

Legitimate Oligopolies of Violence
in Post-Conflict Societies with
particular Focus on Liberia
and Sierra Leone

Andreas Mehler/Daniel Lambach/Judy Smith-Höhn

Kontakt:
Deutsche Stiftung Friedensforschung (DSF)
Am Ledenhof 3-5
D-49074 Osnabrück
Fon: +49.(0)541.600.35.42
Fax: +49.(0)541.600.79.039
www.bundesstiftung-friedensforschung.de
info@bundesstiftung-friedensforschung.de

Dr. Andreas Mehler
GIGA Institut für Afrika-Studien
Neuer Jungfernstieg 21
D-20354 Hamburg
Phone: +49 (0)40 - 42825523
mehler@giga-hamburg.de

Dr. Daniel Lambach
Institut für Politikwissenschaft
und Institut für Entwicklung und Frieden
Universität Duisburg- Essen
Lotharstr. 65
D-47057 Duisburg
Phone: +49 (0) 203.379.3208
daniel.lambach@uni-due.de

Dr. Judy Smith-Höhn
African Conflict Prevention
Institute for Strategic Studies,
Tshwane (Pretoria), 0075 South Africa
jsmithhohn@issafrica.org

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Abstract

During post-conflict periods, institutions and patterns of action are challenged and renegotiated – processes that have long gone largely unrecognized. There continues to be a lack of empirical research on the constellations of authority following the cessation of conflict. This lack corresponds to deficiencies on the level of policy-making: It appears that Western donors, until today, base their approaches to post-conflict reconstruction on the wholly unchallenged assumption that the state is the only legitimate actor in this area. This research project focused on core questions in post-conflict security provision by and beyond the state. The central question of the project was to determine which actors (such as traditional authorities, the remnants of state security organs, private entrepreneurs, international peacekeeping missions etc.) provide security in a situation of fragmented authority, i.e. sanctioning violence and crime. Moreover, the project sought to analyze under which conditions these actors are considered legitimate by different groups within society: some actors might protect specific groups among the population while representing a threat to others. These questions were addressed in empirical case studies of Liberia and Sierra Leone. The project worked under the basic assumption that oligopolies of violence exist in periods directly preceded by conflict, comprising a limited number of actors that produce violence and provide security, who both compete and cooperate with each other. It was also assumed that oligopolies exhibited significant variation, with one important sub-type being an “oligopoly with market leader”.

The results of this research project tentatively confirm assumptions and hypotheses. The importance of a whole number of non-state actors in post-conflict security provision could be confirmed during field research in Liberia and Sierra Leone, although the preponderant role of peacekeeping missions stands out clearly. The intervention of an external peacekeeping force had a resounding impact on the security arena in these post-conflict settings. The international actors have taken the lead in providing security in both countries as they each emerged from civil war. And they were considered to be the most important security provider by an overwhelming majority of survey poll respondents in Liberia and Sierra Leone. Also, the relative gain in personal and public safety is clearly established while the absolute level of the achievements still leaves much to be desired (not least in the eyes of the population). Other results point to a widely shared wish to see state actors becoming the reliable main security provider while their actual and past behavior does not augur too well. Mapping exercises conducted during focus group discussions produced some striking results and led to the identification of additional actors who were considered relevant in the security sector; most prominent among them were the Community Watch Teams. Changes in the composition of the “security market” over time could be observed. The findings of the field research were confirmed by the desk study focusing on a larger sample of cases. This study underlines the necessity to question the label ‘post-conflict’ and avoid the mental dichotomies that lead to a handy identification of ‘post-conflict’ with ‘peace’. We should strive to understand the particular logic of post-conflict situations instead of dismissing them as brief, transitory stages. Such a perspective would also improve the research basis for policy advice. Usually, political strategies for post-conflict strategies employ timeframes that are far too short. These approaches also grossly overestimate the possibilities for social engineering, imagining post-conflict societies as ‘clean slates’ upon which a bright new future can be written. Another result is first of all ‘research-relevant’: While there are often excellent single-case studies about post-conflict societies, they are usually not included in comparative research designs. This, in turn, does not allow the transformation of isolated findings into some generalized patterns.

