff 2009, 335-336)

The Portuguese invasion seemed to validate Touré's reliance on the militias over the military and reinforced Touré's sentiment that the military could not be trusted and should be kept weak. Further purges of the armed forces followed, during which almost 90 percent of the military officers were sacked or arrested (Barry 2000, 119), including high-ranking members of the government such the founder of the Guinean armed forces, Keita Noumandian. Subsequently, the military was further

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<sup>144</sup> PAIGC stood for Partido Africano para a Independência da Guiné e Cabo Verde (African Party for the Independence of Guinea [Bissau] and Cape Verde).

neglected and kept small and underequipped, while investment in the militias surged. The militias became the cornerstone of the country's external and internal defense. Throughout the 1970s, the two militias had approximately 10,000 members, as many as, or more than, the military, and became a powerful counterweight to the country's formal defense forces. In 1971, a formal new command structure was introduced in which the National Militia formally became President's Praetorian Guard, ranking above the army and other military units (ICG 2010, 4; Bangoura 2011, 101).

The People's Militia was further expanded, not only to guarantee territorial security but also to provide a network of reliable informants across the country with a direct reporting channel to the presidency. This intelligence network became critical in surveillance of other government institutions and the general population across the country. Militia members and local party cadres kept close tabs on population movements and reported any suspect activity, unusual meetings, or public comment by anyone that could be interpreted as anti-regime (ICG 2010, 4). Those who did report on others were praised, while those suspected of subversive activities were arrested, interrogated, or worse. This created a climate of fear in which most Guineans were afraid to speak up in public about anything vaguely political and avoided public gatherings unless officially summoned. It also deeply engrained in the collective psyche, among government officials and party members, a deep distrust of strangers and a reflex to report unusual movements and any suspect activity up the chain of command. Guineans were used to taking action locally and mobilizing against suspected enemies of the state.

### *Symbolic capacity: National unity and identity*

As suggested, the Guinean PDG regime's ability to organize and mobilize its population was accompanied by constant indoctrination about the "revolutionary" state-building project and its uniqueness.

During the 26 years of Sekou Touré's rule, Guineans were socialized from their early days to believe in the uniqueness of the Guinean nation. They were taught to see themselves as being part of a grand revolutionary project that was constantly challenged and jeopardized by numerous internal and external enemies. As Victor DuBois noted already in 1964, "Transcending old loyalties rooted deeply in tribe, region, or ethnic group, the party...to an impressive extent has succeeded, not in replacing these loyalties, but in superimposing upon them a more inclusive loyalty to the nation and to the party, a loyalty that has come to signify to the average Guinean citizen something new and hopeful." (DuBois 1964, 200)

Sekou Touré and the PDG leaders had honed their rhetorical skills in the anti-colonial mobilization of the mid- to late 1950s, out of which arose the desire to forge a genuine sense of national unity. Once in power, the PDG regime, in particular from the early 1960s on, made a deliberate effort to forge a new, inclusive, and genuinely Guinean identity. In a first step, as a corollary to the abolition of traditional authority structures, the newly independent Guinea's leadership conducted a two-year "demystification" campaign to deliberately root out traditional beliefs. Traditional religious and ritual practices were still widespread in Guinean society, in particular in the Forest Region, and were seen as remnants to the old chiefly power structures and as obstacles to creating a new inclusive Guinean identity (Rivière 1969; Højbjerg 2002, 59-60). The demystification drive was highly coercive, aimed at physically destroying symbols of traditional beliefs, publicly deriding old practices labeled "fetishism," and exposing traditional spiritual leaders. It relied on the mobilization of the young and

underprivileged to thoroughly crush the old power structures in favor of the “modern” beliefs of the new socialist state. Straker describes the campaign as follows:

Various strata of state-backed militants strove to eliminate the material and psychological bases of long-standing Poro and Sande initiation traditions seen as egregiously primitive and antithetical to new nationalist development objectives...By 1961, thousands of these religious artifacts had been destroyed...local elders responsible for initiation and other communal ritual regimens were publicly humiliated or officially tried for upholding “fetishism” and defying “demystification” ...The impassioned involvement of youthful “insiders”...underscored the fragility, or outright failing, of traditional processes of social reproduction, and the emergence of an era where shared ethnic affiliation no longer provided a solid basis for mutual understanding or trust. (Straker 2009, 13)

These old symbols were replaced with a new symbolism and a vocabulary that merged aspects from all major cultural groups and regions to forge a new, pan-ethnic Guinean identity. From their early mobilization efforts on, Touré and the PDG had appropriated national symbols from each ethnic group’s past and turned them into symbols exemplifying Guinean national characteristics and strengths. For example, Sékou Touré elevated Malinké warrior-king Samory Touré and the Peulh religious and political leader Almamy Alpha Yaya both to the status of Guinean national heroes. Both leaders had distinguished themselves through their resistance to the French colonial conquest and were thus perfect symbols for Touré’s anti-colonial mobilization. By choosing one Malinké and one Peulh historical figure, Touré wanted to highlight the joint destiny and joined history of the two largest ethnic groups in the country and utilize this joint history in the construction of Guinean nationalism (Dumbuya 1974, 190-195). Later Touré also elevated a Soussou woman, M’Balía Camara, who had been an early supporter of the PDG and was killed in the struggle for political power in 1955 to the status national heroine. Touré was able to increase his popularity both with the coastal Soussou, who had not had a national hero so far, and with many women, who identified with M’Balía Camara’s modest origins as a market trader.

For himself, Touré adopted the Soussou name “Syli” or elephant, due to his strength and resilience in the anti-colonial struggle, which later also became a Guinean national symbol. Touré built a cult of personality around his person, always stressing his revolutionary and nationalist credentials over his ethnic or regional origins and styling himself as the “Guide and Strategist of the Revolution” (Kaba 1977, 35) or as the “Loyal servant of the people” (Barry and Duchastel 2003, 71).

In the 1960s, the PDG regime continued to construct a national mythology that emphasized all Guinean people’s commonalities and common heritage. Guinean historians started to publish studies of the common roots of all key Guinean people by showing that most Guinean clans and families could trace their origins to common ancestors and were only later part of distinct ethnic groups due to the slave trade, conquest, and migration. Artifacts and cultural symbols from all regions were converted to new national symbols supposed to represent the cultural richness of the Guinean nation. Music, song, theater, art performances, and other mass spectacles were actively funded and supported by the state to celebrate the new Guinean nation and to continuously spread the state and party ideology and praise the greatness of its leader and the nation (Counsel 2001).

Subsequent mass indoctrination and nation-building efforts reached their full stride in the mid- to late 1960s. They were a logical element of the PDG’s claim to institutional and ideological hegemony but also a complement to the growing authoritarianism, and tightening control. These efforts were a way of countering the growing popular frustration with the country’s penury and its failure to achieve the bright future that Touré had promised (DuBois 1965). Sekou Touré’s strategy was to leave the population little room to harbor what the regime considered “Counter-revolutionary” thoughts and to maintain a constant “Revolutionary tension” and a “Permanent readiness” to think and act in the name of the party (Camara 1996, 199).

All mass media were state controlled, and the regime relied increasingly on radio broadcasts to reach illiterate rural populations. Government media continuously fed Guineans propaganda in line with official doctrine and offered very little actual information about the country or the outside world. By 1967, Sekou Touré had published 15 volumes of his ideological musings about the Guinean revolution, African socialism, and many other topics related to the role of the party and the workings of the Guinean state, which provided the main source for official government and mass media communications (Camara 1996).

In 1968, taking at least superficially a page from the playbook of Mao Zedung in China, the Guinean regime launched its own Cultural Revolution, which included a new emphasis on validating local culture and the original African languages. Six Guinean languages were chosen.<sup>145</sup> Subsequently, primary school students were mainly taught in one of these local languages. All official speeches and broadcasts were also translated into the local languages, which put a significant strain on the government's resources, but greatly increased the regime's ability to communicate with rural populations.<sup>146</sup>

Official communications stressed several themes President Conté resurrected in September 2000 during the insurgent attacks, notably the threats of undermining and breaking up the Guinean nation by foreign intruders and internal enemies of the state. State propaganda frequently warned Guineans that the country was under siege and threat from numerous enemies of the Guinean state and revolution. France's opposition to Guinea's independence and the abrupt departure and withdrawal of most colonial assets at independence, as well as subsequent attempts by France to undermine

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<sup>145</sup> Soussou, Pular, Malinké, Kissi, Toma, and Guézzé.

<sup>146</sup> Only approximately 20 percent of the population spoke French, the official language and the language of the elites.

Touré regime, offered a convenient foil that the PDG played up whenever it was convenient. France, its Western and African allies, specifically Guinea's neighbors Senegal and Côte d'Ivoire, were portrayed as part of broad "imperialist" coalition out to undermine the Guinean nation. In the context of the Cold War, this concern was not entirely unfounded, but Touré turned the rhetoric of Guinea being surrounded by enemies into something akin to a personal and national psychosis. Most external actors and foreigners were considered enemies of the state, including neighboring countries. Guineans were frequently called upon to demonstrate utmost vigilance against foreigners and a potential infiltration from abroad (McGovern 2002). This rhetoric matched the actual strategy of the "complot permanent," which Touré had used since the 1960s to rid the state and party system of older members whom he considered less loyal and of people within the state apparatus who had gotten too powerful.<sup>147</sup> With every new conspiracy, the regime appealed to Guineans' sense of nationalism, reminded them of the importance of the unity of the Guinean people during the successful pro-independence struggle and painted internal and external enemies in the worst possible colors. Since the strong feeling of national unity was indeed one of the few accomplishments of the PDG state, this message resonated with significant parts of the population. Guineans were socialized in this rhetoric and grew up to distrust foreigners and external powers. Whatever doubts Guineans might have had about the veracity of the frequent plots against the regime or the depth of the PDG leadership's commitment to national unity, the state propaganda left deep imprints on the nation's psyche.

### ***Authoritarian regime consolidation and state violence***

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<sup>147</sup> There were alleged plots and subsequent arrests and crackdowns against supposed enemies of the state in 1961, 1965, 1969, 1970, 1976, and 1977. See overview in Kaba (1977) and (1985). Most observers think that, except for the November 1970 attack on Conakry by the Portuguese military, all the other plots were staged or at least greatly exaggerated for internal political reasons. Apologists of the PDG regime claim that all plots were real (Keita 2002).

