

A study of peacekeeping, peace-enforcement and private military companies in Sierra Leone

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The four military interventions into the conflict in Sierra Leone between 1995 and 2000 met with varying degrees of success. One of the more effective ones was launched by a private military company (PMC) early in the conflict. In the following paper a comparison is made between different aspects of the PMC intervention and the interventions by national military and by multilateral forces from regional and international organisations. The findings are that the interventions of the PMC and national forces were more successful due to their clear peace-enforcing mandate, unitary structure, elite counterinsurgency training, intelligence-gathering capabilities, relationship with the public, incentive to win as efficiently as possible and role as a force multiplier for local forces. The failure of multilateral peacekeeping forces in peace-enforcing roles suggests that small contingents of elite special forces, whether donated unilaterally by governments or hired in a competitive PMC market, are not only likely to be more effective in bringing violent conflict to a halt, but could at the same time be helpful in building the capacity, loyalty and professionalism of local militaries.

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Introduction

Four years into the civil war in Sierra Leone, which began in March 1991, the Revolutionary United Front (RUF) rebel faction continued to gain military ground against the government's small, disorganised and ineffective Republic of Sierra Leone Military Forces (RSLMF). Fearing that the RUF were close to seizing the capital of Freetown, the government of Sierra Leone hired Executive Outcomes (EO), a South Africa-based PMC specialising in the provision of peacekeeping services. In less than two years EO managed to secure the capital, oust the RUF from the peripheral districts of Freetown, stabilise the area around the diamond mines, and destroy the RUF headquarters.

EO's success forced the RUF into a weakened military position, compelling them to negotiate and sign a peace agreement with the government in November 1996, thereby creating the stability necessary for the country to hold democratic elections. The RUF insisted that the elimination of all foreign military presence, implicitly EO, be written into the agreement. Four months after the termination of EO's contract in January 1997, a coup toppled the democratically elected government, the 1996 peace agreement failed and Sierra Leone fell back into a state of increasingly savage civil war. Subsequent interventions were undertaken by the Economic Community of West African States Monitoring Group (ECOMOG), the United Nations Mission in Sierra Leone (UNAMSIL) and the United Kingdom, with varying degrees of success in a war that dragged on until 2002.

In this paper EO's intervention into the conflict in Sierra Leone is examined. A comparison is made between EO's overwhelmingly successful and efficient intervention with the relatively less effective peacekeeping operations of ECOMOG and UNAMSIL and the successful intervention of the UK forces that eventually ended the war. Using the case of Sierra Leone as a laboratory for the examination of military intervention as a science, an attempt is made to determine which factors were responsible for EO's success and whether they were unique to this case or could be reapplied by other international actors to future interventions.

With military success as the dependent variable, the paper assesses the relative impact of five independent variables, namely mandate; role, size and quality of forces; timing; intelligence and hearts and minds; and equipment and tactics. Having isolated the most important variables responsible for EO's success the author then determines whether they were specific to EO as a PMC, in which case the UN or regional organisations may want to (re)consider the outsourcing of peacekeeping missions to PMCs, or if the UN and regional organisations could implement specific changes to their own peacekeeping operations that would make their future interventions as effective as EO had been in Sierra Leone.

History of the country and conflict

Formed as a colony for freed British slaves in 1787, Sierra Leone's natural mineral and diamond wealth, high rates of education, and European-modelled Fourah Bay College made it the envy of the West African colonies. However, after gaining independence from British rule in 1961, the country fell prey to the increasingly corrupt one-party system perpetuated by Siaka Stevens and his hand-picked successor General Joseph Momoh (Bergner 2004). For nearly 30 years all government institutions, including the military, degenerated irreparably and with them the rule of law and the country's economy. As a result, large numbers of unemployed young men began gathering in town centres known as *potes* where they smoked marijuana and discussed politics (Abdullah & Muana 1999).

In the late 1980s a former army colonel turned photographer by the name of Foday Sankoh began to organise these groups of disenfranchised men against the Momoh government into what would become the RUF. Professing a loose ideology of democracy, but motivated primarily by financial gain, Sankoh used his ties with Liberian leader Charles Taylor to arm his followers and provide them with training in guerrilla warfare in Libya (Abdullah & Muana 1999).