Instead, research often strives to make itself 'policy-relevant' by focusing on the conditions of success or failure of international interventions case-by-case or propose generalizations on a very slim basis. The desk-study lays the groundwork for such a comparative endeavor in that it identifies three types of post-conflict societies for meaningful further comparative exploitation.

Some policy-relevant results were as well identified. Both the case studies on Liberia and Sierra Leone and the desk study confirm that at least those oligopolies of violence with a dominant market leader (usually the peacekeeping mission, later the state) have the potential to strongly reduce the level of insecurity, both in perceptions as well as in real terms. While it was impossible to gauge the legitimacy of the overall security market structure, we could rate the legitimacy of individual violence actors. Apart from peacekeepers and state agencies, a predominant proportion of the population perceived private security companies and neighborhood watch teams as positive and their services relevant to security provision. Oligopolies of violence resulting from a settlement phase of a conflict were – as a rule – not followed by monopolies of violence. However, in the “success cases”, they were succeeded by oligopolies of violence with a dominant market leader. The respondents of the opinion polls conducted in urban Liberia and Sierra Leone showed a clear preference for “the” state as the providers of security which might comfort the “state-building” community. The ideal of the state (or of the ideal state) is still very much present in the mindset of people who have witnessed protracted phases of turmoil and war – an interesting finding in itself. However, the more qualitative research instruments revealed the distrust towards state agencies as they exist in reality. This mixed message is not easy to interpret for practical purposes: The research project as a whole invites policymakers to pay considerably more attention to alternative providers of security as they can be meaningful locally. Nevertheless, it would certainly go too far to portray oligopolies of violence as desirable outcomes of outside intervention.

The project further sought to identify criteria for selecting non-state armed actors as cooperation partners. The need for such cooperation was corroborated by our findings: Whoever wishes to avoid costly, enduring protectorates as a by-product of ever more complex UN missions should not ignore non-state actors and has to think about cooperation. Two main criteria for such cooperation come into play: efficiency and local legitimacy. This legitimacy may again partly be the outcome of efficient security provision (output legitimacy), or it may be based on charisma, ideology, symbols and myths, or the congruence in important norms and convictions between the protectors and the protected. It is obvious that most western governments will find it impossible to cooperate with actors who openly violate human rights or make appeals for genocide. But even actors who do not qualify as partners should not be left out of any analysis about the security situation. As a minimum, a sober assessment of their local appreciation is needed.

What happens when international forces withdraw is relatively unknown, not least because the country suddenly becomes less relevant to Western interests. With the exit of a major market actor, other actors will struggle to claim as much of the departing actor's market share as possible. On the one hand, remaining major actors will try to improve their market position, sometimes through the use of violence. On the other hand, marginal actors will (re-)emerge to provide security for small sections of the population. Similar processes could be observed in Karachi (Pakistan) and Sierra Leone after UNAMSIL's withdrawal. Clearly, there is much that can still be learned about post-conflict societies.