From the mid-1960s, open violence against anyone who was suspected of not supporting the party and state became part and parcel of the PDG's system. As the country's socialist and centrally-controlled economy floundered, the Touré government developed a "Morbidity sense of embattled insecurity," and since the mid-1960s the country entered a "Kafka-esque era of the 'complot permanent,'" during which Sekou Touré did not leave the country for a ten-year period (from 1965 to 1975) (Johnson 1978, 43, 44). Violent purges against real or suspected regime opponents became common and even close Touré allies were not safe from them. Regime opponents were imprisoned and often tortured and abused in the infamous Camp Boiro military prison in Conakry. Many confessed under duress. Trials and public confessions were often broadcast live over radio to the whole nation. Public hangings were staged by local party committees to set an example. Many of the more senior accused were detained indefinitely, died in detention, or simply disappeared (Johnson 1978, 43). Over the course of the late 1960s and throughout the 1970s, tens of thousands of political prisoners were held at Camp Boiro, and several thousand of them died in detention or disappeared. Many others left the country due to economic hardship and political persecution. The Guinean diaspora in neighboring countries and in Europe swelled to up to 2 million people by the mid-1970s (Azarya and Chazan 1987, 119). The violence against anyone who dared to speak out or suspected of acting against the regime took ethnic undertones in the 1970s, as Sekou Touré specifically singled out Peulh elites as enemies of the revolutionary state. An alleged Peulh plot in 1976 led to the arrest of large numbers of Peulhs in the military and in the state apparatus, as well as the arrest and killing of the former Organization of African Unity Executive Secretary Telli Diallo. Peulh were the most frequent targets of Touré's repressive apparatus, although arrests, torture, killings, and disappearances affected members of all ethnic groups. A feeling of permanent insecurity and distrust was widespread (Charles 2010).

Despite these increasingly discriminatory practices, the regime itself never truly excluded entire groups or regions from access to the state and the party. Touré's purges targeted individuals who challenged, or potentially could challenge, his rule. This group included members of all ethnic groups, including his Malinké co-ethnics. For example, one of the alleged plots targeted specifically Malinké traders. Touré took advantage of many of the purges to also rid himself of Malinké elites whom he considered threatening or whom he considered to be undermining the system. In all the purges, Touré and his allies always made clear that true supporters of the PDG and "Honest militants" ("militants sincères") would have nothing to fear (Sow 1989, 401). Any member from any ethnic group was welcome as long as they showed loyalty to the party and the cause. The ethnic makeup of government was relatively balanced among the three main ethnic groups, with only slight overrepresentation of Malinké (38 percent in government vs. 34 percent of the population), a slight underrepresentation of Peulh (24 vs. 29 percent), and a balanced representation of Soussou (17 vs. 17 percent) in the late 1960s. Only the Forestier communities were more significantly underrepresented (7 vs. 18 percent) (Rivière 1978, 83). Similarly, none of the country's four main regions were visibly favored or disadvantaged by the regime's policies. All rural areas suffered from serious neglect of investment in infrastructure, economic production, and human resources. All Guineans outside the capital Conakry were similarly poor, and there was no clear-cut trend in poverty and social development indicators. Although there are no reliable statistics from the times of the PDG rule, later data showed that common development indicators, whether health, educational attainment, or poverty rates, were high across rural Guinea with no obvious regional pattern (Direction Nationale de la Statistique and Macro International Inc.1999).

The frequent purges antagonized some groups and elites and caused many Guineans to leave the country. They also served as a disciplining tool and allowed for the continued renewal of the senior

state and party cadres with new and younger entrants and ensured that only individuals who were truly faithful to the party line and loyal to Sékou Touré rose through the party ranks (Rivière 1978, 86-87). Touré was thus able to maintain control and to prevent potential challengers to build up powerbases.

### *The state and mobilizational capacity in the post-Sekou Touré era*

When Lansana Conté and the military junta of the CMRN (Comité Militaire de Redressement National or Military Committee for National Recovery) came to power after Touré's death in 1984, they dismantled many aspects of the PDG state. They outlawed the PDG and its local committees as well as youth, women, and union networks and freed political prisoners. They opened up the state monopoly and internal and external trade, privatized government businesses and parastatals, cut the bloated government bureaucracy, and devalued the currency and reestablished its international convertibility. After six years of military junta rule and after significant international and internal pressure, Conté established Guinea's Second Republic with a new constitution in 1990, which opened up the political system to multi-party competition.

Despite the absence of a single party, Conté maintained the highly centralized state apparatus. The military came to play a much more important role in government and society. He recalibrated the ethnic balance in favor of the Soussou, his own ethnic group, Peulh, and Forestiers. He disempowered Malinké, who were seen as loyal to the previous regime. Overall, though, Conté was well aware that maintaining a rough ethnic balance in the state and security apparatus was critical to his rule, in particular since he was a member of a minority ethnic group himself (Barry 2000, 133-144).

Conté inherited the highly centralized state apparatus that Sekou Touré had built. In the absence of a power base or established political party or organization of his own, Conté made use of the resources of power that his position as Chairman of the military junta, the CMRN (Comité Militaire de Redressement National or National Military Renewal Committee), afforded him: the control of the state apparatus and large parts of the military. He sought to increase the central state's control over rural areas by increasing the number of sub-prefectures (sous-préfectures), the lowest level of central state administration, first from 63 to 125 and later to 303 (plus 38 urban communities), all of which were headed by direct presidential appointees (Thiriet 1998). He maintained the existing number of prefectures at 33.<sup>148</sup> Since all prefects and sub-prefects were appointed by the president, Conté was able to consolidate his territorial control by filling a large number of the new administrative posts with his loyalists. A noticeable militarization of the state apparatus occurred under Conté as he appointed many trusted military officers to positions as prefects and sub-prefects (Bangoura 2011, 108). Many of these military officers subsequently became civil servants and remained within the territorial administration, which helped Conté to assert control over rural areas and ensured that the territorial administrators focused mainly on classic security functions of upholding law and order, gathering intelligence, and keeping tabs on population movements. In situations of crisis or a challenge to the regime, Conté replaced additional civilian governors, prefects, or sub-prefects with military officers to exert greater control over critical parts of the country.

The Conté regime continued the practice established under the PDG regime of tight controls of population registration and of the movements of foreigners in the country. Population registries

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<sup>148</sup> The administrative structure of Guinea at the time was the division into 8 regions, each of which was headed by a centrally appointed Governor with 3–5 prefectures per region, each governed by a centrally appointed Prefect. The sub-prefectures (sous-préfectures) were the lowest level of centrally controlled territorial administration in the 1990s.

were maintained by village and quarter (in towns and urban areas) chiefs. No stranger could move around the country without official permissions from the military leadership and the ministry of interior (check!). Sierra Leonean refugees in Guinea reported that their movements within the country were severely restricted. They had to register with village chiefs and seek permission from the sub-prefects to stay or settle in a given area (interview with former Sierra Leonean refugee in Guinea, July 17, 2007). The government was known to refuse domestic travel permits to foreign delegations whose mission seemed suspect or who might criticize the regime (Bickel and Whittaker 1998, 7).

To keep tight tabs on the military, in particular after the attempted mutiny of 1996, Conté assumed himself the role of defense minister. The day-to-day affairs of the defense ministry were run by a junior minister under the presidency. Conté directly oversaw national security until he had to cede control of the defense apparatus to a civilian defense minister after popular protests in early 2007 (Bangoura 2010, 110). For his own and the regime's security, he relied largely on the 1,600-strong Republican Guard,<sup>149</sup> also known as "Red Berets" (EIU 1996, 9), which was almost exclusively staffed by Soussou officers, with smaller numbers coming from other minority ethnic groups. In addition, the regime maintained two other elite units, the Battalion Autonome des Troupes Aéroportées (Autonomous Battalion of Airborne Troupes – BATA) and the Rangers Special Forces unit, which was trained in late 2000 by the US government specifically with the aim of fighting the insurgency in the southeast of the country (ICG 2003b, 12). Each elite unit was trained by different foreign governments – the Rangers by the United States, the Republican Guard by France, and BATA by Moroccans and Chinese (Bangoura 2011).

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<sup>149</sup> Known as BASP or Battalion Autonome de Sécurité Présidentielle (Autonomous Battalion for Presidential Security).

With respect to the **state's symbolic capacity**, official rhetoric became more sober under Conté's rule, although a strong sense of a unified national identity continued to exist. Official state communications became more direct and focused on the issues and problems of the day rather than expounding solely on the greatness of the nation and the supposed accomplishments of the socialist revolution as they had under the PDG regime. However, in particular in moments of crisis, some of the old regime's vocabulary and imagery got revived to rally public support. The notion that foreigners, unnamed external forces, or neighboring states wanted to somehow damage or undermine the Guinean state was a common theme that was occasionally revived. It was part of Guinean public discourse that deflected broader responsibility for problems or crises. For example, in a speech to denounce electoral violence ahead of the presidential elections, President Conté blamed the violence on unnamed external forces and asked all Guineans to remain vigilant with respect to the harmful influence of strangers (Radiodiffusion Nationale 1993). It was this same rhetoric that Conté revived for his September 9 speech and, due to many Guineans' skepticism about the large number of refugees from neighboring countries, it fell on fertile ground.

Many of the country's government officials and intellectuals, when asked about ethnic tensions in the country, admit to these and may voice their own grievances, but at the same time stress their deep belief that all Guineans share common roots and are better off as a nation focusing on the greater common good. The trope that Guineans are all one family has concrete foundations in a prominent publication. This publication suggests that Guineans of all stripes and ethnic belonging are descendants of the same ancestry and that all the different family/clan names in each ethnic group have an equivalent among the other major ethnic groups. The notion that "La Guinée est une famille" (Camara 1991) is commonly repeated by ordinary Guineans, politicians, historians,

editorialists, artists, and government propaganda. It is particularly invoked in times of crisis to bring the nation and instigators of violence to their senses, and it resonates with the wider Guinean public.

## Conclusion

The Guinean state had a broader mobilizational repertoire than its war-torn neighbors Côte d'Ivoire and Sierra Leone. Despite mismanagement and the inability to provide adequate public goods in other areas, it had sufficient organizational capacity to make and implement central decisions and to control its territory through its administrative apparatus and the security forces. President Conté's ability to mobilize institutions and the masses was not because he was charismatic or well-liked or headed a well-oiled state machine. Conté was a former military officer with limited oratorical skills who was not widely popular due to nepotism within the regime, the lack of broad-based economic development, and the occasional harassment of civil society and opposition parties. Instead, the successful mobilization for the defense of the state was rooted in deeper state practices related to Guinea's history and collective psyche. Conté and his regime had access to a relatively broad repertoire of mobilization when it came to security threats like the September 2000 insurgency. The Guinean regime was able to rely on a vocabulary and imagery that had been developed, honed, and propagated widely during the 26 years of Sekou Touré's rule. When challenged by the insurgency in September 2000, Conté employed a rhetoric that stirred these emotions and behavioral patterns among the population. In times of crisis, Guineans were used to rallying around the state thanks to a strong residual sense of national unity, a deep-seated suspicion against foreigners, and a fear of foreign invasion aimed at destroying the Guinean nation. The Guinean state could also rely on civil servants' sense of duty to defend the state and a centralized state structure that was able to execute orders when it came to matters of national security. All major ethno-regional groups had a stake in the state, which seemed to make a defense of the imperfect state a better option than joining an insurgency with unknown outcomes.

