

US–Guinea relations during the rise and fall of Charles Taylor

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ABSTRACT

The Liberian civil war was the major issue in US–Guinea relations between 1990 and 2003. During the first half of this period, the US sought with limited success to secure Guinea’s cooperation in finding a diplomatic solution. President Conté viewed Charles Taylor as Guinea’s implacable enemy and authorised arms support for anti-Taylor factions, while the US pressed for a negotiated peace. The Guinean leader’s negative reaction to US criticism of the flawed 1993 presidential elections halted most dialogue on Liberia for the next two years. When Taylor continued supporting civil war in Sierra Leone after 1997, and fighters allied to him assaulted Guinea border posts in 1999, the US strengthened its engagement with Guinea. Providing military training and non-lethal equipment, it sought to counter the threat that Guinea would succumb to the destabilisation which had afflicted Liberia and Sierra Leone. The US appears positioned to play a positive role in Guinea’s political and economic transition after the departure from the scene of the seriously ill Guinean president.

INTRODUCTION

During the past 15 years, Guinea has teetered on the edge of the West African maelstrom centred in Liberia. It has not yet become a failed state, although its transition to democratic politics halted abruptly in 1993. The turmoil in Liberia imposed pressures on Guinea’s stability, and was perceived by Guinea’s leadership as a challenge to its survival. This article seeks to analyse the evolution and quality of US engagement with Guinea during the course of the civil war in its neighbour country. US diplomacy in Guinea promoted democratisation and economic reform, but for most of the period concentrated with limited success on securing Guinea’s cooperation in finding a peaceful solution for Liberia. US diplomatic engagement with Guinea strengthened during the course of the Liberian conflict, particularly after 1997, when Liberian President Charles Taylor

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intensified his support for the RUF rebellion in Sierra Leone. US policy aimed at countering the threat that political turmoil would envelop the third Mano River Union state.¹ The author was a direct participant in US diplomatic efforts during the first half of the period, as US ambassador to Guinea 1990–93 and special presidential envoy for Liberia 1995–96.²

US–GUINEA RELATIONS DURING THE SÉKOU TOURÉ ERA

When Guinea became the first francophone Africa state to reach independence in 1958, the US scarcely noticed, until its dramatic break with France set the Soviet government in motion. The French government had considered Guinea its most promising colonial investment in West Africa. Its extensive bauxite deposits would be confirmed as the largest in the world, and large iron ore deposits near Mt. Nimba had also come to the attention of colonial authorities. High rainfall and multiple river systems underlined agricultural potential in bananas, vegetables, coffee and rubber (Lewin 1984: 45). With the introduction of universal suffrage in France's West African colonies, Ahmed Sekou Touré swept to power at the head of his *Parti démocratique de Guinée* (PDG). He effectively mobilised Guinea to vote a solitary *non* against de Gaulle's proposed constitution incorporating self-government – but not independence – for French territories within a French Community. Guinea's defiance in that referendum led to immediate independence, and a French decision to cut off all aid and even to tear out much of the country's portable infrastructure. The Soviets quickly offered aid and technicians. By 1961 more than a thousand Soviet bloc technicians were in Guinea to manage a proffered \$100 million aid package.

Soviet offers of aid and diplomatic support after the break with France caught the attention of the United States, which moved quickly to establish diplomatic relations. America's first three ambassadors to Guinea were non-career diplomats, evidence of special White House interest in the country.³ The Kennedy Administration, in particular, was anxious to compete with the Soviets for influence. In 1961 the US launched a modest economic assistance effort, complemented by a Peace Corps programme.⁴

The political unity of Guinea at independence, its isolation from the other French colonies, the absence of an entrenched educated political elite, and the political skills of Sekou Touré facilitated creation of an autocratic state with a strong national identity, a stagnant economy and a radically independent foreign policy (Osborne 2003: 9). Touré's

governance was characterised by sharp denunciation of dissidents (and perceived dissidents) as 'enemies of the nation' and their imprisonment and frequent execution at the notorious Camp Boiro in Conakry. He also kept the army budget-starved and ill-equipped, relying heavily on civilian militias manning internal checkpoints to avoid the military coups that swept across West Africa beginning in 1966. The greatest crisis of his rule came in the Portuguese invasion of Conakry in November 1970, which liberated Portuguese prisoners transferred to Conakry by rebels in Guinea-Bissau, but failed to either destroy the Bissau military high command or overturn its ally, the Guinean government. The civilian militias were important in forcing Portuguese withdrawal. Touré, a Malinke, accused Peulh oppositionists of being a fifth column in the invasion. He executed some and placed many other prominent Peulhs in prison.⁵

US influence rose and fell with the flow of international events and internal Guinean developments. Touré backed the US in the Cuban missile crisis of 1962, but attacked Washington as complicit in the fall of fellow radical Kwame Nkrumah in Ghana in 1966.⁶ In the wake of the Portuguese attack on Conakry in 1970, Touré focused his denunciations on Portugal, France, West Germany, Côte d'Ivoire and Senegal, and kept largely silent about the US.

Touré's harsh application of 'African socialist' economic policies forestalled economic growth and destroyed the domestic private sector. Guinea survived economically by permitting large foreign mining firms to set up enclaves for the export of bauxite, with a large government ownership stake. The Guinean government accepted a proposal from Harvey Aluminum (US) to establish a mining operation at Sangaredi to include a 49% government share. That investment evolved into *Compagnie de Bauxites de Guinée*, the largest single bauxite mining operation in the world, now managed jointly by ALCOA and ALCAN.⁷ These mining enclaves, which also included a French joint venture at Fria and a Soviet mine in Kindia, provided steady foreign exchange reserves, but few jobs and no spin-off for wider creation of wealth.⁸

By the 1970s the US had lost interest in Guinea; it was less worried about Soviet influence and put off by Touré's meteoric personality, poor human rights record, and lack of interest in economic growth. It maintained a small Embassy and modest aid programme, and kept an eye on the important CBG investment. After 1975, Sékou Touré gradually reconciled with Germany, France, Côte d'Ivoire and Senegal, but human rights violations and economic stagnation kept Guinea isolated and in ill repute until his death at a Cleveland, Ohio, hospital in April 1984.

Notably, Vice President George Bush headed the US delegation at Sekou Touré's funeral in Conakry.

THE SECOND REPUBLIC AND ITS RELATIONSHIP WITH THE US

Within a week of Touré's death, the Guinean military, taking advantage of a split in the successor PDG government, seized power in the name of the Military Committee of National Recovery (CMRN). The CMRN was headed by Lt. Col. – soon to be General – Lansana Conté from the coastal Soussou ethnic group. The CMRN abolished the constitution, proscribed the PDG and other political parties, and pronounced the Second Republic. All political prisoners were released, Camp Boiro was closed, and protection of human rights announced as a government objective. The initial political apparatus included a prime minister, Col. Diarra Traoré, a key figure in the military coup, and a mixed cabinet of military officers and civilians. Difficulties arose between Conté and Traoré, a Malinke like Sekou Touré. In December 1984, the post of prime minister was abolished and changes made in the cabinet. Seven months later Traoré failed in an attempt to overthrow his rival and was executed, along with other senior Malinke officers, leaving Conté in full charge.