Zusammenfassung

In Postkonfliktsituationen werden Institutionen, aber auch Handlungsmuster überprüft und neu ausgehandelt, Prozesse, die lange wenig Beachtung gefunden haben. Es gibt immer noch einen Mangel an empirischer Forschung zu den Konstellationen von Herrschaftsbeziehungen nach Beendigung von Gewaltkonflikten. Dem entsprechen auch Defizite in der praktischen Politik. Bis heute gründen westliche Ansätze zu post-konfliktivem Wiederaufbau auf der Annahme, dass der Staat der einzige legitime Akteur im Sicherheitsbereich sei. Die zentrale Frage dieses Projekts war demgegenüber, welche Akteure (traditionelle Autoritäten, der Rumpfstaat, private Unternehmen, internationale Friedensmissionen etc.) in einer Situation fragmentierter Autorität Sicherheit gewährleisten, d.h. Gewalt real kontrollieren. Darüber hinaus ging es um die Analyse, wie legitim solche Akteure in den Augen unterschiedlicher sozialer Gruppen sind – dies auch unter der Annahme, dass sie bestimmte Bevölkerungsgruppen beschützen können, gleichzeitig aber eine Bedrohung von anderen darstellen mögen. Diese Fragen wurden zunächst in Fallstudien zu Liberia und Sierra Leone untersucht. Das Projekt arbeitete unter der Grundannahme, dass Gewaltoligopole in unmittelbaren Postkonfliktsituationen bestehen, die eine begrenzte Anzahl von Gewaltakteuren/Sicherheitsproduzenten umfassen, und die untereinander konkurrieren und kooperieren. Hierbei wurden erhebliche Variationen einer solchen Konstellation angenommen, wobei eine wichtige Variante das „Gewaltoligopol mit einem dominanten Marktführer“ sein würde.

Die Ergebnisse des Forschungsprojekts unterstützen tendenziell die Vorannahmen und Hypothesen. Die Bedeutung einer ganzen Anzahl von nicht-staatlichen Akteuren in der Gewährleistung von Sicherheit konnte durch die Feldforschung in Liberia und Sierra Leone nachgewiesen werden. Allerdings wurde auch die prägende Bedeutung der dortigen Peacekeeping-Missionen deutlich. Die Intervention einer auswärtigen Friedensmission hatte erhebliche Auswirkungen auf die Sicherheitsarena. Internationale Akteure waren führend in der Sicherheitsgewährleistung in beiden Staaten schon direkt nach Kriegsende. Und sie wurden von einer starken Mehrheit der Befragten in Meinungsumfragen in Liberia und Sierra Leone als die wichtigsten Sicherheitserzeuger genannt. Die relative Verbesserung von persönlicher und allgemeiner Sicherheit konnte nachgewiesen werden, während der absolute erreichte Status in den Augen der Befragten noch stark verbesserungsfähig war. Andere Ergebnisse legen nahe, dass der Wunsch nach zuverlässigen staatlichen Akteuren als Hauptträger der Sicherheitsgewährleistung stark verbreitet ist, allerdings deutet in der bisherigen Leistungsbilanz wenig darauf hin, dass dies mehr als Wunschenken war. Das graphische Mapping während Fokusgruppendifkussionen erbrachte wichtige Ergebnisse für die Konstellationsanalyse und half in der Identifizierung weiterer als wichtig erachteter Sicherheitsakteure. Besonders prominent waren Community Watch Teams. Eine fortlaufende Veränderung der Zusammensetzung des Sicherheitsmarkts konnte beobachtet werden.

Die Ergebnisse der Feldforschung wurden durch die begleitende Desk-study mit einer größeren Anzahl von Fällen bestätigt. Diese Studie unterstreicht die Notwendigkeit der Hinterfragung des Etiketts „Post-Konflikt“. Es wird nahegelegt, die vereinfachende Gleichsetzung von „Post-Konflikt“ mit „Frieden“ zu vermeiden. Inhärente Logiken von Postkonfliktsituationen erweisen sich als stabil, es handelt sich regelhaft nicht um kurze transitorische Phasen. Eine solche Perspektive kann Forschung und Politikberatung verbessern. Zeitliche Perspektiven für politische Strategien gegenüber Postkonfliktstaaten sind in der Regel zu kurz gefasst. Möglichkeiten des „*social engineering*“ werden überschätzt, die Vorstellung einer „Stunde null“ in Postkonfliktgesellschaften sind genauso