This organizational and symbolic mobilizational capacity has its roots in the late colonial period when the foundations for the modern Guinean state were laid. A conjunction of factors – a greater ability for Africans to organize and participate in public life through unions and an expansion of the electoral franchise, exploitative colonial policies and abusive practices by colonial administrators and collaborating local chiefs that created significant grievances among local populations, the influence of French, communist, and socialist trade unions, and the emergence of a skilled organizer and orator in Sekou Touré – led to mass mobilization for the PDG. Touré became the uncontested leader of the country and the PDG the uncontested political organization at independence. He led a broad coalition of lower-level colonial clerks, union leaders, small traders, and rural peasants and former slaves that cut across ethnic affiliations and mobilized populations across all four natural regions in favor of independence and radical change. He used this mandate to realize his vision of a strong, centralized, socialist-inspired one-party state that abolished traditional authority structures and empowered lower social classes. Its broad popular base allowed it to develop a discourse of inclusion and national unity that was largely also implemented in terms of access to the state and resource distribution (or lack thereof). The Guinean state from the early days had forged a new genuinely inclusionary national identity and a whole host of discourses, symbols, and rituals to celebrate this national unity. The Guinean state's ability to give all major ethnic communities a stake in the state and to preserve a rough ethnic balance within the government apparatus helped to avoid deep-seated grievances. While at times targeting individual elites from specific ethno-regional communities, neither Sekou Touré nor Lansana Conté ever fully excluded specific groups from the state apparatus, passed openly discriminatory laws that would exclude key population groups such as in Côte d'Ivoire, or channeled all resources to one group only at the expense of others. The newly independent Guinean state through the ruling PDG created a large number of institutions at all

levels of the state that constantly mobilized the population in meetings and public displays of loyalty to the state. It instilled “revolutionary” fervor for the state and the Guinean nation and skepticism toward foreigners and presumed enemies of the state among government bureaucrats, members of the military, and regular party members. From their early childhood, Guineans who grew up in the 1960s and 1970s internalized those messages by being exposed to constant indoctrination and government propaganda on those themes during their participation in party organizations, at school, or during paramilitary training for the people’s militia. The use of these themes became more sporadic under Lansana Conté’s leadership, but the core ideas remained strong and were revived by Conté and other state officials when needed.

The Guinean case clearly suggests that state capacity with respect to the prevention of civil war is not all encompassing and is distinct from a state’s general capacity to provide public goods. Instead, Guinea’s mobilizational capacity, although it included both organizational and symbolic capacity, was residual and situational. It was residual in that Guinean state was not generally organizationally strong. Although it had significant symbolic capacity, it was only occasionally invoked by Lansana Conté’s regime, notably in times of crisis. It was also situational in that it was specific to reacting to an armed challenge to the state and might not have mobilized Guineans the same way in other situations. The Guinean case thus powerfully illustrates that the notion of state capacity that allows for a successful response to armed insurgency is much more subtle than traditional institutional or resource-based analyses assume. It suggests that a residual state capacity based on long-standing, deeply engrained practices is sufficient to fend off an armed challenge, even in otherwise poorly performing states.

Contrary to some claims (Snyder and Bhavnani 2005), extractive capacity was not a central factor that allowed the Guinean state to mount an effective response to the 2000–2001 attacks. Certainly, the Guinean state throughout its post-independence history has been able to maintain a large state and security apparatus due to the regular income provided by the Guinean government from industrial bauxite mining. However, there is no obvious direct causal link between bauxite mining, government revenue, and the successful defeat of the 2000–2001 insurgency. Despite those income streams, the Guinean state throughout the 1970s and in the 1990s and 2000s was at times teetering on the brink of bankruptcy. There is no indication that direct payments to government officials or the large numbers of informal forces, or pay-offs to ethno-regional communities, were a main motivation in ensuring their loyalty in countering the insurgency. The fact that the Guinean state's main source of revenue was from centrally-controlled mining activities may have mitigated the risk of economic discrimination against a specific region or ethnic group. At the end of the PDG regime and throughout Lansana Conté's rule, all Guinean regions were equally poor. It seems thus that the Guinean state's extractive capacity was more of a background condition that enhanced other dimensions of mobilizational capacity rather than a direct causal factor.

### **Senegal: Rural mobilization and strong core state**

In Senegal a relatively effective core state was built on the foundations of a broad ruling coalition of representatives from a wide range of ethno-regional groups and a critical alliance between state elites and Muslim brotherhood and Wolof traditional leaders as influential rural intermediaries in the center of the country. A solid core state and a strong identity rooted in values and social networks of Muslim and Wolof societies in the central groundnut-growing region precluded the politicization of ethno-regional divisions. All these elements made it unlikely that a challenge to the central state would occur or would be successful. Ethnic divisions, while they exist in Senegal, never translated into political cleavages and mobilization against the state by any of the larger ethnic communities.

The central Senegalese state thus had the mobilizational ability to mount a relatively effective response to the Casamance insurgency at its southern periphery.

### **Pre-independence history of the state**

Strong political organizations and early states in the territory of today's Senegal date back as far as the thirteenth century. Those early states were monarchies headed by Wolof kings. They were concentrated in the Wolof heartland of central Senegal around the so-called northern groundnut basin, roughly demarcated by the triangle of the towns of Thiès near Dakar, Djourbel in central Senegal, and Saint-Louis on the northern coast (see map of Senegal in Annex V).

The foundations for the development of the core of the modern Senegalese state were laid in the second half of the nineteenth century when France extended its control of territory from the coastal areas under its control to the hinterland. By the mid-1880s, France had defeated all the remaining Wolof kingdoms (Jolof, Cayor, Baol, Sine, Saloum, Waalo) in central and eastern Senegal. Since the mid-nineteenth century, the French colonial administration had promoted groundnut (peanut) production across the newly conquered territories due to its suitability for the country's sandy soil and semi-arid climate, in which few other cash crops could be grown. Groundnuts became the key Senegalese export product, mainly to produce peanut oil for the French and international markets. Production grew rapidly from 14,000 tons in 1875 to almost 100,000 tons by the turn of the century and peaked just before independence at 808,000 tons in 1958 (Cruise O'Brien 1975, 7). Groundnuts accounted for up to 90 percent of Senegal's exports in the late colonial and early independence period and were the main source of the relative wealth on which the Senegalese state was built.

The late nineteenth century saw the demise of the old Wolof aristocracy that had dominated society in the newly conquered territories, although the strict social hierarchies that structured traditional

Wolof society largely survived (Boone 2003, 47). The legitimacy of the Wolof rulers had been undermined not only by the French conquest but also by their historical involvement in the slave trade and a long history of abusive practices toward their subjects. They had also been challenged for political leadership by the Muslim nobility and charismatic religious leaders who had spiritual legitimacy and had started raising their own armies in the eighteenth century to defend rural communities against the abuse of the Wolof aristocracy. Islamic leaders increasingly took control of tracts of land, expanding on landholdings they had been granted by the Wolof rulers earlier.

With limited resources, early French colonial authorities had to rely on existing rural elites to be able to effectively control the lands just conquered and to extract taxes from the population to fund the colonial state (Boone 2003, 49). The French colonial power first sought alliances with the Wolof elites, although it also accelerated their decline by carving up the old kingdoms into smaller cantons and appointing aristocrats to positions as provincial or canton chiefs within the newly imposed French administrative structure. The Wolof aristocrats imposed a heavy tax burden and forced labor regimes on local populations in the name of the French colonial state, which further weakened their legitimacy. Realizing that the Wolof rulers' ability to fully control the populations under their jurisdiction was weakening, the French administration shifted its support from the Wolof elites to the more and more influential religious leaders of the growing Muslim organizations, the so-called "brotherhoods" (Boone 2003, 50-51).

Two main Sufi brotherhoods, the Mouride and Tidjane, and smaller ones, notably the Quadiriyya and the Layenne, significantly expanded their influence across first Wolof and then Senegalese society in the late nineteenth century. Each was led by a "Grand Khalif," a spiritual leader who had saint-like status (Cruise O'Brien 1975, 10-11) and wielded significant religious and secular influence

through his public pronouncements and thanks to a network of “grand marabouts,” senior clerics and preachers, and lower-level clerics. The brotherhoods were organized in *dara* (“schools”) of devoted followers gathered around marabouts. Each *dara* consisted of disciples from the lower classes, warriors, freed slaves, or peasants and controlled significant tracts of land. The brotherhoods were extremely successful mass movements. In 1973 they had approximately 700,000 followers (Cruise O’Brien 1975, 61) out of a total population of approximately 4.5m, which means that roughly 16 percent all Senegalese and an even larger share of the adult population were members of the brotherhoods.

Although the French colonial administration had reservations about supporting religious leaders, given that secularism was a central principle of the French state, the benefits of having strong local allies with a significant popular following made colonial officials forge alliances with the brotherhoods starting in the 1910s. The French rulers assisted the brotherhood leaders with subsidies and inputs to intensify and expand groundnut production as well as with land grants to create new settlements. This assistance prompted a significant expansion of Wolof settlements and groundnut cultivation westwards into the semi-arid eastern expanses of the country. The French built roads, wells, and irrigation systems to support this expansion and turned the groundnut basin into the wealthiest region of Senegal. They even brought the full might of the colonial state to bear to expropriate land from Peulh pastoralists to make room for further Wolof settlements.

In return, the French gained powerful allies who had physical, economic, and spiritual control over most of Senegal’s Wolof community, who made up at least one-third of the country’s population. The French were thus able to establish firmer control of the groundnut basin in the center of the country. Sufi marabouts were appointed cantonal and village chiefs, and a whole new institutional

infrastructure was developed to, at the same time, control, channel resources to, and tax rural groundnut producers.

Rural groundnut cooperatives (“Sociétés Indigènes de Prévoyance” – SIP) to which all rural households had to belong and pay dues became an instrument of rural control. They served as a way to tie farmers to the state through the distribution of seeds, tools, fertilizer, and credit (Boone 2003, 55). Brotherhood leaders became critical intermediaries in this system as they channeled state resources to their followers. In turn, they received preferential allocations of inputs and credit and managed to expand their landholdings and influence (Cruise O’Brien 1975, 123-126). While this system perpetuated significant income and status inequalities within rural Wolof society, it effectively supported improvements to crop quality and productivity. The SIP system thus was critical for the continued expansion of groundnut output and as a link between the rural populations and the state via the intermediaries of local spiritual leaders in a system of mutual dependence. In 1958 just before independence, 1.2 million Senegalese were part of SIPs (Cruise O’Brien 1975, 125).