At the end of 1985, sweeping economic reforms were announced. The *ylla* was devalued by 97%, and, renamed the Guinea franc, was subjected to a controlled float. Exchange controls were virtually eliminated and import licensing abandoned. Farmers were permitted to sell their own produce and realise the full profits of their labour. Almost 100 state-owned corporations were abolished or privatised. The Guinean government solicited the support of the IMF, the World Bank and major donors. Under World Bank tutelage, a programme to reduce the civil service from 100,000 to 50,000 was announced.

The advent of the Second Republic, highlighting improved human rights and economic reform, stirred Washington's hopes for a more positive relationship. US economic assistance rose from \$6.6 million in 1984 to \$43 million in 1991. The USAID mission was strengthened, and projects were launched in the fields of primary education and health. The Peace Corps programme was resumed. There was virtually no military assistance during the Sekou Touré period, but with the inauguration of the Second Republic, the US began to provide limited assistance to the Guinean navy under the aegis of a regional programme called African Coastal Security (ACS). The ACS programme, designed to assist African coastal states to protect their fisheries and offshore economic zones, paid for a \$4 million floating dry dock for the Port of Conakry, two patrol boats and two

speed boats, plus some radio equipment. In 1988 Conté paid a visit to Washington DC and was received by President Ronald Reagan (Reagan website). That was to be the last high-level meeting between the two governments for more than ten years.

In contrast to his economic policy, Conté proved in no hurry to map out a constitutional course, perhaps inhibited by the attempted Malinke putsch. It was not until 1988, four years after his assumption of power, that he announced his intention to confer power on a civilian government, and not until the following year that he announced a programme of democratisation. He picked a constitutional commission from a representative group of civilians chaired by his foreign minister, a military officer, and gave it a year to come up with a constitution. The Fundamental Law, overwhelmingly approved by national referendum at the end of 1990, established strong presidential powers and envisaged a five-year transition to elections. In January 1991 Conté created a Transitional Council for National Recovery (CTRN) to guide the country to electoral democracy. This Council, two-thirds civilian and each member named by the president, was mandated to draft implementing legislation, including an electoral code, a charter for political parties, and a press code. The legislation was drafted and promulgated at the end of 1991. Political parties were permitted to organise in 1992, and elections moved up to the end of 1993. Lansana Conté made no initial public statement about his plans, but was widely expected to run for president.

The United States provided support for the democratisation process, and encouraged the Guinean government to move forward with the assembly of the basic building blocks for a democratic constitutional order.⁹ In late 1991 the US and Canadian governments financed, under the auspices of the International Foundation for Electoral Systems (IFES), the consultancy of a legal expert who advised the Transitional Council on the basic laws governing elections, political parties and the media. The consultant criticised the tendency in Guinean law to 'put brakes on [the] implementation of democracy', stating flatly that Guinea had 'created a limited form of democracy', but that 'the [new] system leaves room for growth and evolution'.¹⁰ The following year the United States funded the visit of two IFES experts to provide recommendations on the organisation of a system for free and fair elections of the president and National Assembly. The second consultancy concluded that Guinea was 'on its way to democratization with energy and competence', but criticised the key legislative pillars as 'lack[ing] the needed balance between control and freedom' (IFES 1992: 44). The US consultants were warmly received by the Guinean government, but their major recommendations had a limited

impact.¹¹ The CTRN rejected the proposal for an independent administrator of elections. It also rebuffed a recommendation that political parties violating the code norms be fined, rather than suspended or dissolved, with prison terms imposed on their leaders. The Guinean authorities in early 1992 proposed that donor countries assume the cost of most of the 1993 electoral process, estimated at \$10.7 million. The French pledged about \$2 million, but the US, wary of funding an electoral process that might prove undemocratic, confined its support to discrete projects of minimal cost.¹² The International Republican Institute led a symposium to assist political party leaders in overcoming organisational problems and publicising their political platforms. The reaction of the Guinean government to US recommendations on democracy was a warning sign of future difficulties.

DOING DIPLOMACY WITH GUINEA

During the 1990–2003 period, the major issues in the US–Guinean relationship were cooperation in efforts to end the Liberia and derivative Sierra Leone civil wars and, secondarily, promoting political and economic reform. In 1994 and 1995, problems over the presidential elections tended to overshadow the Liberia problem in the bilateral relationship. For the rest of the period, the Liberia problem took priority.

Before getting into the specifics of US diplomacy related to the Liberian conflict, it is instructive to explore the general nature of US diplomacy with a small state, and to indicate the singular nature of interaction with Guinea on foreign affairs. The most important modes of American diplomacy with a small state are:

- dialogue through the US ambassador with key ministers (foreign affairs, defence, finance and interior) and with other party and government influentials;¹³
- dialogue with the head of state through the US ambassador, visits by senior US officials, an official invitation to Washington, and possibly *in extremis* a phone call from the US president.

In the case of Guinea, effective diplomacy has required recognition that Lansana Conté is the only important actor on significant issues. What kind of a leader is Conté and how does that affect doing diplomatic business with him? He views himself as a soldier and farmer, close to the land and most comfortable at his farm in Dubreka. He is a private person, a man of plain tastes who does not put on airs and does not need international

approbation. By the standards of autocratic African leaders, Conté is not acquisitive and greedy. Although there may have been 'joint ventures' with some foreign investors, there are few stories in Guinea or elsewhere about Swiss bank accounts and overseas assets. In exchanges with foreigners, Conté is phlegmatic. He speaks in brief phrases. He is blunt rather than diplomatic. He is naturally cautious, a trait doubtless reinforced by the struggle for survival under Sékou Touré. He does not rush into decisions, but through general shrewdness has avoided major mistakes. By the mid-1990s his health imposed limits on his mobility because of diabetes and perhaps heart disease, aggravated by chain smoking. He suffered a debilitating heart attack or stroke in late 2003.

Conté has had very limited foreign policy interests. He has never been interested in striding the international stage or projecting power and influence in the region. That put him, in the 1980s and 1990s, in sharp contrast to contemporaries like Ibrahim Babangida of Nigeria, Felix Houphouët-Boigny of Côte d'Ivoire or Abdou Diouf of Senegal. He travels infrequently and has skipped many African summit meetings. He has paid attention to fending off threats to Guinea's territorial integrity and to his own rule (including external alliances with Guinean opposition leaders). His operating assumption during the 1990–2003 period was that Côte d'Ivoire, Burkina Faso and Liberia's Charles Taylor, with French encouragement, were engaged in a conspiracy to install governments beholden to them in Liberia, Sierra Leone, Guinea and throughout West Africa. He wanted a healthy relationship with the US, to balance France and to provide some aid. However, he was never willing to cultivate the US, or to trade off reform or Guinean support for US international positions in return for substantially increased aid. For that reason Washington has had limited leverage and influence on Conté.