unangemessen, wie die Hoffnung, man könne einfach eine glänzende Zukunft herbeizaubern. Ein weiteres Ergebnis ist zunächst forschungsrelevant. Oft können selbst hervorragende Einzelfallstudien zu Postkonfliktgesellschaften nicht in komparative Forschungsdesigns einbezogen werden. Damit ist die Übertragung von isolierten Ergebnissen in generalisierbare Aussagen unmöglich. Stattdessen versuchen viele Forschungsprojekte politikrelevant zu sein, indem sie entweder für einen singulären Fall Erfolgsfaktoren identifizieren oder sehr weitreichende Generalisierungen auf kleiner empirischer Basis anbieten. Die Desk-Study innerhalb dieses Projekts schafft die Voraussetzung für sinnvolle Vergleiche durch die Identifizierung von drei Haupttypen von Postkonfliktsituationen. Einige praxisrelevante Ergebnisse können aber auch genannt werden: Die beiden Fallstudien und die Desk-Study bestätigen, dass „Oligopole mit dominantem Marktführer“ (üblicherweise die *Peacekeeping*-Mission, später auch der Staat) das Potenzial haben, Gewalt einzudämmen, sowohl in der Wahrnehmung der Bevölkerung, als auch in objektivierbarem Sinn. Es war zwar unmöglich, die Legitimität des „Systems“ als Ganzes zu ergründen, die Legitimität einzelner Gewaltakteure konnte aber eingeschätzt werden. Demnach nahmen große Teile der Befragten neben staatlichen und internationalen Akteuren auch private Sicherheitsdienste und Bürgerwehren als positiv wahr und bewerteten ihre Sicherheitsgewährleistung als relevant. Gewaltoligopole, die in einer Konfliktbeendigungsphase entstanden waren, wurden üblicherweise nicht in Gewaltmonopole überführt. In den „Erfolgsfällen“ entstanden aber Gewaltoligopole mit dominantem Marktführer. Befragte in städtischen Teilen Liberias und Sierra Leones bevorzugten „den Staat“ als Sicherheitsgewährleister. Das Ideal des Staates ist tief in der Vorstellungswelt von Menschen verwurzelt, die auch lange Jahre von Unruhen und Krieg hinter sich haben; das ist für sich allein ein wichtiges Ergebnis. Bei näherem Hinsehen und unter Nutzung qualitativer Forschungsinstrumente wird das Misstrauen gegenüber den real existierenden Staatsorganen allerdings deutlich. Ergebnisse des Forschungsprojekts fordern Praktiker dazu auf, mehr Aufmerksamkeit alternativen Sicherheitserzeugern zu widmen, da sie lokal sehr bedeutsam sein können. Es wäre aber überzogen, Gewaltoligopole als wünschenswerte Ergebnisse äußerer Interventionen zu charakterisieren.

Das Projekt hatte auch zum Ziel, Kriterien zur Auswahl von nicht-staatlichen Gewaltakteuren als Kooperationspartner zu identifizieren. Die Notwendigkeit einer solchen Kooperation war durch das Projekt bestätigt worden: Wer teure und dauerhafte Protektorate als Nebenprodukt immer komplexer werdender UN-Missionen vermeiden möchte, sollte nicht-staatliche Akteure nicht ignorieren und gegebenenfalls auch kooperieren. Als die beiden Hauptkriterien einer solchen Kooperation bieten sich Effizienz und lokale Legitimität an. Legitimität mag ihrerseits teilweise eine auf Leistung beruhende Legitimität sein (nämlich durch Gewährleistung von Sicherheit), oder auf Charisma, Ideologie, Symbolen und Mythen beruhen bzw. der Übereinstimmung von Werten und Überzeugungen zwischen Beschützer und Beschützten. Während klar ist, dass die Kooperation mit offen Menschenrechte verletzenden oder zu Genozid aufrufenden Akteuren für westliche Regierungen undenkbar sein wird, sollte doch auch in diesen Fällen die Analyse der Sicherheitssituation deren positiven wie negativen Beitrag und lokale Wahrnehmung untersuchen. Weitgehend unbekannt ist, was passiert, wenn internationale Truppen den Rückzug antreten, nicht zuletzt, weil dann das Interesse im Westen schwindet. Durch dieses Ausscheiden aus dem Sicherheitsmarkt werden andere Akteure motiviert, sich den frei werdenden Marktanteil zu sichern, manchmal auch gewaltsam. Gleichzeitig werden marginale Akteure neu auftauchen, um in Marktnischen Sicherheit anzubieten. Solche Prozesse konnten in so unterschiedlichen Fällen wie Pakistan und Sierra Leone beobachtet werden. Dies macht deutlich, dass man noch einiges über Postkonfliktsituationen lernen kann.