In March 1991 the RUF crossed the eastern border into Sierra Leone from Liberia, terrorising civilians and taking over towns in the diamond-rich area of Kono. When the small under-trained forces of the government's RSLMF were unable to repel the RUF, Momoh undertook an intensive recruitment campaign, increasing his forces from 3 000 to 14 000 in the space of a few months. Without training or military experience the augmented RSLMF proved even more incompetent than the original force, and many of its soldiers joined the rebels in the looting of civilian homes for personal profit. These 'sobels' – soldiers by day, rebels by night – often collaborated with the rebels, thereby undermining any hope of the RSLMF regaining military control of the country on behalf of the government (ICG 2001).

Having ousted Momoh from power in a military coup in 1992, 26-year old Valentine Strasser attempted to negotiate a ceasefire with the RUF. This attempt failed despite UN involvement and an offer of amnesty. The RUF continued to gain significant ground throughout Sierra Leone, advancing within 20 km of Freetown in 1995 (Howe 2001:170).

The interventions

Executive Outcomes: March 1995 to January 1996

Capitalising on the flood of cheap and sophisticated weaponry pouring out of the former Soviet Union after the end of the Cold War, and the pool of talented soldiers

made available by the fall of the apartheid regime in South Africa, Eben Barlow created Executive Outcomes, a private military company specialising in ‘the provision of sound military advice, training and logistical support’ (EO homepage). Drawing on his own experience as a counterintelligence specialist in the South African Defence Force (SADF), Barlow assembled a database of his former colleagues and marketed EO to those governments in Africa who found themselves incapable of fending off rebel aggression after the US and Russia had lost their Cold War strategic interest in supporting their regimes.

Having read in *Newsweek* about the success that EO had been able to achieve for the government of Angola, Strasser negotiated an initial US\$15 million contract with EO to assist in re-establishing government control over the economically significant parts of the country, namely an unstable Freetown and the diamond mines in the east. With most of its troops still in Angola, EO was able to deploy that same month and in just over a week on the ground they managed to expel the RUF from Freetown, pushing them 126 km back into the jungle. EO soldiers are reported to have called fighting the RUF ‘child’s play’ after defeating a stronger guerrilla force in Angola. Supplementary contracts followed bringing the total costs to \$35 million over the course of 21 months (Singer 2003:112–113).

When the government capped the number of RSLMF soldiers EO was permitted to train at 150, perhaps fearing the possibility of another military coup, EO began organising and training the Kamajors, local hunters who had formed groups to defend their villages when the government proved incapable of doing so. Renaming them the Civil Defence Forces (CDF), EO served as a force multiplier for the Kamajors and leveraged their knowledge of the local jungle, which surpassed that of the more urban RUF, as well as the intelligence they were able to gather from the local population. Using counterinsurgency tactics they had employed under the SADF, EO efficiently secured Freetown, regained control of the diamond mines, destroyed the RUF headquarters and cleared areas of RUF occupation in a series of five major offensives from May 1995 to October 1996.

EO’s intervention weakened the RUF’s military position, compelling Sankoh to negotiate and sign a peace agreement with the government in November 1996. It further created the stability necessary for the country to hold democratic elections at which Joseph Kabbah was elected. However, facing political pressure from the international community and at Sankoh’s request, a clause was written into the peace agreement dictating that all foreign militaries had to leave the country. Within 100 days of EO’s leaving, as their own intelligence had predicted, a military junta known as the Armed Forces Revolutionary Council (AFRC) staged a coup and allied itself with the RUF, who then proceeded to oust Kabbah and retake all of the territory that it had lost to the EO-reinforced CDF.

ECOMOG: June 1997 to May 2000

While RUF aggression against civilians had always been gratuitous and deplorable, it rose to unprecedented levels of abuse and butchery after EO's departure. In response to Kabbah's campaign slogan 'the future is in your hands', the RUF began their signature campaign of hacking off the limbs of men, women and children, initially dumping them in bags at the doorstep of government buildings. Accounts such as that of one man running through his village waving the bloody stumps of his newly severed arms, screaming for the rebels to just kill him, and their alternative response of breaking both sides of his jaw with a hammer to silence him, serve as examples of the RUF's gratuitous cruelty against civilians that included terror, degradation, maiming, murder, cannibalism and wide-scale sexual abuse (Bergner 2004).

Despite these atrocities, the conflict garnered little attention in the Western media because of its competition for airtime with the ongoing situation in the Balkans. Already heavily invested in its peacekeeping operations in the Balkans, and without a member of the Security Council lobbying on Sierra Leone's behalf, the UN remained unresponsive to the ousted Kabbah regime's cries for help. It was at this point that the leadership of the Economic Community of West African States (ECOWAS) took matters into its own hands.