THE DIPLOMACY OF THE LIBERIAN CIVIL WAR, 1990–97

On Christmas eve 1989, Charles Taylor, a former senior official in the Samuel Doe government, entered Liberia from Côte d'Ivoire with a small group of Gio warriors. After losing his job with the Doe government in the mid-1980s, Taylor fled to the US, where he was arrested in response to a Liberian request, based on the US–Liberia Extradition Treaty, having been charged with embezzlement in Liberia. He escaped from jail and made his way to Burkina Faso, where he formed an alliance with Col. Blaise Compaoré, soon to become Burkina's leader. Compaoré arranged for Taylor to go to Libya, where he was trained and financed by Col. Muammar Qadhafi's government. There Taylor linked with Foday

Sankoh, later to become leader of the notorious Revolutionary United Front (RUF) of Sierra Leone. Taylor's invasion drew on Libyan, Burkinabe and Ivorian logistic support. By June 1990 Taylor's forces, now expanded into the National Patriotic Front of Liberia (NPFL), were on the outskirts of Monrovia.

Those West African leaders not underwriting Taylor, including Lansana Conté, were deeply troubled by the rapid rebel advance. In April, Ibrahim Babangida, Nigeria's military leader, called for intervention by the Economic Community of West African States (ECOWAS) in the Liberian crisis. US Assistant Secretary for African Affairs Herman Cohen became active in trying to promote a peaceful settlement, securing a promise of asylum for Doe from Togo. Doe rebuffed this initiative, however, boasting of his invulnerability, and the US did not push it because of a general White House reluctance to get deeply involved (Cohen 2000: 138–44). In a May 1990 summit in The Gambia, Nigeria, encouraged by Ghana, Guinea, The Gambia and Sierra Leone, secured the creation of a Standing Mediation Committee (SMC) to mediate the Liberian conflict and report back. By August, US attention had been diverted from Africa by Saddam Hussein's invasion of Kuwait. At its 7 August meeting (which President Conté attended as an observer, since Guinea was not a member of the committee), the SMC decided to deploy an ECOWAS Cease-Fire Monitoring Group (ECOMOG) to Liberia to monitor a cease-fire and create an interim government, pending elections in 12 months.¹⁴ This force initially comprised one battalion each from Nigeria, Ghana, Guinea and Sierra Leone, and a few troops from The Gambia, plus Nigerian and Ghanaian naval and air assets. Most francophone states, notably Côte d'Ivoire, Burkina Faso and Senegal, opposed the creation of ECOMOG. The West African initiative and decision to deploy ECOMOG was strongly supported by the United States.

Why did Guinea, alone among the francophone states, join ECOMOG? (see Mortimer 1996). First, Lansana Conté believed that Taylor's revolt constituted a threat to the entire region. Armed intervention by rebels in Liberia against the Doe government, which gained power by military means but then claimed legitimacy through election, provided a dangerous model for Guinea; the Guinean leader was leading a transition from military rule to promised elections. Second, Conté believed in an Ivorian/Burkinabe/French conspiracy to undermine Guinea's sovereignty and independence.¹⁵ In Houphouët's support for Taylor, Conté saw first steps toward a rearrangement of political power in the region, aimed at securing Ivorian hegemony. Third, the Guinean leader had a certain admiration for Babangida, the Nigerian soldier head

of state, who in his view had come to power to set things straight in his own country. In spite of his distaste for summit meetings, Conté attended both the summit in The Gambia and the SMC meeting which dispatched ECOMOG.

Ironically, the arrival of ECOMOG forces in Monrovia in late August did not save Doe's skin. On September 9, careless security measures permitted a dissident NPFL group to sweep into the port area and seize the Liberian president during a visit to the ECOMOG commander. Doe was tortured and killed the same day. There was initial confusion and chaos, but a Nigerian commander replaced the first Ghanaian commander and reorganised the ECOMOG force. Nigerian troop levels doubled. ECOMOG forced the NPFL out of the city and installed an Interim Government of National Unity (IGNU) headed by Professor Amos Sawyer. The ECOMOG intervention halted Taylor's momentum and gave time for armed groups opposed to Taylor to form and take the field against him. A November 1990 meeting in Bamako marked official ECOWAS endorsement of ECOMOG's role, despite francophone reservations (*West Africa* 3-9.12.1990: 2954).

The diplomacy of the Liberian civil war involved many rounds of ECOWAS summit meetings held in various West African capitals, in which the US played an indirect role of fluctuating impact. The US objective was to promote the use of ECOMOG to achieve a negotiated settlement of the Liberian crisis which would end the fighting and establish a basis for democratic government. During the 1991-93 period, the US placed particular emphasis on engaging Ivorian President Felix Houphouët-Boigny, who had become ECOWAS chairman, in efforts to arrange a settlement. Vice President Dan Quayle visited Abidjan in September 1991 to urge that course on the Ivorian leader (Adebajo 2002b: 94). Deputy Assistant Secretary of State for African Affairs Leonard Robinson shuttled around the region in support. The US presumption was that the Ivorian could be persuaded that the conflict in neighbouring Liberia was potentially dangerous to his country; hence the Ivorian leader had both a stake in achieving peace and strong leverage over Taylor.

American reliance on Houphouët had no appeal for Lansana Conté. Robinson made several stops in Conakry, but found Conté resistant to the US approach. In a June 1991 meeting the Guinean was blunt: How can the US rely on Houphouët-Boigny to solve the problem, since he 'created' Taylor? A visit from Assistant Secretary of State Herman Cohen in January 1992 elicited much the same reaction; Conté referred to Houphouët as 'an accomplice of Taylor'.¹⁶ Efforts to persuade Conté to attend meetings in Côte d'Ivoire fell on deaf ears. Not only did he not care

much for summit meetings, but he certainly had no intention of going to meetings in Côte d'Ivoire hosted by the Ivorian leader.

Four meetings took place in Yamoussoukro, Côte d'Ivoire, in the second half of 1991 under Houphouët's leadership. Houphouët focused on creating a more neutral ECOMOG so as to induce Taylor to negotiate a settlement.¹⁷ With strong encouragement from the US, Senegal contributed 1,500 troops to ECOMOG.¹⁸ The essence of the Yamoussoukro agreement was that ECOMOG would deploy to all parts of Liberia, that the NPFL and other factions would encamp and disarm to ECOMOG, and that an interim government would be created pending elections. The NPFL would continue to administer the territory it controlled until elections (Adebajo 2002b: 89). Implementation of the Yamoussoukro accord immediately stalled, and the Ivorians became disenchanted with Taylor. In April 1992, Houphouët-Boigny, now seriously ill, convened a meeting at his winter home in Geneva, where the accord was confirmed and timetables were adjusted. Taylor signed a revised timetable for disarmament but disavowed it on his return home, claiming signature under duress. Taylor's defiance undermined the US premise that Ivorian leverage over Taylor was the key to peace. At a November 1992 meeting in Abuja of the ECOWAS Committee of 9, established to monitor implementation of the Yamassoukro Accord, Conté reportedly criticised Houphouët directly, a breach of African protocol.¹⁹ By that time the Ivorian leader was no longer chair of ECOWAS and his deteriorating health had removed him from a significant role in the Liberian conflict; he died in December 1993.