1. Introduction

During post-conflict periods, institutions, concepts of law and order as well as patterns of action are challenged and renegotiated – processes that have long gone largely unrecognized. The question as to which state or non-state institutions emerge during such situations has received little if any attention. There continues to be a lack of empirical research on the constellations of authority following the cessation of conflict in Africa and elsewhere. This corresponds to deficiencies on the level of policy-making: It appears that Western donors, until today, base their approaches to post-conflict reconstruction on the wholly unchallenged assumption that the state is the only legitimate bearer of the monopoly of violence. However, such approaches need to be tempered by questioning the pre-conflict state's validity, for it is generally accepted that the post-colonial state has often played an important role in the persistence and escalation of violence. Hence, there must be a prior consideration as to whether the state can and should be reconstructed to its pre-conflict shape.

One repeatedly stressed core attribute of statehood is the monopolization of violence. It is difficult to find empirical evidence for the Europe-inspired notion of the state with a monopoly on taxation and on the use of violence in (West and Central) Africa, where it is only superficially internalized by state officials while it is present in their thinking and discourse only as a pretence (Erdmann/Engel 2007). In West and Central Africa (empirically) illegitimate monopolies of violence and oligopolies of violence coexist. Both could a) be more or less legitimate in the eyes of the population and b) offer a varying degree of security and orientation.

In this context, one important task for social scientists is to determine which actors (such as traditional authorities, the remnants of state security organs, private entrepreneurs, international peacekeeping missions etc.) provide security in a situation of fragmented authority, i.e. sanctioning violence and crime. This points to a related question: Under which conditions are these actors considered legitimate by different groups within society. This is not a mundane aspect as some actors might protect specific groups among the population while representing a threat to others. Frequently, it is only a limited number of actors that produce violence and provide security while partly competing, partly cooperating with each other. Their interplay constitutes what could be termed as an "oligopoly of violence".

Even after a protracted phase of erosion of state authority, state actors will be present in the security field. But there is little reason to consider them *a priori* as more legitimate than others; the normative bias in favor of the state which is endemic in the state-building literature has to be avoided. Some policy-relevant questions on the macro-level of the state were raised in addition to the more academic design of the project:

1. Can oligopolies of violence reduce the susceptibility of post-conflict societies to resort to violence in order to solve conflicts?
2. Are these oligopolies of violence, consequently, considered legitimate by the central players and, more generally, by the population as a whole?
3. Can legitimate oligopolies of violence be transformed into legitimate monopolies of violence?
4. Should we cling to the ideal of the state's monopoly of violence even when state actors lack legitimacy and have proven themselves to be ineffective at providing security?

However the dominance of policy-oriented approaches in the mainstream literature on war-to-peace (or war-to-democracy) transitions has so far not led to realistic policy advices. This may be explained by normative biases and a lack of clarity. For instance, when speaking of 'post-conflict' situations, one must be careful to explicate implicitly any preconceptions in such a designation. The whole idea of 'post-conflict' easily leads to a mental dichotomy that transforms 'conflict' and 'post-conflict' into synonyms of 'war' and 'peace'. In this dichotomy, 'conflict' means situations structured by violence carried out by organized actors according to a dominant conflict narrative, while 'post-conflict' implicitly signals the end of such violence and the return to a peaceful normality. This is obviously far from the reality lived on the ground.