ECOWAS had formed a regional peacekeeping force known as the Economic Community of West African States Monitoring Group (ECOMOG) to respond to the conflict in Liberia in 1990, and redeployed its ECOMOG troops from Liberia to Sierra Leone in June 1997 with the goal of liberating Freetown from the RUF and restoring the Kabbah government to power. With its initial shelling of Freetown ECOMOG managed to cause more harm to civilians than to the RUF, and for the next six months failed to force any change in the *status quo*. In early 1998 Kabbah signed a contract with Sandline International, a PMC loosely affiliated with EO, to tactically assist and advise the ECOMOG forces (Singer 2003:115). Going on the offensive, ECOMOG was able to quickly oust the AFRC/RUF from their stronghold in Freetown, and Kabbah was led back into the capital at the side of Nigerian President Abacha (Howe 2001:166). Subsequent operations in the mining districts proved less successful and resulted in a stalemate between the RUF and ECOMOG.

In January 1999 the RUF launched an assault on Freetown known as 'Operation no living thing' in which civilians were massacred and houses burned throughout the capital. In response ECOMOG launched an attack of its own but, finding it hard to distinguish AFRC/RUF soldiers and supporters from ordinary civilians, the undisciplined Nigerian soldiers 'tortured, raped and summarily executed [anyone] remotely suspected of being involved with the AFRC/RUF' (Campbell 2002:89). This went on for several weeks and resulted in the eventual victory of ECOMOG but also in the death of 3 000 to 6 000

people (many of them civilians), the displacement of some 150 000 residents of Freetown, and the reported abduction of over 2 000 children who were forced into military service by the RUF (UN 1999b:6).

With a newly elected administration in Nigeria unwilling to shoulder the rising costs of the intervention, and with the signing of a new peace agreement negotiated in Lomé, Togo in July 1999, ECOMOG timed and coordinated its departure over the course of the next nine months with the transition of the UN's heretofore small observer mission to a full-scale peacekeeping operation, to be known as the United Nations Mission in Sierra Leone (UNAMSIL).

UNAMSIL: October 1999 to December 2005

In addition to granting blanket amnesty to the RUF soldiers and ceding the position of vice president of Sierra Leone to their leader, Foday Sankoh (this despite the unconscionable terror for which they were responsible), the Lomé Agreement called for the UN to deploy a neutral peacekeeping force of 6 000 to oversee the disarmament, demobilisation and reintegration (DDR) of an estimated 33 000 to 40 000 combatants (UN 1999a:3).

The UN deployed its forces in October 1999 and managed to keep a tense and volatile peace. However, rather than making progress in the disarmament of combatants, there were several incidents in which UN troops were targeted and forcibly disarmed themselves by both the RUF and former RSLMF (UN 2000a:4). In February 2000 the decision was made to increase the UN forces to 11 000 to compensate for the gradual withdrawal of ECOMOG. When the last of the ECOMOG troops left the country in early May 2000, additional pressure was put on the RUF to actually disarm, and the UN attempted to open its first DDR centre in the diamond district of Koidu. In response, the RUF killed seven peacekeepers and took 500 more peacekeepers hostage, stealing their weapons and vehicles and effectively ending the Lomé Agreement.

United Kingdom: May 2000 to present

While the UN reports that British paratroopers were deployed to Sierra Leone in May in order to evacuate UK nationals from Freetown, thereby coincidentally bolstering the UNAMSIL mission, the British are widely perceived as intervening in the conflict to bail out the hapless UN mission (UN 2000b:10, Campbell 2002). Operationally separate from UNAMSIL, these 650 special forces soldiers aided the new Sierra Leone Army (SLA) in defending Freetown from the RUF and established a training programme for SLA soldiers. They used significantly greater force against antigovernment forces, launching attacks against the West Side Boys (a splinter faction of the AFRC). As UN contingents from India and Jordan began pulling out their troops due to political in-

fighting at UN headquarters in New York and because of the heightened danger of the mission, the UK intervention became the key factor in altering the military balance in favour of the government and encouraging the RUF to sign a ceasefire agreement in Abuja in November 2000 (ICG 2001).