### **Critical juncture politics and a broad ruling coalition**

Senegal has a long history of exposure to elections. French citizens in the four “Communes”<sup>150</sup> voted in the election for a seat in the French National Assembly and in municipal elections since 1848. This electorate included African “evolués,” i.e., those Africans who had been born in the four Communes, acquired higher education, and were considered to have embraced French culture. In 1914 the voting franchise was expanded to most Africans who had simply been born in the four Communes, which promptly led to the election of the first African to represent Senegal in the French parliament (Schachter Morgenthau 1964, 125, 131). Electoral democracy was extended to the

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<sup>150</sup> The four urban “Communes” of Dakar, Gorée, Saint Louis, and Rufisque had been under direct French rule and were thus part of France since 1872 (for Gorée and St. Louis), 1880 (Rufisque), and 1887 (Dakar).

remaining territory of the Senegalese colony in 1946. Pre-World War II Senegalese politics was marked by competition between political leaders representing largely socialist and conservative interests. The local SFIO (Section Française de l'Internationale Ouvrière, the French socialist party) affiliate, the Bloc Africain, emerged as the largest organized political force at the end of the War.

The SFIO/Bloc's African leadership was largely made up of urban professionals and government officials from Dakar and the other three Communes. It was led by Lamine Guèye, a lawyer and Senegalese member of the French National Assembly. Guèye chose as his deputy Léopold Sédar Senghor, a French-educated linguist and poet and son of a wealthy trader from the Siné Saloum in the heart of the groundnut basin. Senghor was also elected to the French National Assembly in 1946 and was put in charge of building up the party apparatus outside the four Communes.

Tensions soon emerged between the more moderate Senghor and the leftist Guèye. These personal differences<sup>151</sup> between Senghor and Guèye also reflected deepening divisions between the SFIO leadership composed of former "citizens" from the urban centers and the much larger rural population who felt its interests were not represented in Dakar. The Senegalese Territorial Assembly was also dominated by individuals from the urban centers. Senghor broke with Lamine Guèye and the SFIO in 1948 and formed the Bloc Démocratique Sénégalais (BDS) together with Mamadou Dia, a trained teacher and economist of mixed ethnic heritage (Toucouleur and Serer) who grew up in the heart of the groundnut basin.

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<sup>151</sup> Senghor was a Catholic, a rarity in the largely Muslim country, and was opposed to the anti-clericalism of the socialists. He had only joined the SFIO in 1945 and was not entirely comfortable with the party (Schachter Morgenthau 1964, 139-142).

The increasing enfranchisement of rural voters and the significant expansion of the electorate between 1945 and the mid-1950s created a unique opening for a politician like Senghor, who had all the attributes to work across many traditional divides as son of a wealthy trader in the groundnut basin with Western education, as much at home in French intellectual and literary circles as in the huts of rural groundnut farmers, and a Catholic in a largely Muslim country.

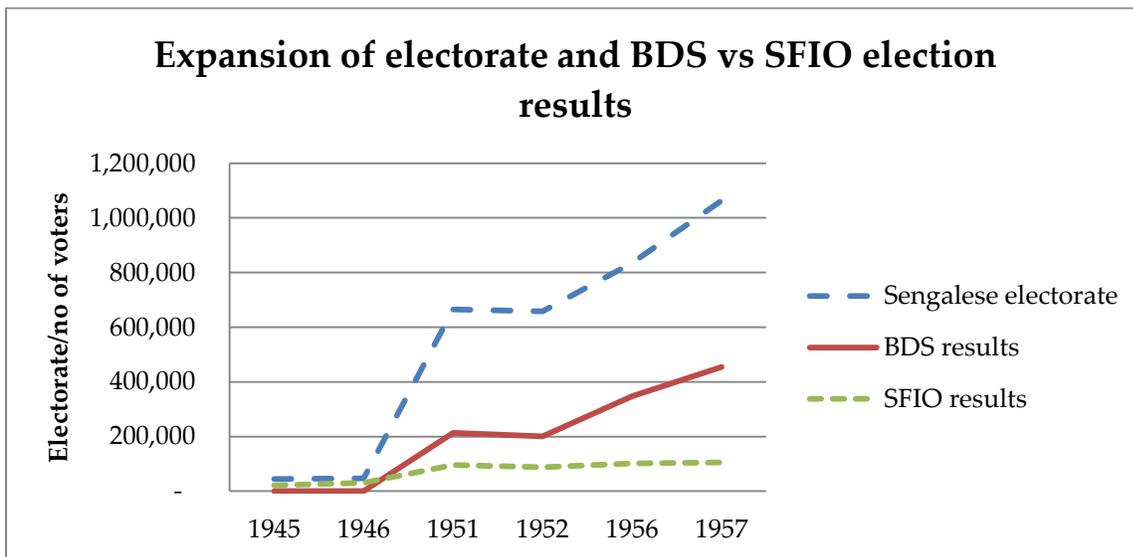
As soon as the electorate expanded beyond the core of urban voters in the Four Communes, rural interests quickly grew in importance. The number of eligible Senegalese voters increased fifteen-fold from roughly 44,000 in the first French National Assembly election in October 1945 to 665,000 in the National Assembly election of June 1951 (Foltz 1964, 21). It then further grew to 835,000 (457,000 voted) in 1956 and 1.06 million in 1957 (Schachter Morgenthau 1964, 396). Therefore, the candidate and party with the greatest ability to mobilize the large number of rural voters would easily prevail.

In an attempt to capture the expanding rural electorate, Senghor and Dia traveled the countryside and assembled a large coalition of rural elites that could mobilize significant parts of the rural population. Their goal was to build a mass political party in opposition to the urban elite-centered SFIO. Senghor saw himself as a man of the people and spent many hours sharing meals with constituents and listening patiently to the grievances of rural people. Well aware of what it would take to mobilize sufficient shares of the rural population, “Senghor and his colleagues took great care to associate with...the major groups living in the area—for they wanted to avoid duplicating the SFIO error of a leadership dominated by Wolof and Lebou townsmen” (Schachter Morgenthau 1964, 149). Their “Sprawling and inclusive coalition” (Boone 2003, 60) systematically associated ethnic and regional interest groups, many of which had been formed out of disappointment about

the SFIO's apparent lack of consideration for rural and regional interests. This included the Union Générale des Originaires de la Vallée du Fleuve (UGOVF), the Union des Toucouleurs, and the original MFDC in Casamance (Foltz 1964, 20). Local BDS leaders were carefully chosen to represent a range of interests and networks of influence – marabouts with a religious following and members of aristocratic families and of large trading families with networks of commercial interest (Barker 1973, 292-293). The BDS promised higher salaries and pensions to key interest groups, such as traditional chiefs and veterans of the French military, and a greater say for farmers in rural cooperatives to counter the influence of urban traders (Schachter Morgenthau 1964, 149).

Competition between the BDS and the SFIO was particularly keen in the groundnut basin for the support of the Sufi brotherhood leaders of the Mourides and Tidjanes due to their ability to mobilize large numbers of voters. Senghor and his allies exploited existing frustrations among leading marabouts with Lamine Guèye and the SFIO policies as well as succession struggles within some of the leading Mourides and Tidjane families. Senghor's ability to build strong alliances with brotherhood leaders was all the more striking given that he was a Catholic Serer in a country dominated by Islam, while his opponent Guèye was a Muslim Wolof. His choice of Mamadou Dia, who had gone to Coranic school and could eloquently converse with the Muslim leaders as associate, played a role, although it was as much Senghor's rural origins and his ability to listen and proactively address the concerns of the religious leaders. He tailored the BDS positions, policies, and electoral promises to the needs of each constituency, including promises to introduce Arabic in state schools, support for new mosques in some areas, and state-funded trips to Mecca for the brotherhood followers (Schachter Morgenthau 1964, 148-149).

As shown in the below table, the BDS was able to capture the largest share of the newly eligible electorate, winning more than 200,000 votes in the 1951 French National Assembly elections against the SFIO's 95,000. This gap widened in subsequent elections, with the BDS expanding its support base roughly at the same rate as the electorate was expanding, to almost 350,000 in 1956 and to almost 450,000 (out of 580,839 voters) in the Territorial Assembly elections of 1957. The BDS thus had significantly outmaneuvered the SFIO, which continued to appeal to urban voters and rich rural traders and whose support stagnated at the 1951 level of approximately 100,000 votes (Foltz 1964, 21-24).



With an overwhelming majority in all elected bodies since 1952, the BDS also gained control of significant government resources and started to remake government institutions in its own image. After the party's first decisive win in the 1952, capturing 41 of 50 seats in the Territorial Assembly (MacKenzie and Robinson 1960, 316), it expanded and reorganized itself, creating rural party units across the country, led by close allies who matched electoral constituencies. New provincial party structures allowed the BDS to give significant leeway to rural notables, in particular the brotherhood

leaders in the groundnut basin, over organizing, staffing, and financing local party structures and activities (Boone 2003, 64).

Within the government, the party appointed members and key allies across the administration and channeled resources to important constituencies. According to Boone,

The BDS was able to appoint personnel at all levels of government, including grassroots and regional levels of provincial administration, in a rapidly expanding state apparatus. In the groundnut basin, the BDS gave positions to favorite sons and influential local figures, thus helping to anchor provincial administration in the already established agrarian rural elite. SIPS were thoroughly colonized by chiefs and marabouts, and the BDS relied on these institutions as vehicles to co-opt local influentials and harness the votes of their disciples and dependents. Senghor's party sponsored the creation of new producer cooperatives...further deconcentrating the party-state machine and extending its territorial reach. Public works projects...and the licensing of private groundnut buyers were also opportunities for party building that were skillfully exploited by Senghor... (Boone 2003, 63)

As a result, the BDS was able to establish quasi-hegemony in rural politics in Senegal from the mid-1950s. The French colonial authorities had gradually stepped back from administrative control and left the internal governance of the country largely to the newly elected African elites. As the dominant political force in Senegal, the BDS quickly absorbed the other political parties, including the MFDC in Casamance, and the main rivals of the SFIO by 1956. The new, broader party was renamed Bloc Populaire Sénégalais (BPS) and won the March 1957 Territorial Assembly elections, the first Assembly elections under full universal suffrage, with 78 percent of the vote and vast majorities in rural areas. Only Lamine Guèye's SFIO successor party PSAS (Parti Sénégalais d'Action Socialiste), as the main remaining opposition party, won a few seats in urban areas (Foltz 1964, 23-26). This sweep by the BPS of the Territorial Assembly elections in 1957 prompted Guèye and the PSAS to finally join Senghor's party. Together they formed the Union Progressiste Sénégalaise (UPS) in 1958, which consecrated the hegemony of Senghor's brand of socialism, having absorbed all major political forces. Only two radical left-wing and anti-colonial parties were not part

of this large coalition that represented more than 90 percent of the Senegalese electorate (Beck 2008, 53). Just a few years before independence, Senghor and his allies had won almost complete hegemony over the political life in Senegal. This hegemony and the ability to rally the vast majority of Senegalese around their political project became obvious in the 1958 referendum on the French Community, in which the “yes” (to remain under French tutelage) vote championed by the BPS won by an overwhelming majority of 97.5 percent. Senegal gained independence in 1960. Senghor continued seamlessly as the country’s first post-colonial president and the BPS as the dominant political force.