2. Oligopolies of violence

2.1 Definition and forms of oligopolies of violence

Oligopolies of violence comprise a fluctuating number of partly competing, partly cooperating actors of violence of different quality. In this context, ruling is based on a mixture of real repression and permanent readiness to negotiate (in contrast to the symbolic presence of a repressive apparatus and application of rules in the “ideal” European state).

Anthropologists and sociologists have worked on the real functioning of relations of domination in West Africa¹, but mostly with regard to confined areas of research. The specific interest of political science is rather with the systemic (“macro”) and institutional level, and it forces us to rethink about terminology and models. Some elements of economic theory can be helpful here, particularly those focusing on market relations. Economists are intrigued by problems of “imperfect competition” – monopolies and oligopolies usually rate poorly regarding their efficiency. A monopoly can be easily defined: one singular provider of a product or service. An oligopoly is a situation where there are only a few providers of a product or service. But varieties are important (see figure 1).

Figure 1: The variety of oligopolies

(Oligopoly = “imperfect competition” + “few providers”)
Main forms:
<i>Homogeneous oligopoly</i> : few providers of an identical product
<i>Heterogeneous oligopoly</i> : few providers of differentiated products
Variants:
Oligopoly based on arrangement – cartel
Oligopoly with a dominant market leader
Oligopoly without arrangement /continuous adverse competition
Forms of oligopolies of violence:
Territorial oligopoly of violence (based on arrangement or with a dominant leader etc.) ²
Functional oligopoly of violence (= always: heterogeneous oligopoly)
Temporal oligopoly of violence (seasonal variations; night and day)

This perspective on security provision within an imperfect security market is obviously based on rational choice considerations and involves some cost-benefit analysis concerning all stakeholders. It can be expected that the lower the market concentration, the higher the level of violence (Mehler 2004: 545).

1 Sometimes termed as the “cultural constructions regarding the nature of political power” (Hoffman 2003:211).

2 Regarding the territorial dimension, Boone (1998: 139) suggests “that a radically decentralized political order could be forged on the basis of existing, local-level structures of political authority and economic exchange”.

2.2 Oligopolies of violence – a perspective “from above”

As already noted, governing elites usually pretend to uphold a monopoly on the use of violence. Everything that could challenge this claim will be discarded and is difficult to be discussed in “political dialogues”. The European (or “Westphalian”) notion of the “state” may even be well-absorbed, a “lesson learnt” and, subjectively, what governing elites are aiming at. This paragraph is not so much about the elite’s view of the constellation of violent actors/security providers, but rather an “objective perspective” from a bird’s-eye view. But it is also about the fundamental possibilities of cooperation and confrontation that oligopolists themselves own.

Nevertheless a brief explanation of the aforementioned differentiation will be necessary: In a territorial oligopoly of violence, the main actors may find relatively stable arrangements amongst themselves in order to distribute areas and zones of control within the state. In these areas they might exert a monopoly on violence. Without the formal attribution of sovereignty by international law they lack important political and material resources, which presents a more volatile situation justifying a separate conceptualization from a nation-wide monopoly of violence (Büttner 2003: 8). A second option is the functional oligopoly which stresses the idea that different violence actors/protectors provide security from different kinds of threats (from different kinds of aggressors) or for specific social categories: Vigilantes working particularly for the protection of merchants on market days (market police) are one example. The Bakassi Boys in Onitsha, Nigeria are probably the most famous example (Baker 2002, Harnischfeger 2003, Meagher 2007). Ethnic militias may protect ethnic fellows – partly the background of the “young patriots”, at least in the rural municipalities of Southern Côte d’Ivoire (Chauveau/Bobo 2003), or of varying *Area boys* groups in Southern Nigeria (Gore/Pratten 2003). Those actors may compete or cooperate with each other.³

The oligopoly (of violence) with a dominant market leader is another inspiring notion originating from economic theory: some 60-80% of a given “market” may be controlled by the dominant leader, while the margins are left over for other entrepreneurs. The “rump state” might quite often find itself in a position of a weakened, but not yet collapsed state: its representatives completely control the capital and a certain perimeter outside of it, while some sub-contractors do not permanently provide security in zones under effective rule. Some indirect control over the sub-contractors and marginal entrepreneurs may be exerted by local allies of the state (e.g. “traditional” authorities, pro-government militias).