In 1991 the Liberian conflict took a new turn threatening to Guinea. In March, Taylor sent several NPFL units to accompany Revolutionary United Front (RUF) guerrillas across the Sierra Leone border to attack villages around the diamond centre of Koindu. As a result the RUF was able for the first time to set up permanent headquarters in Sierra Leone, increasing instability in that country. The US then began pressing Houphouët-Boigny to rein in Taylor. In March 1992 US envoy Robinson urged the Ivorian leader to blockade Taylor-held territory from Côte d'Ivoire, and to encourage ECOMOG to set up a buffer zone at the Sierra Leone border. In late May a military coup under the leadership of Valentine Strasser overthrew Sierra Leone President Joseph Momoh, who took refuge in Conakry. Two countries were now in turmoil, and Sierra Leonean refugees began to flow into Guinea. In October 1992 the NPFL launched a new effort to seize Monrovia by force, but was eventually repulsed by ECOMOG after many thousands of civilians had died. In response to Taylor's activities in Sierra Leone and his new military

offensive against Monrovia, the UN Security Council imposed an arms embargo on all factions in Liberia.²⁰

Two months after NPFL/RUF penetration of Sierra Leone, the United Liberation Movement for Democracy (ULIMO), an armed faction opposing Taylor, was launched in Conakry. It was originally led by Gen. Albert Karpeh, who had created a following of former Armed Forces of Liberia elements loyal to Doe. Karpeh was joined in ULIMO by Krahn politician George Boley and by Alhaji Kromah, a former minister of information in the Doe Administration. Earlier that year Kromah had created the Movement for Redemption of Muslims, to rally his fellow Mandingos against Taylor.²¹ ULIMO quickly bifurcated into largely Mandingo and Krahn factions. Kromah rose to the leadership of ULIMO-K, largely through selective killings of rivals, presumably profiting from his ties to the Conté regime. ULIMO first flexed its muscles diplomatically when in November 1991 it rejected the provision of the Yamoussoukro Accord calling for disarmament to ECOMOG (*West Africa* 18–24.11.1991: 1940).

By 1992, there were numerous reports coming out of Liberia that ULIMO was benefiting from training and equipment from the Guinean government (*West Africa* 26.10–1.11.1992: 1823). In a July 1992 meeting, I asked the Guinean leader about these reports. Conté conceded that Liberians were being trained at Kankan, but claimed it was in response to a request by IGNU Interim President Amos Sawyer that Guinea train the ‘kernel’ of a new Liberian army. He said the trainees would not go back to Liberia to fight Taylor.²² In September I put three questions to Defence Minister Abdourahmane Diallo: Would the trainees be reinserted into Liberia? Would they join ULIMO? Would they draw on the arms originally purchased by Doe? Diallo said the trainees would be kept in Kankan until a democratic government was in place. I proposed that the US defense attaché, then based in Dakar, visit Kankan during his next trip to Guinea; US confirmation of the nature of the training would constitute positive publicity for Guinea. Diallo seemed taken with the idea. Two weeks later, after notification to the minister, the attaché and I visited Kankan. The camp commander denied any foreknowledge of our visit and declined to let us circulate in the camp.²³ Washington did not have a strong interest in pressuring the Guineans on their support for ULIMO, given the general belief in Washington that Taylor was benefiting from extensive arms supplies reaching him from Ouagadougou via Côte d’Ivoire. In October, Charles Taylor accused Guinea of permitting Nigerian alpha jets to stage attacks on the NPFL out of Nzérékoré, provincial capital of Forest Guinea. There were simultaneous rumours in

Monrovia that Guinea would send a second battalion to ECOMOG. The Nzérékoré airport was too primitive to support military aircraft, and the second Guinean battalion never materialised, but Taylor was clearly concerned about an expanded Guinean role in the war.

In 1994 the chairmanship of ECOWAS passed to Jerry Rawlings, president of Ghana. The energetic Ghanaian had a powerful motive to solve the Liberian problem; he wanted to repatriate the important Ghanaian contingent under conditions of success. His initial steps were not fruitful. He brought Taylor and several other faction leaders to Akosombo, Ghana, in August, where they signed a new cease-fire. Rawlings did not, however, consult Nigeria. The Nigerians rejected the Akosombo Agreement for that reason and because, in their view, it offered too many concessions to Taylor. Even as negotiations proceeded, the Nigerians were laying the groundwork with the anti-Taylor factions for a successful attack on Taylor's capital at Gbarnga the following month. Although the factions soon fell out, allowing Taylor to retake his capital, the Nigerians had sent a clear message: Charles Taylor could not become president of Liberia without Nigerian agreement (Ellis 1999: 105). Rawlings took the lesson to heart. In January 1995, he succeeded in bringing to Accra Gen. Sani Abacha (who had seized power in Nigeria in late 1993), Lansana Conté, and President Compaoré of Burkina Faso, but a settlement could not be agreed upon (Adebajo 2002b: 163).

By late 1994 the White House and the State Department were increasingly concerned that the stalemate in Liberia was posing unacceptable risks for the region. The Administration's sensitivity was heightened by pressures for action from the US Congress, in particular from the influential bipartisan duo of Senators Nancy Landon Kassebaum (R-Kansas) and Paul Simon (D-Illinois). The White House decided to demonstrate its determination to work harder for a settlement by appointing a special envoy for Liberia. Already working as State Department director for West Africa, I was given that additional hat in early 1995. My instruction was to work with President Rawlings to find an effective solution.

In March Rawlings paid an official working visit to Washington. Liberia was high on the agenda of his meeting with President Clinton. When US officials conveyed to him an offer by Secretary-General Boutros-Ghali to host a summit in Geneva, Rawlings balked. He said such a UN effort would undercut the influence of West African leaders on the parties. Instead he proposed a summit meeting in Nigeria designed to encourage a deal between Abacha and Taylor, whom he viewed as the two major protagonists. The Clinton Administration accepted his logic and instructed me to assist Rawlings in his efforts to convene a meeting in the

Nigerian capital Abuja, to include the heads of state of Côte d'Ivoire, Burkina Faso, Guinea and Sierra Leone, in addition to himself and Abacha.²⁴

After much diplomatic conversation and shuttling among West Africans and Americans, a summit meeting convened in Abuja on 17 May, to include the Liberian factions. Neither Conté nor Compaoré nor Taylor appeared. The meeting deadlocked over a formula for faction participation in a Council of State to run Liberia. However, a major challenge to forging an eventual agreement had been met: enlisting Abacha as a peacemaker. A second challenge was to persuade Taylor to travel to Nigeria. He did not trust the Nigerians and feared arrest on arrival.²⁵ However, by June informal discussions involving Rawlings, Abacha and Burkinabe leader Compaoré and members of Taylor's staff had proceeded far enough to give him sufficient confidence to travel there. On 2 June he brought a 76-member delegation to Abuja and spent four days talking to Abacha. On 19 August, in the context of a meeting of ECOWAS heads of state, Abacha and Taylor signed the Abuja Agreement, which called for a new cease-fire and a new Council of State with a collective presidency. Ministerial positions were to be distributed among the factions. A plan for disarmament, demobilisation and reintegration of fighters was to be developed, and preparations begun for elections in 1997. ECOMOG was to stay in place, and discussions were launched with the US and other donors to augment its mobility and capacity to deploy throughout Liberia (Adebajo 2002b: 165–9).