### **Organizational capacity: Party and central state control**

#### ***Central state capacity***

Senghor and his allies used their political dominance and the momentum generated by their expanding ruling coalition to build a highly centralized yet broad state apparatus firmly rooted in the strong core set of alliances with Muslim brotherhood leaders and their networks of influence and economic interests as well as the Wolof-Muslim identity of the central groundnut basin. These alliances would shape post-independence state-building strategies and have a significant impact on the state’s organizational and symbolic capacity. It not only made for a relatively effective core state, but also left little room for challenges to the central state. Such challenges could only arise from peripheral areas that were less integrated and less receptive to the adoption of the Muslim-Wolof core state model.

The Senegalese state became centralized as Senghor consolidated his power after independence. After a standoff between Senghor and his more left-leaning Prime Minister Mamadou Dia over reforms that would have weakened the role of rural intermediaries, Senghor had the military

intervene and Dia locked up for an attempted coup d'état. The Sufi Brotherhood leaders were clearly on Senghor's side, which enabled the President to consolidate his rule as the uncontested leader of Senegal. In 1966 Senghor made the UPS the only legal party in Senegal.

Senegal's single party regime was less authoritarian and much more short-lived than in many other West African states. Although opposition parties had been outlawed, there was significant political competition within the single party, since the UPS/PS<sup>152</sup> had co-opted and integrated most political forces in the country. The one-party regime only lasted for a little over a decade, after which two opposition parties were legalized in 1976 (the Union Démocratique Sénégalaise (UDS) and the Parti Africain de l'indépendance (PAI)). Another one (the Mouvement Republicain Senegalais (MRS)) was legalized in 1978 (Cox and Kessler 1980, 331).

Decision-making in the Senegalese post-independence state was highly centralized in Dakar, and authority was concentrated in President Senghor's office. The 1963 constitution abolished the position of Prime Minister and established a presidential system. Senghor was not only the head of state and government but also secretary general of the UPS thus kept tight control of all political decision-making and appointments of importance. Ministers could not take decisions without Senghor's concurrence. The country's National Assembly was known as "chambre d'applaudissement" (applause chamber), since it always reliably approved and translated into legislation presidential policies and priorities (Beck 2008, 54-55).

Although some government institutions were more effective than others and rivalries between political clans played themselves out in the control of government agencies and offices, those

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<sup>152</sup> The UPS was renamed Parti Socialiste/Socialist Party in 1975.

tensions were within the ruling party and were generally not ethnicized. This was also true within the military. There were ethnic rivalries at times between Wolof and Toucouleurs, who constituted most of the officer corps and Casamançais, who were relatively numerous among the rank-and-file. However, there was no political mobilization around those categories, and the military officers came from the same social and political circles as the political, economic, and religious elite. Military officers were selected according to political loyalty and educated in French, and later Moroccan and American, military academies. Because of these realities, the Senegalese military always seemed more corporatist, technocratic, and less political than many of its West African counterparts. Officers and rank-and-file soldiers were comparatively well paid, which also might have helped with their acquiescence. The close relationship with the French military and French military bases in Senegal also contributed to the depoliticization of the troops<sup>153</sup> (Diop and Diouf 1990, 95-100). The Senghor regime early on developed the concept of the “Armée Nation,” the systematic involvement of the military in activities that benefited the civilian population, notably road and other infrastructure construction through the army engineer corps and the health system in rural areas through its military hospitals, involvement in vaccination drives, and even HIV research and prevention (Diop 2013). The military in Senegal thus was much more cohesive and was considered to support, rather than compete with, the political leadership of the country. As mentioned, when it came to fight in Casamance, the military acted as a unitary force and clearly in defense of the state. Even for the large number of Casamançais soldiers, there never seemed to be any question which side they stood on.

### ***Rural intermediaries and territorial administration***

The Senegalese government’s and ruling party’s alliance with the Muslim brotherhood leaders became the core model of rural state-building and anchored the state in the groundnut basin and its

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<sup>153</sup> However, the French military presence in Senegal was not dissimilar to its influence in Côte d’Ivoire, so this in and of itself did not seem to have been a decisive factor in explaining the Senegalese military’s relative effectiveness.

political economy. In return for delivering votes at election time, assisting with the governance, control, and taxation of rural areas, the grands marabouts and the groundnut-growing areas received subsidized seeds and fertilizers, credit, and investments in infrastructure that ensured strong groundnut crops and social peace throughout the 1960s and 70s. In the 1960s, groundnuts made up almost 80 percent of Senegalese exports. The country generated roughly 25 percent of global peanut production (Badiane 2001).

Many subsequent policy decisions were aimed at strengthening the control of the Senegalese state in the groundnut basin by strengthening its intermediaries. After independence Senghor's government created regions, departments, and arrondissements as basic administrative units, all dependent on the central state and each headed by an appointed governor, prefect, and sub-prefect respectively. Below those central state outposts, a range of lower-level institutions were put in place that helped to keep a tighter grip on rural populations, production, and marketing circles. These lower-level institutions included producer cooperatives at the village level, rural councils in charge of managing land tenure, and local UPS party cells (Boone 2003, 69-92).

In the groundnut basin, the regions created largely followed the contours of the colonial cercles and pre-colonial traditional authority structures around Wolof ruling families and influential clans (Boone 2003, 80). While the centrally appointed governors, prefects, and sub-prefects and their administrations were charged with the implementation of national policies, in the groundnut basin they largely had to defer to rural powerbrokers to implement state policies: "The authority of the center's direct agents – regional governors, prefectorial officers, and the agents of the central ministries – was trumped by that of grands marabouts, Wolof aristocrats, and regional UPS barons" (Boone 2003, 88). Producer cooperatives to which all farmers had to belong became critical

instruments for taxing and controlling rural populations while channeling resources and inputs – seeds, tools, fertilizer, credit, expertise – to local peanut farmers. The leadership of most cooperatives was closely controlled by marabouts’ networks or village chiefs, who ensured that chairpersons were relatives or close associates who protected elite interests. Some of the larger or wealthier cooperatives were at times headed by senior marabouts themselves (Diop 1992, 250-252). A 1964 National Land Law (Loir sur le Domaine National) made all land formally state property and gave the right to allocate or redistribute land to the Councils, which were controlled by members of the traditional landholding elite (Boone 2003, 73-79). This confirmed existing land tenure patterns, cemented the privileges of traditional rural elites, and even allowed them to take advantage of their now officially state-sanctioned powers to allocate themselves larger landholdings.

These measures were accompanied by other actions that tightened state control over groundnut pricing, marketing, and export, which ensured that the state reaped a significant surplus from the production of the country’s main export crop. A share of this surplus was retained by local powerbrokers, and other parts were plowed back into rural areas in the form of infrastructure investments, inputs, and credit. This system was largely built on the backs of the majority of subsistence and small-scale farmers, who at times received less per kilo of groundnuts than the markup the state earned from each kilo of groundnuts exported. Rural groundnut producers constantly struggled and incurred increasing levels of debt facilitated by easy access to credit through the cooperatives, thus creating further dependence on the state and the rural elites (Cruise O’Brien 1975, 131-138).

While they relied on the rural intermediaries, central state leaders were not entirely beholden to the rural powerbrokers. Although the brotherhood leaders and members of former ruling families often

decided on the application or non-application of central policies and laws, the central state remained a powerful actor due to its ability to centrally control the flow of resources:

Economic dependence...enabled regime leaders in Dakar to manage and manipulate the “coalition of notables” that comprised the UPS. Senghor was a master at directing the downward flow of state resources to structure local-level competition, balance factional interests, temper rivalries, and make sure the provincial notables’ political ambitions did not exceed the scope of their own fiefdoms. (Boone 2003, 90)

This economic dependence on the central state locked the rural elites into a mutually beneficial and reciprocal relationship with the state that proved quite durable over the years. The mutual dependence on rents from groundnut production to fund the state and the rule of the Muslim marabouts, was a critical element that held religious and political interests and clans together and tied them inexorably to the state. Senghor and his colleagues knew that they needed the brotherhood leaders to control the rural populations, help tax peasants while expanding groundnut production further east into more arid lands, and deliver votes in favor of the ruling party. However, without state inputs and state investment into rural infrastructure, the brotherhoods would have lacked sufficient resources to expand their rule into new areas and to continuously expand their orders and followings (Boone 2003, 90). Over time, the brotherhood leaders reinvested their wealth into other commercial endeavors and many became important traders starting in the mid-1970s, which allowed them to increase their autonomy from the state. They still remained tied to preferential treatment by the ruling party and the backbone of the country’s political system and the UPS/PS until the late 1990s.

This patrimonial logic of state-building became the main *modus operandi* for the Senegalese state in the post-independence period (Beck 2008). Between the different Sufi orders and factions led by lower-tier marabouts as well as old influential aristocratic clans, this system led to a fair degree of

rivalry and competition in their vying for central state resources. However, these political conflicts were all managed within the framework of the ruling UPS/PS party (Fatton 1986). Since there was no credible alternative to the PS state until opposition leader Abdoulaye Wade's electoral victory in 2000, the central state managed to successfully regulate cleavages and political conflict within the framework of the central state and party apparatus. There was little incentive for any of the local actors to completely reject the central state and no external sources of resource distribution that would have made such an option attractive.

### ***Absence of intermediaries and "administrative occupation" in Casamance***

While the construction of the state around the strong alliance with the traditional leaders in the groundnut basin defined the overall state-building strategy, it did not necessarily match the strength of rural intermediaries in other parts of the country. Depending on the influence of local authority structures, the central state's direct influence and rural control varied significantly (Boone 1990, 2003). Specifically, central state governance in Casamance, in particular in the Diola-dominated areas of Lower Casamance, presented a stark contrast to the situation in the groundnut basin. Since Diola society was less hierarchical and had weak and fragmented authority structures, there were no strong and influential intermediaries for central state institutions, neither for the political parties nor the state. As a result, Dakar-appointed government officials played a much more important role in imposing central rule than in the groundnut basin. Political leaders in Dakar still sought alliances with local leaders and promoted certain party members to national office with the expectation that they would develop and extend patronage networks throughout the southern region. Those Dakar-approved local leaders were generally of Casamançais descent but had been educated in Dakar and had joined the party or government institutions there. They did build patron-client networks of influence in Casamance and channeled central state resources to the region. However, they lacked traditional powerbases and had limited "social authority" beyond offering access to government

patronage. “Patron-client relations were more individualized and instrumental” than in other parts of Senegal (Beck 2008, 155-156). They never had as wide a following as the religious and Wolof elites in the groundnut basin and had to manage much more shifting alliances. Their patronage distribution was often focused on northerners in Casamance or those with connections to northern interests. It reached much smaller parts of Casamance society. Local allies of the regime were seen as extracting resources for the central state mainly rather than acting in the interest of local populations (Boone 2003, 116-127).

