

**Democratization and
Human Security in Postwar
Sierra Leone**

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Edited by
Marda Mustapha and Joseph J. Bangura

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DEMOCRATIZATION AND HUMAN SECURITY IN POSTWAR SIERRA LEONE

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Foreword

Salone, as it is affectionately called, is a country that leaves nobody untouched. The foreign visitor arriving by plane during daytime will be received with spectacular views over long white sandy beaches, a beautiful blue bay, and a city that spreads out between the lush green mountains of the Western Peninsular and the Atlantic Ocean. Coming closer, one can also make out the grey water of creeks spilling their waste water into the bay, the typical pattern of crowded shanty towns, and the wounds of deforestation and erosions along the mountain slopes. Once on the ground, the traveler is welcomed by a large crowd of very friendly but apparently unemployed mostly very young Sierra Leoneans amid visible deep poverty and a totally confusing organization. This contrast between the country's natural beauty and its charming people on the one hand and its yawning problems and the difficulties of finding workable solutions on the other is what dominates Sierra Leone's political life to this day. It is also what ultimately this book is about.

Democratization and Human Security in Postwar Sierra Leone is a book that could hardly have come at a more appropriate time. Sierra Leone, a country that has barely recovered from its exceptionally brutal 11-year long civil war (1991–2001), is now suffering one of the most devastating outbreaks of the Ebola epidemic. Probably never before has the relationship between democracy and human security been more evident.

Sierra Leone, a country born with the scars of transatlantic slavery and the exploitation of what would later be called blood diamonds, did not have a good start at independence. In its first 40 years since independence in 1961, the country had a series of coups and attempted coups, 31 years of authoritarian military and one-party rules, and 11 years of a deadly and senseless rebel war. In the process, anarchy set in and the country became a failed state, creating hell on earth for ordinary Sierra Leoneans and the subsequent near disintegration of the country. These problems were essentially structural; the decline of Sierra Leone's democracy led to

bad governance and subsequent breakdown of human security culminating into war and destruction.

In 2004, Sierra Leone's Truth and Reconciliation Commission (TRC) concluded that the causes for the rebel war were the "endemic greed, corruption and nepotism that deprived the nation of its dignity and reduced most people to a state of poverty [in which] successive political elites plundered the nation's assets, including its mineral riches, at the expense of the national good." And about the country's institutions the TRC said, "government accountability was non-existent, institutions meant to uphold human rights, such as the courts and civil society, were thoroughly co-opted by the executive." These are very strong words indeed! They need to be remembered if this lovely country is not to slide again into a downward spiral with all its disastrous effects.

For the last 13 years, Sierra Leone had peace. However, the outbreak of the Ebola in 2014 could jeopardize all of this. The Ebola crisis goes much deeper than the numbers of those killed by the disease; its fallout on the country's economy, on its intercommunal relations, on its social services, and ultimately also on its still fragile democratic system cannot yet be fathomed. The feeling of helplessness would now only amplify the destructive effects of Ebola. What Sierra Leone now needs more than ever is to strengthen its resolve to bring the country forward! For this it would need an open and inclusive debate about what went wrong, about solutions, about the way forward. What would a post-Ebola Sierra Leone look like? What should be its priorities? What would be the role of the government, of political parties, of parliament, of the justice system, and of the country's civil society, its sizable diaspora, its religious and traditional leaders, its media, and its general public in overcoming this crisis and its aftermath? If Sierra Leone would find the strength for such a public debate that involves all aspects of its society, this country could emerge from the Ebola crisis stronger with better institutions and a more self-reliant society.

For such a debate this book could make a great contribution! And that is why the chapters should primarily be directed at Sierra Leone's political, economic, religious, traditional, civil and academic elites. Surely, not everybody will agree with all of their findings, but this should not prevent discussing them. It would be a great shame if this book would be pushed aside because of narrow party politics; Sierra Leone needs such books.

Marda Mustapha and Joseph Bangura, two eminent Sierra Leonean academics, compiled and edited this book. Both bear witness to the

exceptional diversity and vitality of Sierra Leonean intellectual community around the world. It would be a great sign of national maturity if Sierra Leone could make greater use of the many talents in its expatriate community for its own development.

Michael von der Schulenburg
United Nations Executive Representative of the
Secretary-General to Sierra Leone
2008–2012