The new Council of State was inaugurated on 1 September 1995. Although there was a serious breakdown of order in April 1996, when the NPFL and ULIMO-K joined forces against ULIMO-J inside the Monrovia city limits, the final result was stalemate and an easing of violence. Under a competent new commander, ECOMOG gradually reestablished order and was able to deploy to most of the country. The election campaign moved forward with United Nations and international NGO support. On 19 July 1997, Charles Taylor was elected president in the freest and fairest elections in Liberia's history. There was common consensus that Taylor won the vote because Liberians were afraid that if he lost, he would go back to the bush to resume the civil war (Ellis 1999: 107–9).

THE IMPACT OF GUINEAN PRESIDENTIAL ELECTIONS
ON US DIPLOMACY

Unlike Compaoré and Taylor, who had also boycotted the 17 May 1995 meeting in Abuja, Lansana Conté played no role in the negotiation of

the pivotal agreement in August of that year which ended the first stage of the Liberian civil war. He was certainly unhappy with the accord, which potentially positioned Charles Taylor to be a successful candidate for the Liberian presidency, but he did not raise a formal objection, and there is no indication that Rawlings and Abacha took his views into account. The US also ignored Guinea's position. In fact, during the 1994–96 period, Liberia took a back seat to political reform in overall US–Guinea relations.

On 19 December 1993, Guinea held its first ever multiparty presidential election. For the US government, this election provided an important test of the gradual political transition launched in 1988. US-funded consultancies on electoral processes in 1991 and 1992, together with general Embassy reporting on the political process, raised warning signals about weaknesses in democratic reform, but did not completely dash hopes that a reasonably fair presidential election would take place. Indeed, the US government financed IFES and International Republican Institute (IRI) teams to observe the polling.²⁶

In the election seven political parties presented candidates to compete against Lansana Conté, who had moulded around himself the *Parti de l'Unité et du Progrès* (PUP). The PUP was strongly supported by Conté's Soussou people, but included supporters from most of Guinea's ethnic groups. The other major parties had a largely ethnic attraction. Alpha Condé's *Rassemblement du Peuple de Guinée* appealed to the Malinkes and to their homeland in Upper Guinea. Mamadou Bah (*Union pour la Nouvelle République-UNR*) and Siradou Diallo (*Parti du Renouveau et du Progrès*), both Peulh, competed for that vote, concentrated in the Fouta Jallon highlands of central Guinea. Four other parties had minuscule followings. Conté was widely expected to win the vote. The only question was whether he would get an absolute majority, or, falling short of that, be forced into a run-off.

From 20 and 22 December, electoral results from the prefectures and communes were transmitted back to the National Counting Commission (*Commission Nationale de Recensement des Votes*) in Conakry. On the evening of 21 December, the minister of the interior gave a status report to the press, indicating that Conté thus far had 45% of the vote, followed by Alpha Condé with 31%. Final results were expected to be announced late on 22 December. The announcement was delayed, however. Very early the following morning, a clearly nervous minister of interior announced that Conté had won a 51% majority of the vote and had been duly elected. He gave no explanation for the sudden surge of support for Conté, but noted that the results from the opposition stronghold in Siguiri Prefecture in

Upper Guinea had been disallowed because of irregularities reported by the governor's office.²⁷ The telecast was then terminated.

The US government, unlike most others, refrained from sending a congratulatory message to Lansana Conté. That decision was based on Embassy discussions with both IFES and IRI about discrepancies in the tabulations of votes and IRI's statement, prior to the balloting, that the organisation would not send observers to the elections because it had determined that 'it is not possible to hold an open, transparent, and meaningful presidential election on ... December 19'.²⁸ Conté was very unhappy. He blamed American Ambassador Joseph Saloom for 'false reporting' to Washington on the elections, and basically refused to deal further with him, although other officers in the government continued transacting business with him and with the Embassy (Saloom 2004 int.). Disappointed with Guinea's election failure, the US reacted sharply. It cut its foreign assistance by 60 %, from \$38.8 million in 1993 to \$15.7 million in 1995. Food aid was halted in 1995, and new assistance was limited exclusively to primary education, in particular education for girls, the most successful and dynamic US project. The Peace Corps programme continued at the previous level. Although some Embassy dialogue on Liberia proceeded with the foreign and defence ministries during this period, there were no further discussions between Conté and the US ambassador about this key issue in the bilateral relationship until 1996.

GUINEA CONFRONTED BY TAYLOR AND THE RUF, 1998-2002

Charles Taylor did not use the temporary legitimacy given him by a relatively free and fair election to bind up Liberia's wounds and revive its economy. His primary goals were to consolidate his power internally and to project it more broadly in the region. Control of the Executive Mansion in Monrovia enabled him to increase his support for the RUF in Sierra Leone. The RUF gained strength in the political chaos after the military coup of 1992, because certain elements of the military were informally allied with it. Under strong popular and international pressure, the military government agreed to presidential elections in which the electorate turned out overwhelmingly in favour of Ahmed Tejan Kabbah, a retired UN civil servant. In May 1997 an Armed Forces Revolutionary Council overthrew Kabbah and invited the RUF to join the government. The RUF was drawing world-wide opprobrium for its signature approach to warfare: attacks on civilian populations featuring widespread rapes and indiscriminate maiming of children, women and men. Taylor dispatched NPFL cadres, no longer needed for war in Liberia, to Sierra

Leone to support the RUF. His major interest seems to have been, not RUF control of Freetown and the countryside, but securing the revenues from the rich alluvial diamond mines controlled by the RUF near the Liberian border.²⁹

ECOWAS sought to counteract this new instability. There had been a squad of Nigerians and a handful of Ghanaians in Sierra Leone since 1990, serving as a rear base for ECOMOG. During the coup against President Kabbah, Nigerian soldiers took casualties and found themselves embarrassingly pushed out of Freetown. In July 1997, after some fruitless dialogue with the new military junta, ECOWAS designated the West African forces in Sierra Leone as 'ECOMOG II'. In February 1998, serious fighting erupted, and Nigerian reinforcements from the original ECOMOG, which was phasing out of Liberia, hastened across the border to Freetown. ECOMOG II, under Nigerian leadership, then ousted the junta and reinstated Kabbah, to the applause of the international community (Adebajo 2002a: 87–8).

The struggle did not end, however, for the RUF attacked Freetown again in 1999, and the turmoil had serious consequences for Guinea. From 1996 to 1999, in the aftermath of the Abuja Agreement and the 1997 Liberian elections, Guinea's borders with Liberia and Sierra Leone were relatively quiet. The Conté regime was largely preoccupied with internal matters. In February 1996, an army mutiny provoked widespread violence and the burning of the presidential palace, nearly toppling the president. Conté went to the barracks to talk with the mutineers and was eventually able to work out a settlement (Guinée website). The two and a half years that followed were perhaps the most promising for Guinean reform since the creation of the constitution and basic laws in 1991 and 1992. In June 1996, Conté appointed as prime minister Sidiya Touré, a Guinean who had earlier been chief of staff for ex-prime minister Alassane Ouattara in Côte d'Ivoire, and who was able to cobble together a new economic reform programme with IMF and World Bank help. With the arrival of a new US ambassador in Conakry in mid-1996, the Guinean leader decided to reopen personal communications with the US government. In December 1998, Conté won re-election to a second term in an election which the US viewed as flawed but improved over the 1993 poll.