Consequently, the central state in Casamance had “Fewer layers in the administrative hierarchy and no rural outposts that could be used by local politicians to organize electoral followings” (Boone 2003, 116). Compared to the groundnut basin, the technical state agencies were understaffed. The limited funds available were merely sufficient to pay staff salaries, with no resources left to implement their mandate. Whatever activities they did carry out were focused on the urban centers where they were located, and they never really intervened in rural areas. The rural development agencies (Centres d’Expansion Rurale Polyvalents – CERP) were much less effective in Casamance than in other parts of the country (Darbon 1988, 68-101). State infrastructure investment in Casamance was lower than in the groundnut basin. Government contracts for infrastructure works often went to northern contractors rather than Casamançais businesses, which led to the takeover of many commercial circuits in Casamance by Dakar-based interests and businesses (Darbon 1988, 188-190). Apart from urban elites and those with connections to the north, the state in Casamance had very limited relevance to and credibility with rural populations. Instead, it had a “Blunt, authoritarian character” (Boone 2003, 123), which, over time, contributed to the build-up of grievances and the anti-state mobilization by the MFDC starting in the early 1980s.

This anti-state mobilization remained at the periphery of the central state, though. The limited support the anti-state sentiment expressed by the MFDC had was underscored by the fact that the various iterations of the ruling party, the UPS in the late colonial period, and later the PDS/PS, always won comfortable electoral victories in Casamance until 2000, when opposition candidate and later president Abdoulaye Wade mobilized a comfortable majority there. The PS clientelist networks were not as dense in Casamance as in the groundnut basin and were more focused on redistributive politics. They were still sufficient to ensure the state a wide following (Beck 2008, 153-156). The MFDC's armed opposition to central state rule within Casamance was still, comparatively, a marginal movement. Overall, Senegalese state rule was never in danger of being supplanted by MFDC rule, except in some remote areas near the borders with Guinea-Bissau and the Gambia.

### **Strong core state identity**

The forging of a large ruling coalition before independence in the 1950s required not only alliances with key actors in different parts of Senegal, but also a discourse that was inclusive of all ethnic groups and regions. Two parallel dynamics subsequently shaped a Senegalese national identity that was at the same time broad and integrative, but also constructed around an "Islam-Wolof model" (Diaw and Diouf 1998, 283), infused by Muslim values and the Wolof language.

First, official state policy pursued an integrative and assimilationist model in creating a new overarching Senegalese identity. Influenced by his education in France and his background as a double minority – ethnic Serer and Catholic – in a plurality Wolof country, Senghor embraced the idea of creating a broad new Senegalese identity following the French model of the nation-state, where a national identity developed through the assimilation of peripheral groups by a dominant

culture (Neuberger 2000). Senghor often explicitly expressed his admiration for the secular French nation-state:

In old France one's fatherland was identified with one's province...In West Africa the fatherland is the Serer country, the Malinke country, the Songhai country, the Mossi, the Baoulé or the Fon...The principle and permanent objective of the kings of France for nearly a thousand years was to make a nation out of diverse races and to extend their kingdom to the natural frontiers of ancient Gaul. These frontiers were natural however only in the geographical and economic sense; to the anthropologist, the Basque differs more from the Fleming or Breton than the Wolof differs from the Baoulé or Fon. The aim was progressively to reduce the provincial fatherlands and assimilate them into the Ile de France which imposed its dialect as the national language. (cited in Neuberger 2000, 954)

Senghor believed in the modern nation-state's ability to construct a unified Senegalese identity through the institutions of the state and through an official discourse focused on common values and aspirations. This official state doctrine of national consciousness creation was secular and focused on elites, but at the same time left room for more of a grassroots process of national identity formation driven by political and economic dynamics.

Second, while national unity was an important theme and part of President Senghor's rhetoric from early on, the content of it developed more organically and implicitly. The state and party leaders' alliance with the Muslim brotherhood and Wolof traditional elites, and the anchoring of the state in the socio-economic dynamics of the groundnut-growing areas, led to an informal process of "shadow" Wolofization (Cruise O'Brien 1998). This process was driven by both commerce and religious discourse and networks, as Wolof traders came to dominate commercial circuits and religious leaders communicated with their followers largely in Wolof. Although French remained the official language of education and the state, Wolof became the vernacular not only of the streets and markets but also of the government bureaucracy. Lower-ranking government officials mainly communicated in Wolof as the language most easily understood by most ethnic groups in Dakar and

the center of the country (Cruise O'Brien 1975, 154-158). While the French language was always a marker of social status and class distinctions (with only 15 percent of Senegalese mastering the official state language), Wolof was the great equalizer and a tool first for urban and then for national integration (Smith 2010). This, over time, led to the adoption of a Wolof identity by many smaller ethnic communities, notably the Lebou and Serer around Dakar and in the Siné Saloum (Cruise O'Brien 1998).

The combination of all these factors made for a subtle but important and growing hegemony of Wolof language and culture over central Senegalese society, reflected in a continuously growing share of Senegalese who self-identified as Wolof. While at independence in 1960 Wolof comprised 36 percent of the population (Robinson and MacKenzie 1960, 284), the share of those who self-identified as Wolof in a national survey had increased to almost 45 percent by the early 2000s (Direction de la Prévision et de la Statistique 2004, 33).

## Conclusion

This case study shows that high state mobilizational capacity, in particular a core state identity in combination with some organizational capacity through intermediaries bound together by mutual interests, does not only determine to what extent states are able to respond to insurgency, but also may set the parameters for where conflict breaks out within a state. A strong core identity and organizational capacity at the center of the state may, through its imposition on peripheral areas, generate grievances among minority groups. Since state presence is weaker peripheral areas, generate opportunities for localized insurgency may be generated. However, states with a stronger core identity and relatively greater organizational capacity also have a broader repertoire of mobilizational tools available that allow for a robust institutional response to localized, separatist insurgencies. Due

to the localized nature of interests and grievances, insurgents lack the ability to broaden their uprising and mobilize wider support for their cause. The insurgency thus never escalates to larger civil war, but may continue to simmer as low-grade conflict. In the case of Casamance, it is a three-decade-long guerilla war, which is contained to remote areas of the country, but which the state has not been able to fully control and resolve.

The broad rural electoral coalition that Senghor and his allies built in the early 1950s, and the subsequent co-optation of other political currents, laid the foundations for two developments: first, the establishment of a large network of critical intermediaries comprised of Muslim brotherhood leaders and other local elites in the central groundnut basin that have shaped and dominated the Senegalese state largely until today; and, second, the development of a relatively strong sense of national identity and of that identity being able to integrate different ethno-regional groups.

While the Senegalese state lacked strong intermediaries or brokers between the state and rural populations in Casamance, its core coalition and its deep roots in the central groundnut basin through its networks among the rural elites and Muslim brotherhood leaders meant that the MFDC never had any support among state elites in Dakar and among political leaders in others parts of the country. Consequently, all the tools for mobilization were in the state's hand: a credible message of a unified state identity; a small but effective security apparatus, and relatively well-functioning state institutions with a significant presence on the ground. Those institutions were able to implement policies that addressed some of the local grievances; for example, with respect to the allocation of land.

Although the Casamance conflict lingers on even in 2015, the Casamance insurgency never threatened the core of the Senegalese state nor was it particularly costly to Senegal's leaders. While the MFDC had a compelling message grounded in historical wrongs and exploitation of their region by northern elites, it never managed to become a genuine mass movement since it was too much rooted in Diola identity and interests. There were no national cleavages that the MFDC could have exploited to turn their cause into a national issue. Even within the region, their following was limited, and many Casamançais were themselves ambiguous about or opposed to the armed struggle due to its negative impact on their livelihoods. Many Casamançais who worked in Dakar for the central government openly dissociated themselves from the insurgency (Foucher 2007) and backed the state response. Active counter-mobilization was not really needed, since the core Senegalese state identity was so strong that MFDC was easily portrayed as a fringe movement. And the Senegalese state treated it like that. Publicly, Senegal's leaders for a long time made an effort to ignore the Casamance issue, while working on various strategies to tackle the issue on the ground at multiple levels: military, political, and social. All major parties and leaders from across the political spectrum and from various parts of Senegal spoke out against the MFDC's separatist claims and openly defended the nation-state against attempts to break it up.

Although the Senegalese state's organizational capacity in Casamance was less effective than in the center of the country because it lacked strong local allies and networks of influence, the strong core identity was sufficient to allow for a robust institutional response to the Casamance crisis. Unlike in Côte d'Ivoire or Sierra Leone, the MFDC's message did not trigger any defections within the state security forces. Even though the MFDC "maquis," as the rural fighters were called, was led by some former Senegalese soldiers, they were not successful in luring away Casamançais members of the security forces. The Senegalese government made a point of sending recruits from Casamance itself

to the front lines to fight the rebels, thus demonstrating that it had firm control of the armed forces and no concerns about the insurgent movement challenging the integrity of state institutions. The Senegalese state was fully in control of the message and the response to the insurgency and over time was successful in undermining its support base through a mix of concessions, coercion and co-optation. In Casamance. It was not the state, but the rebel movement itself, that was deeply divided – a fact that leaders in Dakar could exploit and use to their advantage.

Material capacity was not a critical factor in the Casamance conflict as incentive for fighters to join the rebellion. The insurgency has been described as a resource-less conflict. There is little evidence that fighters on both sides, the insurgents or the state, were primarily motivated by economic incentives. The Senegalese state struggled economically in the 1980s and 1990s but was still able to mobilize a robust military response and to pay off some of the MFDC factions.

## 6. Conclusion

This comparative study has explored the causes and causal pathways that link state formation trajectories in post-colonial states to the outbreak of civil war in recent times. It yields two key insights.

First, detailed process tracing of the escalation process from limited insurgency to full-fledged rebellion suggests that mobilization is indeed a critical mechanism that explains why lower-level insurgencies expand or not. Insurgencies succeed in cases where their message resonates with local populations and where they are able to generate support for their cause and grow their organization while state leaders fail to do so. States that have been able to mount significant resistance to insurgency were able to successfully counter insurgent efforts by mobilizing central and local institutions, as well as local populations, through appeals to a sense of national belonging and a duty to defend the central state against internal and external enemies.