A few days after the agreement was signed, the British staged military exercises throughout Freetown in order to, as one officer noted, 'remind the leadership of the RUF of the need to honour that agreement' (Reno 2001:224). According to Findlay (2003:309) 'the continued British military presence acted as a deterrent, a confidence building measure and a source of moral and actual support to UNAMSIL and government forces'.

The British commitment to maintaining its presence and training programme in Sierra Leone in conjunction with UNAMSIL is thought to have directly contributed to the gradual decline in violence and the relative peace and stability that have held since 2002.

Assessing the independent variables

Mandate

First of all, it is important to distinguish between the mandates of peacekeeping and peace-enforcement in assessing the success and failure of each intervention. In theory, peace-enforcement is the creation of peace through the military support of one side of a conflict in order to force a victory or a stalemate that makes it rational for the opposing side to cease fighting militarily and to begin negotiating diplomatically. Successful peace-enforcement creates the conditions for peacekeeping. Peacekeepers, on the other hand, are a neutral force sent in to maintain a peace that has already been established, tentative though it may be, so that the theatre of conflict between warring parties can switch from the battlefield to the boardroom. Successful peacekeeping holds the balance of power on the ground constant so that a negotiated political solution can be reached and institutionalised, based on that balance.

EO entered the conflict in Sierra Leone with a peace-enforcing mandate. They came in clearly on the side of the government with the objectives of securing Freetown; regaining control of the diamond mines in the Koidu district; destroying the RUF's headquarters; and clearing any remaining areas of RUF occupation (Shearer 1998:54). Their mandate was to act as force multipliers, devising and leading operations while using the local Kamajors as soldiers to carry them out. In this way EO served as the brain of the operations and the Kamajors as the main military body. They did not deviate from their enforcement mandate and successfully forced the RUF into a weakened military position. At the point when Sankoh lost control of the diamond mines, the primary source of wealth fuelling his rebellion, he stood to gain more from negotiating than

fighting. He signed a peace agreement based on the position he was forced into by the RUF's military strength relative to that of the EO-enforced Kamajors.

When EO left, however, this position changed and with it Sankoh's incentive to keep a peace based on an outdated balance of power. The RUF was once again militarily strong enough relative to the pro-government forces to retake the diamond mines, and that is exactly what they did. For the peace to have held, EO would have had to have stayed, or troops with equal military strength intervening on the side of the government would have had to replace them so quickly that the RUF would not have been able to capitalise on the power vacuum created by the transition. A peacekeeping force such as ECOMOG could have intervened in addition to EO. However, ECOMOG as a neutral *peacekeeping* force could not have replaced EO, whose biased role as *peace-enforcers* was propping up the pro-government forces and in turn constraining the RUF's action.

The blurring of the theoretical distinction on the ground between peacekeeping and peace-enforcement may have contributed to the failure of the ECOMOG and UNAMSIL interventions. Originally entering with a mandate to keep the peace established by EO, Nigeria unilaterally changed ECOMOG's mandate to peace-enforcement after the AFRC ousted Kabbah and aligned themselves with the RUF (Howe 2001:168). With the change in mandate ECOMOG troop levels were increased from 4 000 to 11 000, based on the rationale that more troops translate to more effective peace-enforcement. However, it was not until Sandline International entered, with a clear mandate of peace-enforcement and to serve as force multipliers for ECOMOG, that the mission successfully achieved its goal of driving the AFRC/RUF forces from Freetown and restoring Kabbah (Singer 2003:115). Due to political considerations, Sandline International was forced to leave Sierra Leone. The primarily Nigerian ECOMOG forces then returned to their peacekeeping mandate, but were naturally perceived as enemy rather than neutral forces by the RUF.

The RUF's perception of Nigerian troops as a hostile force became increasingly important as they were integrated into the UNAMSIL peacekeeping mission which was mandated to keep the peace dictated by the Lomé Agreement and assist in a DDR plan. This perception of bias extended to all UNAMSIL troops, making the RUF reluctant to disarm and at times provoking them to attack. Furthermore, while the UNAMSIL peacekeeping mandate fell under Chapter VII peace-enforcement in order to 'ensure the security and freedom of movement of its personnel', it did not foresee combat of this sort and as a result troops were 'not equipped or given logistical support to engage in sustained combat' (Reno 2001:224). This confusion of peacekeeping and peace-enforcing mandates, sometimes referred to as 'robust peacekeeping', seems to have directly contributed to widespread confusion on the interpretation of the rules of engagement among the different troop-contributing countries, and contributed to the abject failure of the mission (Findlay 2003:303).