Charles Taylor's high-handed behaviour once in office – mysterious killings of opposition politicians, as well as rivals within the NPFL, looting of the Treasury, diversion of much of the budget to his personal security, and failure to pay salaries – eventually revived armed opposition, which had gone dormant after the 1997 elections. Alhaji Kromah, leader of ULIMO-K, contested the 1997 presidential elections, coming in third.

Following the election, Kromah was appointed head of the Reconciliation Commission, but when opposition leaders began to lose their lives, he fled to Guinea and later to the United States.³⁰ The government of Guinea apparently cut back assistance to ULIMO after the Abuja agreement and ended it after the 1997 elections. According to the US ambassador in Conakry during the 1996–99 period, Kromah appeared periodically in Conakry but there were no reports of ULIMO activity or Guinean government involvement with Kromah at that time.

In 1999 insurgent activity revived, particularly in Lofa County in Liberia's northeast. Once in 1999 and again in 2000 the insurgents seized Voinjama, the county seat. Rivalries for leadership of the insurgents precipitated the formal creation in February 2000 of Liberians United for Reconciliation and Democracy (LURD) from a coalition of different groups. By mid-2000, LURD held sway in Lofa County. Initially there were several pretenders to leadership, including Alhaji Kromah and Charles Julue, a notoriously brutal Krahn commander who sought to recruit his tribesmen into a new opposition. However, it was Sekou Dammaté Conneh, a Mandingo, who rose to the top. In the power struggle, Conneh's major asset was his Guinean wife, Aicha Keita Konneh, who had gained special influence with Lansana Conté. She warned the Guinean leader of the 1996 military mutiny against him and predicted he would survive it (Reno 2002: 63, 76). Because of her *clairvoyance*, she and her husband had regular access to Conté.

Taylor's troops retaliated against the Lofa insurgency by attacking Diomandou in Guinea's Macenta prefecture in 1999. Much larger-scale attacks began in September 2000. The major border town of Gueckedou, across the border from Lofa, was largely destroyed, along with Massadou in nearby Macenta prefecture. The military camp in the town of Macenta was also flattened, and smaller attacks were carried out much farther west in the border villages of Pamelap and Madina Oula, across from Sierra Leone. An unknown group called *Rassemblement des forces démocratiques de Guinée* claimed responsibility on behalf of Guinean dissidents seeking Conté's overthrow. It is generally believed that the attackers, even if they included Guinean dissidents, were largely RUF troops and Taylor militia. A week later Conté responded with an inflammatory speech in the Soussou language, blaming the attacks on a 'diabolical alliance' between Taylor, Compaoré, and Alpha Condé, the Malinke politician who had contested the presidential elections of 1993 and 1998. Conté asserted that the attackers included combatants who had merged with and were recruiting from the refugee population. He called on the populace to aid the security forces in 'rounding up and searching' the refugees. The speech

precipitated attacks on refugee camps and the detention of about 3,000 people, many of whom were beaten and raped. Most of the victims were innocent Sierra Leonean refugees, although there is little doubt that the camps contained some combatants (McGovern 2002: 84–90).

After the attack on Gueckedou, the Guinean government expanded support for the LURD. The Guineans purchased arms and ammunition on the international market and handed over a significant portion to the insurgents. The arms transfer was not evident to the diplomatic community in Guinea, but came to light with photographs of heavy weapons in possession of LURD forces in Liberia (Brabazon 2003: 8–9; see also HRW 2003). The US government wanted to seal off Liberia and Sierra Leone from international arms flows, and was uncomfortable about a resumed Guinean arms relationship with Liberian rebels. The embassy took up the issue with senior Guinean officials and urged a halt to the transfers. The Guineans paid no attention.

In response to the attacks on Guinea, ECOWAS decided in December 2000 to deploy a force of more than 1,600 to the common border areas of Guinea, Sierra Leone and Liberia to protect the borders, facilitate free movement of persons, and ensure security for humanitarian agencies and refugees. That decision was never implemented, however, because Conté was not satisfied with a neutral border protection role. He demanded a strengthened mandate for an ‘intervention force’ focused on Liberian ‘aggression’ (Samb 2001).

US SHIFT TO A REGIONAL APPROACH

In 1998 and 1999, as the threat to Sierra Leone mounted, the Clinton Administration became worried about the impact on Guinea and the potential for a third failed state in the region. The change corresponded with a broader evolution of US policy towards the Mano River Union states. During the phase of the Liberian conflict ending with Taylor’s election, the US had focused exclusively on Liberia and on collaboration with ECOWAS to deal with conflict in one country. RUF receipt of support from Taylor was deplored, but viewed as a sideshow. The overthrow of the Kabbah regime in May 1997 and Taylor’s renewed support for the RUF after his election, however, forcefully brought home to Washington that the fates of Liberia, Sierra Leone, and Guinea were intertwined. The United States put diplomatic pressure on Taylor to cease his support for the RUF, gave general support to ECOMOG’s ouster of the mixed army/RUF junta, and concentrated on fashioning a diplomatic solution. During the 1998–2000 period, the US attempted to promote talks among the

leadership of Guinea, Sierra Leone and Liberia. Taylor, Kabbah and Conté met in Conakry in November 1998, with US Special Africa Envoy Jesse Jackson in attendance. No progress was registered at that meeting, and there were no further summits for four years.³¹

Two months later, when fighters of the RUF and the ousted military junta almost defeated ECOMOG, both London and Washington, based on informal discussions with Kabbah and Foday Sankoh, began to explore the possibility of an accord. In May, Jackson gathered together both Sierra Leonean protagonists in Lome, and witnessed their signing of a cease-fire agreement. Continuing discussions under Togolese auspices led to the Lome Agreement in July 1999.³² It was agreed that the RUF would enter a coalition government, transforming itself into a political party, and that all combatants would be amnestied. ECOMOG was to constitute a peace-keeping force, with monitoring by a UN observer mission (for the text, see Hirsch 2001: 135–57). This more regionally focused approach initially partook of the illusory assumptions which underlay the Abuja Agreement of 1995 on Liberia. As Adebajo (2002a: 99) has pointed out, both accords assumed a settlement could be reached ‘basically [by] efforts to appease local warlords by giving them political power in exchange for military peace’.

The Lome Agreement did not stabilise the Sierra Leone situation. In August 1999 President Obasanjo announced that Nigerian troops would be phased out within six months. This action prompted the Security Council to create the UNAMSIL peace-keeping force in October 1999 at a level of 6000 troops. But effective disarmament did not take place, and by 2000, RUF forces were confronting and humiliating UN peace-keepers, disarming some and taking others hostage. A new Jesse Jackson mission to the region began, but was aborted when prominent Sierra Leoneans accused him of collaboration with the RUF, and the government in Freetown, angry with what it now regarded as a sell-out to the RUF at Lome, said his safety could not be guaranteed (Barone 2001). The threat to UNAMSIL shifted US action away from ineffective conciliation to a more muscular approach, following the British lead. British deployment of 700 paratroopers in May 2000 stabilised the situation in Freetown, set the stage for the arrest of Sankoh, and enabled UNAMSIL to regain its footing. With British and US support, UN forces were expanded to over 16,000 troops during the next 16 months. Both governments also played key roles in creating the Special Court for Sierra Leone to try Sankoh and his cohorts, and in UN imposition of an embargo on Sierra Leone diamonds.