The study confirms that states' mobilizational capacity can be usefully conceptualized as a repertoire composed of the three dimensions suggested at the outset – symbolic, organizational, and material capacity – that can be used to mobilize institutions and populations. States that successfully kept insurgencies in check, or outright defeated them, displayed a broader mobilizational repertoire. In contrast, civil war states had a limited repertoire of mobilizational tools and were unsuccessful in mustering a unified response of their institutions and rallying the population to come to their

defense. To illustrate this point, if we assign simple higher/lower<sup>154</sup> scores for each case country, the following individual scores for each mobilizational dimension could be assigned.

**Table 7:** Mobilizational capacity scores broken down by the three dimensions: organizational, symbolic, and material capacity.

	<b>Organizational</b>	<b>Symbolic</b>	<b>Material</b>	<b>Mobilizational</b>
Côte d’Ivoire (civil war)	Lower	Lower	Higher	Lower
Sierra Leone (civil war)	Lower	Lower	Lower	Lower
Guinea (no civil war)	Higher	Higher	Lower	Higher
Senegal (no civil war)	Higher	Higher	Higher	Higher

Post-colonial states in the developing world are rarely effective along all three dimensions. In the aggregate, high scores across two dimensions seem sufficient for a country to have mobilizational capacity to prevent the outbreak of civil war. One or two categories usually predominate, although the three dimensions are also mutually dependent and reinforcing. This is particularly the case for symbolic and organizational capacity. The cases studies seem to indicate that at least higher symbolic and organizational capacity to some degree go together. This interdependence between symbolic and organizational capacity seems logical - greater symbolic capacity also ensures a more effective organizational response, since it helps to rally state officials, civil servants, and members of the security forces and prevents defections by official state representatives to the rebel cause.

The cases also suggest that material capacity plays a different role as compared to the other two dimensions. There is little indication that resource mobilization and offering direct payoffs were critical factors during the early mobilization phase that determined whether insurgencies would escalate or not. This does not mean that material motivations were absent. Most fighters, whether on the insurgent or on the government side, cared about material benefits. For those who join

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<sup>154</sup> These scores serve mainly to illustrate the findings. Since they are not genuine “scores” reflecting clear-cut quantitative indicators but are rather based on qualitative assessments, it seems to be most useful to see them as relative to each other and not understand them in absolute terms.

insurgencies, though, motivations to fight are closely linked to grievances in that they are usually aggrieved at least in part because of being economically disadvantaged. After all, since political appointments and belonging to certain patronage networks are key avenues to economic well-being in many African and other post-colonial societies, political and economic exclusion are intimately linked. For poorly and infrequently paid government official and soldiers, material benefits matter to the extent that if soldiers are not paid at all over time, they will be less disciplined or even mutiny. The Sierra Leonean group around Valentine Strasser did so in April 1992 after they felt neglected and used as cannon-fodder by higher-ups without receiving adequate compensation. Material mobilizational capacity seems to operate mainly through its interaction with the other dimensions, notably organizational mobilizational capacity. Economic crisis and declining state revenues have certainly contributed to increasing political and ethno-regional tensions in Côte d'Ivoire and Sierra Leone in the decade leading up to the war. However, Guinea and Senegal also experienced periods of economic decline in the 1980s and 1990s but still found ways to mobilize their security forces and people from a range of communities to respond with determination to insurgency. Furthermore, even cash-strapped Sierra Leone found the means to invest heavily in the military and more than double the size of its troops within a year and half after the onset of the insurgency. In a similar way, Ivorian president Laurent Gbagbo, despite two decades of economic decline in Côte d'Ivoire, invested tens of millions of dollars in foreign mercenaries and new weaponry for the Ivorian government forces. Political priorities of leaders seem to be what matters most, rather than material resources as such.

The second key insight is that modern African states' mobilizational capacity was determined at a critical juncture in the late colonial period, during which the confluence of various contingent events

determined emerging African leaders' ability to forge a strong identity and state organization across the territory.

The size of the ruling coalition that took control of the state and the organization of territorial control that were established at independence were the two critical variables that influenced contemporary mobilizational capacity. Broad ruling coalitions set in motion inclusionary dynamics that allowed the leaders of the newly independent states to develop a stronger unified identity and discourse that appealed to large swathes of the population and to give a stake in the state to a broader set of groups and regions. Narrow ruling coalitions, in turn, created incentives for leaders to exclude significant groups and regions from public decision-making and resource distribution and rely on exclusionary discourses over time, as they tried to consolidate and secure their rule. In a similar vein, institutions of territorial control, notably the type of rural intermediary the central state relied on in administering the countryside, shaped later institutional practices. Reliable rural intermediaries can either be central state representatives or rural intermediaries who are tied to the central state through mutual interests. Both pathways can produce institutions of territorial control that can be deployed effectively when the state comes under attack. In contrast, if the state's main local intermediaries have significant autonomous sources of power and resources or depend almost exclusively on the central state as the sources of their authority, they will remain weak and ineffective with respect to their ability to mobilize local defense when the state comes under attack.

Taken together, these variables exhibited path dependence in that they influenced decision-makers' future options in subtle ways. At the founding moments of modern post-colonial states, they produced rhetorical and behavioral patterns among state agents, institutions, and the broader population that influenced future decisions and conditioned the options available to respond to

armed challenges even decades later. They were path dependent in that they narrowed the options that leaders could draw on in their decision-making. They were not path dependent in the all determinant in the sense of the “increasing returns” processes suggested by Pierson (Pierson 2000a). Instead, the path dependence was relatively weak or residual. Nonetheless, leaders would have to have strong ideological convictions or be influenced by external ideas to step out of these patterns. For example, if leaders were able to come to power and take control of the state in the late colonial period without broad-based popular mobilization, they were unlikely to develop either the organizational infrastructure or the symbolic tools and language to mobilize support beyond their constituencies.

The role these variables played is borne out by the patterns observed in the four cases. The cases show that the mobilization of broad rural coalitions by new African leaders during the late colonial period was essential in creating relatively inclusive state institutions and developing a strong national identity. The case studies are not fully conclusive as to how broad-based rural mobilization has to be for it to lead to a more inclusive state, but it is safe to say that support among a significant majority of the population and core regions of a country make for higher mobilizational capacity. Broad rural and cross-ethnic and cross-regional mobilization such as by the Guinean PDG in the 1950s was rare and defines the ideal case at one end of the spectrum. Mobilization was less broad in Senegal, but the overwhelming electoral victory of Leopold Senghor’s BDS and his mobilization of considerable support in rural areas across Senegalese regions provided a strong basis on which to build a relatively broad-based state. This state was anchored in Wolof culture and in the groundnut basin in the center of the country and among its religious elites and their followers, who altogether comprised more than half of the country’s population. This anchoring in Wolof culture and the groundnut basin led

to the formation of a solid core state identity, helped by the growing influence of the Wolof language and culture even among non-ethnic Wolof.

In contrast, narrow rule based on limited or shallow popular mobilization, over time, led to more narrow states whose regimes sooner or later institutionalized ethno-regional interests and cleavages. Differential treatment of certain groups or regions led to a build-up of grievances against the regime. State institutions came to be seen as inherently partial and belonging to one or a few privileged groups. The state's favoritism toward a few groups led to a more intense competition for control of the state and also undermined the effectiveness of most state institutions, including security institutions, which were narrowly constituted or wracked by ethnic divisions. It also led to the relative absence of a unified national sentiment, as state leaders tended to adopt more exclusionary discourses in favor of certain communities over others. Once an insurgent challenge occurred, governments with a narrow base were unable to sufficiently mobilize either their divided and often-dysfunctional institutions or the broader population to counter the challenge.

The cases suggest then that, with respect to the instances of broad-based rule, there are at least two different pathways from mass mobilization to the development of significant organizational and symbolic capacity. The first, exemplified by the Guinean case, involved the establishment of a broad-based centralized state that abolished rural power structures and ruled rural areas directly through political party cells and state offices. The second pathway, found in Senegal, saw the development of a strong core identity around the Wolof and the co-optation of religious leaders and rural intermediaries who were connected to the state in mutually beneficial politico-economic relationships. Both pathways led to the development of both symbolic and organizational state capacity that was sufficient to fend off armed challenges. In the case of Senegal, the core identity

was so strong that armed challenges were limited to the periphery of the state. In contrast, narrow, ethno-regionally based ruling coalitions in Côte d'Ivoire and Sierra Leone, over the years, led to narrower and narrower regimes and an exclusionary official rhetoric with few or no unifying symbols. Over decades, this narrowing undermined the regimes' ability to mobilize state institutions, which were themselves deeply divided and fragmented, or convince the broader population to come to the defense of the state. These divided institutions were no match for highly motivated insurgent organizations who benefited from the ethno-regional divisions and long-standing grievances within institutions and among certain population groups in their own mobilizational efforts to grow their insurgencies.

Similarly, with respect to the role of institutions of territorial control, in both Côte d'Ivoire and Sierra Leone the state presence at the local level was thin and sometimes nonexistent. Each state took a different path to weak institutions of rural control. In Côte d'Ivoire, the weakness was a function of traditional authority structures with historically limited influence as well as the dominance of Houphouët-Boigny and his concern for creating a strong center and limiting the potential for rural mobilization by potential opponents. In Sierra Leone, the weakness was the result of the role that strong Paramount Chiefs came to play in modern Sierra Leonean politics. They were deeply entrenched and had control over material and traditional claims to authority so that they became critical gatekeepers for access to rural areas and populations. Political parties came to rely on them in the late colonial period for electoral mobilization. Under the northern-dominated APC regime, chiefs in the southeast of the country felt either little loyalty to the government or had limited mobilizational capacity if they had been imposed by the center.

This contrasts sharply with Guinea and Senegal, which each took its own path to relatively effective rural control. In Guinea, a strong central state abolished traditional authority structures completely and replaced them with strong party and state structures that had been dismantled to some extent and greatly weakened by the 1990s, but maintained residual capacity to respond effectively in times of crisis. In Senegal, local representatives of the central state played less of a critical role in the response to the Casamance uprising, although they remained loyal to the central state. However, the Senegalese state had forged strong alliances in the central groundnut basin of the country with local powerbrokers, who had strong ties to the central state through mutual political and economic interests. The fact that the Senegalese state was in part built around this strong core necessarily relegated any challenge to the central state to the periphery of the country, as happened in Casamance.

The findings of this study offer interesting insights to a number of different research communities within comparative politics or African studies, notably for scholars of civil war, of colonial and African state formation, as well as for methodologists interested in path-dependent processes.