Oligopolies based on arrangements represent less violent situations, while a stronger competition between violent actors is not just hypothetical. While competition might be “good” and normal for the classical markets observed by economists, differences might occur when it comes to security. Open competition between actors of violence leads to even more violence. The open “security market” offers few “advantages” for the “consumer”: There is usually no real freedom of choice between those violent actors capable of providing security. Only arrangements lead to relatively few acts of violence (“*Oligopolistischer Sicherheitsmarkt*” – Bakonyi 2001).

The “imperfect market” provides incentives to particular strategies of the usurping actors involved. One obvious strategy is a rather direct and crude way to create demand for security by using violence (or threatening to do so) in the first place. When there is competition for dominance in a certain area, violence will be used (against the population,

3 A more “organized” form of policing by self-help groups can be imagined. A specific discussion on virtues and pitfalls of US-inspired “community policing” is beginning to assume shape (see Ruteere/Pommerolle 2003, Baker 2007). South Africa and Kenya seem to be the most prominent African test-cases.

less the adversary) in a less restricted way. Furthermore a strategy of cooperative maximization of gains may lead to a cartel of violence: a small number of oligopolists find arrangements and provide the total amount of a given product/service (i.e. security). This strategy should lead to less outrage. But however it may mean that the provided service is either expensive to the client or of a bad quality, as rent-seeking is facilitated in cartel situations. Mehlum et al (2002: 448) argue that “in weak states violent entrepreneurs engage themselves in a rent-enhancing division of labor where the entrepreneurs go into both plundering and protection, squeezing the targets from two sides. This is the *protection screw* (...)”. But the nature of the good (security) and the nature of the strategies (using or at least threatening with violence) are rather different from the goods dealt with in economist textbooks: Therefore cartels of violence might be rare or ephemeral in practice.

Another important qualification concerns the main motivational driving forces. Economic theory has a dominantly “*homo oeconomicus*” understanding of behavior. In emotionally charged conflict situations those motivations are not the only ones (Cramer 2002, 2006, Mkandawire 2002: 190, Richards/Vlassenroet 2002). Religious motives and habitual behavior may interfere or be even dominant. Nevertheless the current very prominent role of political economy explanations for war and violence are far too simplistic.⁴ However, the mechanisms of oligopolies sometimes have a high explanatory value for fuzzy situations in West Africa.

Some authors have used the term “oligopoly of violence” without, however, defining and conceptualizing it. But how do they emerge? One interpretation focuses on the reaction to state despotism: The state is the source of arbitrariness and insecurity, and it is imperative to be protected from it (Waldmann 2002, Leander 2002, Bangoura 1996, Elwert 1999, von Trotha 2000). Von Trotha (2000) shows how traditional chiefs behave as protectors against a violent central authority and thus appropriate a regional monopoly of violence (“para-statehood”). The second, opposing alternative is built on the inability of the state to impose its rule in central questions of sovereignty (monopolies of violence and taxes) against groups and individuals who compete for those privileges – a weak state may thus break down in the course of a struggle with competing actors of violence. In the final analysis, both explanations may not be contradictory – despotism is not to be confounded with a strong state. Quite to the contrary: it is a sign of weakness if violence has to be used frequently instead of its only use as a threat.

2.3 Changing perspectives: Oligopolies of violence seen “from below”

How are actors of violence perceived by the population? To answer that question, perspectives on the research topic need to be changed. Certainly, rationalities of violence actors differ significantly from those of the population, if we consider them as the victims of violence or beneficiaries of security services. To understand the ambiguous systemic logic as a whole, both the security provider’s as well as the security receiver’s rationalities need thus to be considered.