The new American regional approach to the Liberian problem led to a change of policy toward Guinea within a year of Taylor’s election.

Watching the assault on Sierra Leone unfold, Washington became concerned that the sub-regional turmoil would also infect Guinea. Economic assistance expanded rapidly, while military cooperation steadily grew. The US increased economic aid from \$22.5 million in 1998 to \$35.6 million in 2002, broadening beyond primary education to health, particularly HIV/AIDS assistance, the environment, and small enterprise. The assistance package did not include direct budgetary or foreign exchange support, but conveyed a message of moral support for Guinea in the face of crisis. In 1998 the US Special Operations Command responded to an Embassy/State Department request to send a Joint/Combined Exchange Training Program (JCET) team to work with Guinean forces on 'search and destroy' activities designed to protect the Guinean border. The team did not provide military equipment, except for food rations. A resident military attaché was assigned to the US Embassy in Conakry for the first time (Nagy 2004 int.). During 2000, the US military sent a second training team, which provided basic training to Guinean forces in border security, small weapons, and martial arts. Military training (IMET) expanded from \$100,000 in 1998 to \$300,000 in 2001.

In October 1999, Secretary of State Madeleine Albright made a stop in Conakry during a trip to Sierra Leone, holding a brief meeting with President Conté in the airport. It was the first contact of a senior Administration official, i.e. above the assistant secretary level, since Conté's 1988 visit to Washington. The subject of that meeting was Sierra Leone, but it was another signal to Charles Taylor that Guinea had US backing.

In response to the attacks on Guinean frontier villages in September 2000, the US further increased its military support in 2001. The centrepiece was a programme to train an 800-man ranger battalion over a 6-month period as a 'rapid reaction force'. The package included uniforms, communications gear and some vehicles, but no lethal weapons. Training included instruction in human rights. The battalion was carefully screened to include representatives of Guinea's different ethnic groups, and the Guinean Government committed itself to maintain the battalion as an integrated unit (Walkley 2004 int.).

In mid-2002 the Bush Administration's interest in Guinea accelerated further, but for reasons unrelated to Liberia. During 2002–03, Guinea was a non-permanent member of the UN Security Council, as the US began to press for action on Iraq. After considerable effort, the US was successful in securing unanimous passage on 8 November of Resolution 1441, instructing the IAEA weapons inspectors to return to Iraq. When the US returned to the Security Council in February 2003 to persuade its

members to take up the Iraq question a second time, Guinea had rotated into the Council presidency and was being assiduously courted by the US and Britain for a yes vote and by France, its leading aid donor, for a no. Assistant Secretary of State for African Affairs Walter Kansteiner visited Conakry in advance of the discussion. There was a lot of international speculation about what carrots – economic or military aid – might be required to secure Guinea's vote. Unable to resolve the differences between rival Iraq resolutions, the US dropped its campaign for a second resolution in March and moved towards armed intervention. No new Guinea aid package emerged, but the intensity of US diplomatic engagement with Conakry had increased.

ENDGAME: THE ACCRA AGREEMENT OF 2003

In 2002 the opposition to Taylor gained support from a new source: Côte d'Ivoire. Laurent Gbagbo secured the Ivorian presidency in 2000 in the wake of a popular uprising against Gen. Robert Guei, who had overthrown the civilian government in 1999 and then tried to rig the presidential election in his own favour. Gbagbo ended ten years of Ivorian support for Taylor. When Guei fled Côte d'Ivoire, Gbagbo began recruiting anti-Taylor fighters, mostly from the LURD, to bolster his own security forces within Côte d'Ivoire. By early 2003, however, these LURD elements became active in southeastern Liberia along the Ivorian border. That was the genesis of MODEL (Movement for Democracy in Liberia), made up largely of Krahn fighters previously associated with ULIMO-J (ICG 2003: 18–19).

By the end of 2002 the armed factions, particularly LURD, were putting significant pressure on Taylor's forces, and the Taylor regime began to falter. In March 2003, Taylor was indicted for crimes against humanity and war crimes by the Special Court in Sierra Leone. By June the LURD was on the outskirts of Monrovia. ECOWAS, under the chairmanship of Ghanaian President John Kufuor, sponsored peace talks on Liberia, including representatives of the Taylor government, LURD, MODEL and Liberian civil society. In mid-July the Taylor government and the two factions signed a cease-fire envisioning a comprehensive peace agreement within 30 days. Guinea was not directly involved in these talks, but played an indirect role because of its relationship with the LURD, as did the US ambassador in Conakry. Ambassador R. Barrie Walkley had strictly avoided contact with the LURD up to this time, but became an intermediary in conversations within the rebel group. LURD lacked a means of communication between its representatives in Accra and its leader, Sékou

Konneh, in Guinea. Both the Guinean government and the US Embassy pressured the LURD to participate in the talks and to negotiate in good faith.

Twice in July President George W. Bush announced that Charles Taylor 'must leave Liberia', helping to dramatise the hopelessness of the Liberian's situation. On 11 August Taylor accepted a Nigerian offer of asylum and departed the country. The US then deployed for six weeks a joint task force of three vessels off the coast of Liberia. Only a handful of marines actually went ashore, but the deployment increased pressure on the parties. ECOWAS deployed its own force. On 18 August, representatives of the rump Taylor government, LURD, MODEL, the political parties and civil society signed a comprehensive agreement in Accra. This established a National Transitional Government of Liberia which held office until the elections of October 2005. The LURD representatives in Accra refused to sign without proof of Sekou Konneh's approval. Konneh signed a facsimile copy of the agreement at the US ambassador's residence in Conakry, which then faxed the copy back to Accra, setting the stage for formal signature (Walkley 2004 int.).

With his main Liberia objective achieved, the departure of Taylor, Conté quickly terminated assistance to the LURD. The Guineans were concerned that LURD could easily become a disruptive element in Guinea. The LURD leadership and fighters were instructed to return to Liberia and to preserve the peace. In December 2003 Conté was re-elected president of Guinea in an election boycotted by most of the opposition.

GUINEA'S UNCERTAIN FUTURE

Since the end of the war in Liberia, there have been signs that the Conté regime is approaching its end. Serious illness in mid-2003 forced hospitalisation of the Guinean president in Morocco (to keep him out of the public eye), and effectively removed him from active campaigning in the presidential election of that year. Although details of the illness have not been disclosed, it is likely that a combination of diabetes and heart disease continues to undermine his health. January 2005 brought an unsuccessful assassination attempt against Conté.

There is danger of serious instability at Conté's departure because of the lack of a clear successor, ethnic tensions between Soussou, Mandinka and Peulh, and the general unhappiness of the military. The outcome is not predictable. The range of possibilities includes a military coup and an outbreak of serious ethnic conflict dividing the country into warring regions, or some combination of the two. It is also distinctly possible,

however, that the political class will join with the military in coming up with a constitutional solution to avoid Liberia-like chaos. Politically conscious Guineans are acutely aware of the danger that a political crisis could spawn widespread inter-ethnic violence.