For scholars exploring the causes of civil war onset, the focus on mobilization and counter-mobilization by the state and insurgents offers a causal mechanism linking state capacity and civil war outbreak that has so far been ignored. The focus on mobilizational capacity and its origins in the late colonial period also highlights that weak “opportunities” for insurgency due to weak state capacity and increased grievances have the same roots. Limited popular mobilization and a narrow popular base for the state at independence led to both exclusionary and less effective institutions and growing grievances among excluded ethno-regional and social groups.

Mobilizational capacity as a mechanism is more directly causally related to state capacity and state response to an insurgent challenge than those suggested by other studies. The mechanisms offered so far by Wimmer et al. (2010) and Roessler (2011) focus more on shorter-term competition for power at the summit of the state, with an emphasis on current power constellations and recent shifts in power to control the state. Roessler looks specifically at strategic interactions between elites representing different groups in ruling coalitions. Both approaches make useful claims and have significantly advanced theory and empirical evidence on the role of grievances in the outbreak of civil war. However, they still leave gaps, notably with respect to the mechanisms that link ethnic power competition to the escalation of violence from lower levels to full-fledged civil war (Wimmer et al. 2010) and that allow elites to mobilize support for elite competition to escalate to wider war (Roessler 2011).

This study suggests that even though Cederman, Wimmer et al. criticize that “Much of the recent literature on ethnic conflict and civil wars fails to get the state’s role right” (Cederman et al. 2010, 91), they also fail to offer a fully convincing explanation of what aspects of state capacity play a role in the outbreak of civil war. Ethno-political competition over control of the state is not uncommon in post-colonial states, but power competition does not necessarily imply that that competition is violent nor that it needs to lead to civil war. Their suggested solution, that the mere size of excluded ethno-regional groups predicts civil war outbreak, has limited explanatory power for the case of Guinea, for example, where a government led by a president from a minority group managed to stave off an insurgency that attempted to win support among equally-sized or larger ethnic communities.

Mobilizational capacity as a mechanism that links state capacity and civil war offers a more accurate and versatile explanation that is broadly in line with Cederman et al.'s argument but goes beyond the mere demographic weight of included versus excluded groups in ethno-regionally defined regimes. It suggests that historically constructed power structures – the popular coalition that underpins the regime and institutions of territorial control – matter more than short-term power constellations between ethno-regional groups.

Similarly, to Roessler's question, "*Why do rulers employ ethnic exclusion if it increases the risk of civil war?*" [italics in original] (Roessler 2011, 301), the findings here would answer that ethnic exclusion has a deeper history and rulers' favoring of their core constituency, even if it is a small minority, is historically conditioned rather than the result of an internal security dilemma. It is a rational state-building strategy for leaders whose mobilizational repertoire has been limited by a power constellation between ethno-regional groups established in the late colonial period. They consolidate their power by appealing to their core constituencies and by relying on trusted allies with whom they share kinship ties, ultimately to the determinant of state institutions and their ability to rally broad support for the state in the face of an armed challenge.

My argument is also significantly different from other accounts that have offered insufficient theorizations of the state and state formation and have focused much more on immutable factors such as geography and topography or external factors such as externally imposed borders and colonial institutions as sources of limited state capacity. The account presented here truly takes the internal dynamics of state formation seriously and considers the *longue durée* of state evolution and its impact on recent macro-political and macro-social events. It also offers a useful complement to the assumption that the state has no significant structuring influence on politics and conflict on the

African continent and that conflict between elites and big men and their desire to enrich themselves at any cost truly drives violent conflict and civil war. I do not, however, assume that African states are generally effective and deliver adequate public goods for their citizens. The study recognizes that many African states have been largely ineffective in generating much economic development or in lifting significant numbers of their populations out of poverty. Patrimonial relationships were highly prevalent in the cases studied here, but a mere focus on elite conflicts does not provide the full picture of why Côte d'Ivoire and Sierra Leone experienced civil war and Guinea and Senegal did not with respect to both the broad popular mobilization in Guinea and the relatively successful anti-insurgency mobilization of institutional actors in Guinea and Senegal. African states cannot be entirely discounted, and it is analytically unhelpful to use vague (and dismissive) summary labels such as "failed," "collapsed," (Rotberg 2002), or even "vampire" (Frimpong-Ansah 1991) states. It is important to understand the *sui generis* processes that have shaped states and state institutions on the African continent and be specific about the state's functions and where state institutions and power constellations have a structuring influence on elite interactions and relationships between elites and the population. The findings presented here thus offer insights into which aspects of the state and which institutions might continue to shape political and social behavior and ultimately might be considered to offer some form of state "strength" in a very limited domain.

The argument put forward here adds to a growing literature that suggests that the coalitions and mobilized population groups that support authority structures, and ultimately the state, at founding moments matter a great deal, not only for state formation, for the types of regimes, and for economic development, but also for how resilient those states are in preventing civil war/responding to armed challenges. This conclusion is in line with other research that has emphasized the role of ruling coalitions in state formation and institutional change. For example,

Charrad (2001) has shown that the way tribal groups were affiliated with state authority had a long-term impact on policies and laws toward women's role in society in post-independence Maghreb states. As mentioned earlier, Acemoglu and Robinson (2012), in their widely acclaimed study of the long-term sources of growth and poverty, suggest that whether states are inclusive and based on a broad ruling coalition or exclusive and ruled by a minority is a critical variable in explaining whether states become more or less extractive and are able to generate growth and redistribute wealth. In a recent study on the origins of genocide, Scott Straus (2015) highlights the importance of historically constructed inclusive versus exclusive institutions in the genesis of genocide on the African continent. Similar to the argument made here, he focuses on the historical incentives and constraints that shape official state ideology and define "The primary political community and the main project of the state" (Straus 2015, x), which, in the case of genocide, is an official ideology that excludes certain parts of the population and can lead to escalation of violence and may ultimately produce attempts to eliminate certain groups.

These insights are particularly important if scholars want to offer advice to international policy makers in designing external interventions in "fragile" and post-conflict states to help stabilize them and make them more effective. The findings from this study confirm a growing realization among analysts and policymakers that there are deeper, slow-moving, and hard-to-change constellations of power that underpin state institutions and "governance" arrangements in fragile states and that external intervenors need to think much harder about whether and what kind of change they may be able to effect from the outside with the relatively limited means they have. Reflections by Western donors on the notion of an underlying "political settlement" (DFID 2010) as an important underpinning to state capacity and the realization in donor-funded research that, "Patterns of inclusion and exclusion are central to the stability and resilience of political settlements" (Putzel and

Di John 2012, iv) go in the right direction, although they are far from a mainstream view yet and have not necessarily translated into concrete changes to international interventions (Castillejo 2014).

As a final note, it is important to note that the analysis and theoretical framework presented here do not purport to explain all dynamics of state formation and civil war onset. There might well be other variables and causal channels that affect state's mobilizational capacity or link certain state formation dynamics to large-scale violent conflict in other ways. Nonetheless, the variables and mechanisms suggested here exercise significant causal powers and offer a new dimension in understanding the links between state capacity and civil war. It is also good to keep in mind that the theoretical framework was developed and tested with African civil war and non-civil war cases in mind, although there is no *prima facie* logical reason why it would not apply in other post-colonial countries in other parts of the world. Findings by Taylor and Botea (2008) seem to suggest that it would apply in Asian cases as well, but the causal mechanisms would have to be tested more specifically in other contexts.

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# ANNEXES

Annex I: Map of Sierra Leone (Central Intelligence Agency 2005):

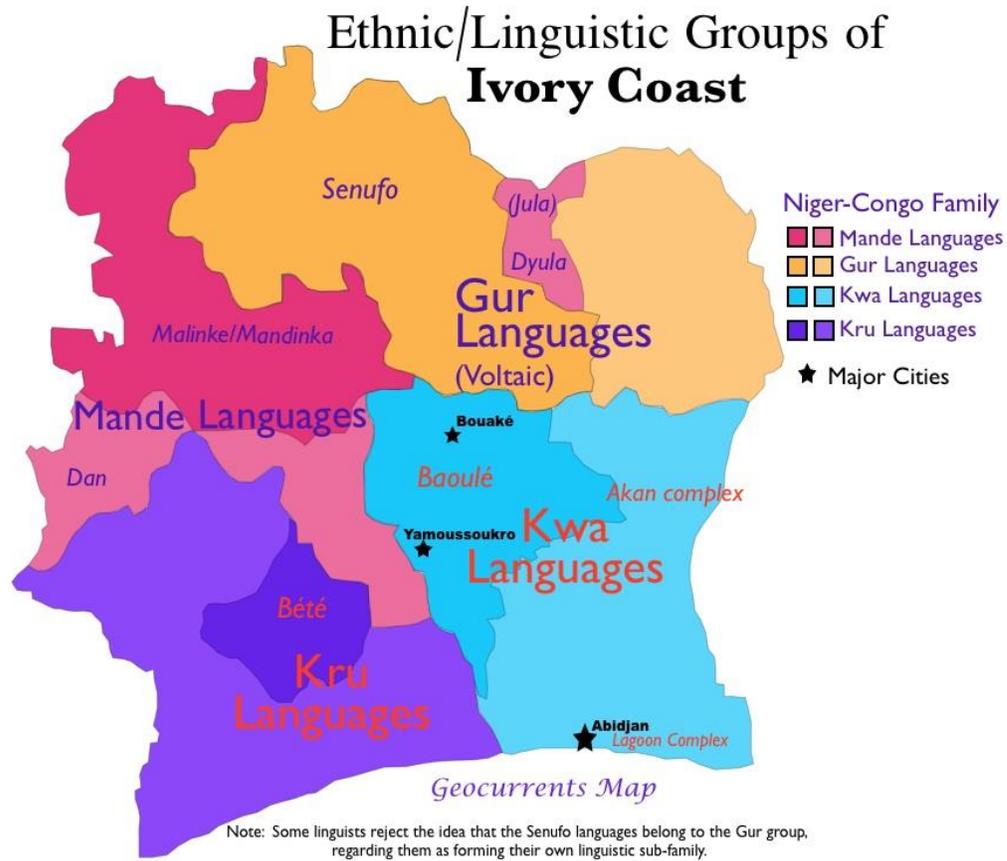


Annex II: Map of Côte d'Ivoire (Central Intelligence Agency 2004):



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Annex III: Ethnic map of Côte d'Ivoire (Lewis 2011):



Annex IV: Map of Guinea (United Nations Department of Field Support 2014):



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**Annex V: Map of Senegal, the Gambia, and Casamance (United Nations Department of Field Support 2004):**



Map No. 4174 Rev. 3 UNITED NATIONS  
January 2004

Department of Peacekeeping Operations  
Cartographic Section