Role, size and quality of forces

The minimum of 80 and maximum of 350 soldiers working for EO in Sierra Leone were recruited from a pool of 2 000 soldiers who had formerly worked for elite units in the SADF, including the 32nd battalion, which had been one of the most elite strike forces in South Africa's bush wars with the highest kill ratio of any SADF unit, the Civil Cooperation Bureau, a covert assassination and espionage unit, and Koevoet, a police counterinsurgency unit (Singer 2003:103). They had the advantage of extensive training and experience in counterinsurgency at an elite level, as well as having worked together before and all speaking the same native language. This uniformity to their background and elite skills aided in their ability to anticipate each other and display a degree of flexibility in their operations that was helpful in keeping the RUF off balance (Singer 2003:116).

In contrast, UNAMSIL's total complement of 15 000 soldiers were drawn from 24 different nations (mostly Ghana, India, Jordan, Kenya, Nigeria and other areas of the developing world), with different working styles, work ethics and native tongues and little training and experience (Findlay 2003:297). The most elite troops were a battalion of 500 lightly armed Kenyans who, when outnumbered, surrendered their weapons to the RUF (Ashby 2002:109). Similarly, although 90 per cent of the ECOMOG forces were Nigerian, there were still communication problems as well as significant divergence in state interests between the anglophone and francophone soldiers, particularly at the higher levels in the chain of command, which hampered efficient and unified defensive responses to the RUF (Umaru 2003). Moreover, the ECOMOG forces had no counterinsurgency training, and because of equipment shortages they were not inclined to risk their helicopters or planes in the ground-air operations that had proven so successful for EO (Howe 2001:198).

More comparable to the EO forces in size and training, the UK contingent consisted of a small number of elite forces including the 1st parachute group and 'an Amphibious Readiness Group comprising 42 Commando Royal Marines, a combat air group of 13 Harrier jump-jets, two frigate gunships with a logistics support group of three Royal Fleet Auxiliaries, and support helicopters' (Findlay 2003:301). Thus, in the EO-supported Kamajor/CDF, Sandline International-supported ECOMOG and the UK-supported UNAMSIL operations, small units with superior skills acting as force multipliers were the most effective agents for carrying out the task of peace-enforcement.

Timing

At the time of the EO intervention the RUF is thought to have been composed of only a few thousand rebels, mostly 'situational opportunists' and only an estimated 350 'hard-core' fighters (Howe 2001:200). After EO's departure the RUF regained control over the diamond mines, which were crucial for funding and fortifying their military enterprise,

and their numbers increased to upwards of 35 000 soldiers, including an estimated 4 500 child soldiers, as of 2001 (Campbell 2002:55). So it is fair to conclude that EO had an advantage in intervening early into the conflict, since RUF forces increased and gained experience over time.

Moreover, the fracturing of the RSLMF and the rise of the CDF created additional anti-government forces so that forces who intervened later faced not only a larger, more experienced RUF but also the splintered RSLMF faction of the AFRC/West Side Boys, who staged the coup in 1998, and the Kamajors/CDF, who acted as an independent force after EO left. According to Aning (2001) such factions have no rights under the law and no sovereign territory to which they can retreat, and face both physical and political extinction as a consequence of defeat. As a result such groups fight to the end and must either be eliminated or subsumed into the government forces, which complicated the task of outside forces after EO's departure. Furthermore, as Reno (2001:225) aptly notes, the defeat of the multiple factions would have entailed 'attacks on the families and homes of fighters and the use of force at levels prohibited by the conventions of warfare and international agreements'.

The conclusion is therefore that as time went on and the war progressed, the RUF grew increasingly stronger, the government grew weaker, and new factions emerged with unclear and shifting alliances to complicate intervention. Because it entered the conflict closer to its inception, EO had an unquestionable advantage over the ECOMOG, UNAMSIL and UK forces that entered later.

However, the success of the UK intervention, while not as dramatically efficient as that of EO, could be considered equally good given the military circumstances. The increased number of combatants and multiplicity of factions, in addition to the restrictions put on the British government by international law and norms, required that the UK make a 'lengthy commitment' to the conflict (Reno 2001:225). As a result, the British peace-enforcement troops have been able to work in conjunction with the UNAMSIL peacekeeping troops and the Sierra Leone Army to see the conflict through to its end in a way that EO, ECOMOG and the Kamajors/CDF were not able to coordinate as similarly positioned forces.