It is important that the international community consider how it might promote a transition to authentic democratic government and broad-based economic reform. New turmoil in West Africa should be avoided. The diplomacy of the Liberian civil war suggests that the US is now positioned to play an important diplomatic role in the transition, in close consultation with other donor countries.

NOTES

1. Liberia, Sierra Leone and Guinea signed the Mano River Union agreement in 1973 with the objective of promoting sub-regional economic integration. The Mano River originates in northwest Liberia near the Guinean border and forms part of the border between Sierra Leone and Liberia.

2. Scholarly writing on Guinea during the Conté regime is very limited. The most useful articles are Reno 2002 and McGovern 2002. Reno (1998: 15, 52, 73, 103), although not using Guinea as a case study, also hints at some useful lines of inquiry.

3. John Morrow, an African-American academic, reached Conakry by June 1959.

4. William Attwood was in place within 3 months of the launch of the Kennedy Administration and immediately initiated a successful lobbying effort for an aid package (Attwood 1967: 33–46).

5. See Diallo 1985, for a personal account of the horrors visited on leading Peulhs at that time.

6. Guinea's arrest in Conakry of a US Pan-Am airlines crew arriving from Accra, alleged to have been part of the 'conspiracy' against Nkrumah, led to rioting in Conakry and endangered US diplomats and their families (see Schweitzer 1990: 16–18).

7. ALCOA and ALCAN are both 45% shareholders of Halco Mining, a partnership which in turn owns 51% of Compagnie des Bauxites de Guinée (CBG). CBG, a partnership with the government of Guinea, has exclusive rights to mine bauxite in Guinea's Sangaredi Plateau. In addition to mining in Sangaredi, CBG operates a port in Kamsar for drying and shipping bauxite to refineries worldwide (see Alcoa website).

8. Kaba (1985: 178) suggests that 'Toure's real goal was not to promote socialism and people's democracy, but rather to use capitalism to reinforce his own rule.' Professor Kaba's article was the first scholarly look in English at the transition to the Conté regime.

9. My instructions when I went to Conakry as ambassador in August 1990 were to encourage democracy and economic reform, in addition to working with the Guinean government to find a peaceful solution to Liberia.

10. IFES 1991: 2, 4. IFES is a Washington-based international NGO which has frequently provided electoral services on contract *inter alia* with the State Department and USAID.

11. The first consultant remarked, 'On the basis of the experience gleaned [*sic*] from the years of the Sékou Touré regime, both those involved in the political process and the population at large seem to conceive of power, even democratic power, as flowing from the top down, rather than in the opposite direction.' IFES 1991: 2.

12. Author's journal entry, 8.3.1992.

13. Supplemented on occasion by parallel conversations in Washington with the country's ambassador.

14. See Adebajo 2002b: 60–5. Although ECOWAS is an economic grouping aimed at eventual trade and monetary union, it had adopted protocols in 1978 and 1981 which permit it to intervene in 'an internal armed conflict within any Member state, engineered and supported actively from outside, likely to endanger the security and peace in the entire Community'. Adebajo argues that the protocols did not provide clear legal justification for ECOMOG because the regional forces contemplated under the protocols had not been created and not all members had ratified the protocols. The SMC included Nigeria, Ghana, the Gambia, Mali and Togo, initially excluding states like Guinea which were neighbours of Liberia and recipients of its fleeing refugees.

15. Both Houphouët and Touré were leaders in the 1950s in the Rassemblement Démocratique Africain. Houphouët supported de Gaulle's proposal for self-government within the French Community, however, while Touré insisted on independence (see Schachter-Morgenthau 1964). Touré henceforth viewed the Ivorian as a tool of French objectives to bring Guinea back into the French orbit. Sekou Touré bequeathed this view to many Guineans, including Conté.

16. The author's journal entries of 13.6.1991 and 12.1.1992.

17. Initially, the Ivorian president proposed that ECOMOG be replaced by a UN peace-keeping force, but that idea was rejected by UN Secretary-General Perez de Cuellar (*West Africa*, 2–8.9.1991: 1469).

18. The decision was announced during President Diouf's visit to Washington in September 1991. As an inducement, the US not only paid for the Senegalese contingent but also cancelled a portion of Senegalese debt. Although the Senegalese troops were added at Taylor's behest, an NPFL attack on Senegalese troops, killing several, eventually induced the Senegalese to withdraw in 1992 (Adebajo 2002b: 94).

19. Adebajo (2002b: 105) cites *Africa Confidential* 20.11.1992, quoting Conté, 'Why should we respect him, just because he is old?'

20. Security Council Resolution 788 of 19.11.1992.

21. Mandingos, Liberian Muslims tracing their origin back to the Mandinka peoples of Guinea, achieved prominence during the Doe regime, but faced widespread discrimination by Christian groups, especially the Gio, the backbone of Taylor's support.

22. I also asked about the status of arms ordered by Samuel Doe and seized during transit through Conakry after Doe's death. Conté said they would be turned over to a duly elected Liberian government. Author's journal entry, 18.7.1992 (see also Ellis 1999: 95–6).

23. Journal entries, 4.10.1992, 25.10.1992.

24. The author, appointed Special Presidential Envoy for Liberia in January, met with Gen. Abacha on 15 March to urge acceptance of the Abuja summit idea. Abacha was non-committal.

25. At one point Taylor proposed to me by telephone that the US fly him in and out of Nigeria on a military aircraft and provide him an armed escort while in Nigeria. Taylor proposed to ECOWAS officials that he be accompanied to Nigeria by former US President Jimmy Carter or OAU Secretary-General Salim Salim (Adebajo 2002b: 166).

26. In the end the two IFES representatives were credentialed only as 'technical supervisors' (IFES 1994: 52). IRI cancelled its observer mission four days before the election.

27. The Supreme Court, in confirming Conté's election on 4.1.1994, also invalidated the results from Kankan prefecture, another stronghold of RPG candidate Alpha Condé (IFES 1994: 81).

28. IFES and IRI views were amplified in their reports published in March 1994 (IFES 1994; IRI 1994). The IRI press statement of 15 December is included as an appendix to the latter report.

29. Adebajo 2002a: 82. There are reports that Al Qa'ida laundered its financial assets by buying millions of dollars worth of Sierra Leone diamonds from Taylor before 9/11 (Farah 2004 and *New York Times*, 17.8.2004, citing a UN report on Ahmed Khalfan Gailani).

30. In particular after the brutal murder of Sam Dokie and his family; see <http://www.theperspective.org/kromah.html> for a 25.10.2000 interview with Kromah.

31. In 2001 there were reports that Conté favoured another summit with Taylor and Kabbah. That meeting took place in Rabat under the auspices of the Moroccan king in February 2002, adopting a set of anodyne statements on border security, refugee repatriation and the revival of the Mano River Union. Conté/Taylor/Kabbah summit website.

32. It has been alleged that Kabbah was under heavy pressure from the US to agree to the Lomé Accord. That view is disputed by John Hirsch, US ambassador to Sierra Leone at the time. Hirsch (2001: 82) argues that Kabbah, unlike many of his colleagues, 'was convinced that a peace deal could work'.

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