Intelligence and hearts and minds

The RUF, with their lack of coherent ideology and brutal terror tactics against the populace, had no support from the civilians of Sierra Leone. EO was able to leverage this against their adversary by winning the hearts and minds of the local population, which resulted in the support of the Kamajors and access to intelligence on the ground. Not only did the Kamajors serve as scouts, but EO also used locals to conduct counter-intelligence operations at the same time that EO was effectively employing aerial reconnaissance and radio intercepts. In this way EO 'built a profile of enemy operations, which were then broken

down through targeted air strikes and helicopter assaults' (Singer 2003:116). Conversely, all EO soldiers communicated in Afrikaans which prevented the RUF from understanding any communications they were able to intercept (Howe 2001:195). The UK forces, too, benefited from the warm welcome they received from the general population of Sierra Leone through the information they were able to garner with this support. Further benefit was gained from the 'invaluable intelligence information on rebel troop movements collected by Harriers situated on an aircraft carrier positioned off the coast' (Findlay 2003:301).

In contrast, UN Secretary-General Kofi Annan said, 'We were completely sleeping on the issue of intelligence' with reference to the surprise attack in which the RUF took more than 500 UNAMSIL peacekeepers hostage (Findlay 2003). UNAMSIL headquarters were unable to obtain information on the status or whereabouts of the soldiers during the whole period of their detention, highlighting their lack of access to information (Findlay 2003:302). Apart from deficiencies as fundamental as the lack of basic topographic maps and encrypted radio channels, ECOMOG also suffered from a lack of intelligence that hurt their tactical capabilities and defence. This was further exacerbated by ECOMOG's lack of local military allies and mixed reputation among the civilian population (due to their frequent violation of human rights) (Howe 2001).

Equipment and tactics

EO's significant advantage over other interveners seems to have been its relentlessly offensive strategy against the RUF and its ability to innovate and employ offensive tactics that kept the RUF off balance, so they seldom had to react or act defensively. According to Singer (2003:113), 'EO strategy mandated the constant pursuit and punishment of the rebel force. It also made use of air and artillery assets and sought to engage the RUF in stand-up battles'. EO had no real weapons advantage over the RUF, as all of its equipment was purchased on the open market, mainly from the same ex-Soviet sources (Shearer 1998:53). Most essential to the EO campaign was the use of 'close air support of ground units' in which ex-Soviet Mi-8, Mi-17 and Mi-24 helicopters were deployed (Howe 2001:197). Moreover, EO introduced new technology into the battles, such as night-vision equipment, napalm, fuel air explosives and cluster bombs. They also used tactics not found in books in a way that showed their mastery of counterinsurgency tactics and an ability to think on the ground (Singer 2003).

In contrast, 'ECOMOG's ill-equipped peacekeepers lacked not only helicopters and gunships, but also sufficient trucks, tanks, ambulances, communication equipment, spare parts, uniforms, medical supplies and office equipment' (Adebajo 2002:90). The imprecision of the UNAMSIL mandate resulted in it being inadequately armed for the task. The fact that 'more than half the troops arrived without the required weapons, communications equipment or logistical support' contributed to the lack of UNAMSIL

capabilities. However, when combined with the logistical, planning and ground support of the British forces, UNAMSIL was able to partially redeem itself with the successful launching of the operation that freed its captive soldiers (Findlay 2003).

Incentive structure

In a PMC like EO, soldiers are paid well. For the intervention in Sierra Leone, salaries ranged from US\$2 000 to US\$13 000 per month depending on experience and expertise. EO also provided full medical and life insurance for its employees. As in any contract-based work, firms want to build their reputations in order to gain contracts, and soldiers seek to build their resumes so that they will continue to be hired. Thus, as long as there is adequate competition in the industry, with both firms and individual soldiers competing amongst themselves for contracts, the successful completion of the intervention rather than prolonging the war is the goal. The small community of private soldiers ensures monitoring and feedback on performance, and the soldier risks his life to win in battle because by not doing so he risks his livelihood and jeopardises his source of income.

This is in stark contrast to the case of the soldier fighting on behalf of a multilateral organisation in which the incentive to risk his life is dependent on what Howe (2001) refers to as the 'professionalism' of his own national military. A soldier in a professional military organisation has such an entrenched mindset, discipline and chain of command that he is no longer a rational actor maximising economic profit but is psychologically impelled to do his best. His incentive to die for his country, if necessary, is a result of the training that has forced him to internalise a collective ethic. In an unprofessional military in which soldiers still act as individual profit-maximisers, they have no incentive to put themselves at risk on behalf of the collective security. In the account of his experience in UNAMSIL, UK soldier Phil Ashby (2002:111) confirms this, stating of UNAMSIL troops: 'They were not prepared to stick their necks out in any way or risk doing anything to disrupt their daily routine of sleeping and watching TV. They were happy just to sit back and collect their \$100 UN pay every day.' According to the ICG (2001), many UNAMSIL soldiers considered themselves under no obligation to rescue other contingents' soldiers'.

Notably, soldiers from unprofessional militaries are paid the same high UN wage whether the mission succeeds or fails and whether they personally contribute or not. Moreover, at the political level, developing countries often repeatedly donate contingents to UN missions in order to gain equipment that their soldiers bring home. Because of the lack of political will by developed countries to contribute troops, the same developing countries are asked back time and again regardless of performance. In this sense troops sent from unprofessional militaries could be viewed as the real 'mercenaries' in present-day military interventions, while an open and competitive market for PMCs in which soldiers compete for contracts are likely to be far more reliable, skilled and effective.

Summary and conclusions

In summary, the advantages EO had over ECOMOG and UNAMSIL in intervening in the conflict in Sierra Leone were its clear peace-enforcing mandate, its unitary structure, the elite training and experience of its forces in counterinsurgency techniques, its intelligence gathering capabilities and positive relationship with the public, its role as a force multiplier and user of local forces, as well as the financial and professional incentives for its soldiers and headquarters to win against the RUF as quickly and efficiently as possible. ECOMOG and UNAMSIL in particular suffered from unclear and at times inappropriate mandates, inefficient multilateral structures that led to communications problems and conflict of interests within the headquarters, insufficiently trained and inexperienced troops as well as a lack of incentive for their soldiers to perform.

In contrasting the small elite force of the PMC with the large forces of regional and international organisations, what is clear are first the definite advantages of sending a small unitary elite force into a conflict in a peace-enforcement role; second the obvious inadequacies of large multilateral forces in peace-enforcement roles; third the potential for failure of large multilateral forces in peacekeeping roles under complicated political circumstances and without the retention of the peace-enforcer; and last the potential inherent in the deployment of a small, elite force in a peacekeeping role and the utilisation of the local population as peacekeepers under it. From the evidence the tentative conclusion is that in a Chapter VII mission, and potentially in a Chapter VI mission as well, a small unitary elite force that trains and directs local forces at the mass level may be most effective and efficient in carrying out its mandate. Therefore, it is possible that in the case of intervention less is more and that the traditional peacekeeping concept of large multilateral deployments should be reconsidered altogether.

Local citizens fighting to protect the security of their own villages, cities and states from domestic and foreign threats is the model on which the strong states of Western Europe were founded. Thus, in view of the problems of a lack of military professionalism, widespread unemployment, violent conflict and weak states currently plaguing much of Africa, it makes sense to research ways of redistributing the sizeable labour force into the business of state building through national defence. It makes much less sense to deploy tens of thousands of foreign soldiers under the rubric of regional and international organisations to do the jobs that would otherwise contribute to the promotion of local allegiance to, investment in, and ownership of the currently precarious states in Africa. Rather than paying exorbitant UN salaries to foreign troops, peacekeeping funds could be diverted to the payment of fair wages to local African soldiers, incentivising their participation in the state security system. Ideally, the training of local forces in a Chapter VII mission could produce a professional military, while a Chapter VI mission could in turn contribute to the construction of a professional police force for the state in question.

Finally, in comparing the successful EO and UK interventions, it was clear that EO's success was not specific to its role as a PMC and could be duplicated by a national army. The key difference between these two types of forces lay in the incentive structure of the soldiers to fight and the military organisations to complete their mission. Thus, as long as the market for PMCs remains open and competitive, a single elite force from a PMC and from a national contingent is likely to differ only in the political and financial viability of sending either one to undertake and complete the mission. In their present role as 'mercenaries', PMCs are viewed by the international community as an unattractive option. However, if nations with professional militaries are unwilling to commit elite units to interventions, the bolstering and training of local militaries by PMCs may be the best available alternative.

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