The mixture of competition and complementarity of rules, claims and authorities is characteristic for emerging oligopolies. Bierschenk (1999: 339) gives a telling description of the city of Parakou (Benin), depicting the ambivalence of core actors as mediators in, and generators of conflict:

4 Collier/Hoeffler 2004a, Berdal/Malone 2000, Addison/Le Billon/ Murshed 2003, Jean/Rufin 1996. See the critical assessments of Marchal/Messiant 2002, Cramer 2002 and Mkandawire 2000 as well as the slightly more differentiated position in Collier et al. 2003.

“The area of conflict management can be seen as an oligopolistic service market that is characterized by competition for the competence of conflict management and the ambiguousness of decision-making processes. It is a market of aspirant-mediators who are at the same time originators of conflict” (translation AM).

In the disastrous cases – Benin would definitely not account for them, but rather Liberia or Sierra Leone – it could be argued that the population is not concerned at all by a debate on principles of international law that may still be entertained in development cooperation apparatuses, but which is far removed from their daily needs. The interest to survive and to secure the survival of the family is preponderant. A recent survey showed that 36% of all households in Abidjan were victims of acts of violence in 2001-2002 (26% in Lomé, 24% in Bamako, 23% in Cotonou and 21% in Niamey; Roubaud 2003: 72). Physical security is an essential need.

When the state's monopoly of violence is not or no longer (or only in an unacceptable way) enacted, the state (apparatus) becomes a burden for the population and loses its legitimacy. Furthermore it does not (or only inefficiently) deliver the expected services.⁵ In such a situation, private actors filling the gap might not be viewed as illegitimate per se. In a recent contribution, Biró (2007: 9) explored the possibility that even warlords provide a “modicum of public goods”, with security being the most prominent one.

The *caudillo*, a figure in the political scene of many Latin American countries, may sometimes act in a comparable way, while the direct command over an armed gang is not relevant (Biró 2007: 28f). The ambiguous role of the “big man” is more familiar in African circumstances (e.g. when it comes to parties and elections). While land ownership is the essential capital of the *caudillo*, the big man may have a rather bigger variety of power assets and the access to the prince and a solid network of powerful relations as well. However, he is, first and foremost, always a patron in the clientelistic logic and therefore a protector. Essentially, one and the same person or organization may become both an agent of intimidation/repression and an agent of protection for different groups of the population or for the same group at different points in time. The ambivalence is obvious; perceptions oscillate between “violence actor” and “protector”. Tilly's (1985: 171) categorical distinction between a racketeer and a legitimate protector may therefore miss the point.⁶

Thus, – at least for specific parts of the population – oligopolies of violence can be legitimate because they are efficient and provide relative security. In addition they are considered to be the rule rather than the exception and based on certain traditions. This assumption is speculative as long as there are no quantitative surveys, which could measure empirical legitimacy. This was one of the aims of the research project described here.

The threat or the potential force of protection has to be analyzed and defined by interviewing the population. Various participatory methods come to mind – in addition to opinion polls. Moser/McIlwaine (2004) use different types of charts in their approach of participatory urban appraisals to get a much better idea of the representations of danger. They systematically collected maps of dangerous places in urban Guatemala and

5 Increasingly, frequent violent protests in African cities against brutal and corrupt practices (e.g. in Abidjan and Douala; themselves frequently violently disbanded) may illustrate the problem. The quantitative survey by Roubaud for Abidjan shows that one of the most severely criticised public services concerns security/police (although education and urban infrastructure are rated even worse). Roubaud stresses the extremely diverging opinion of respondents, which he explains by the partisan behaviour of the police against the „nordist“ population.

6 “Someone who produces both the good and, at a price, the shield against it is a racketeer. Someone who provides a needed shield but has little control over the danger's appearance qualifies as a legitimate protector” (Tilly 1985: 171). The term “little control” might need more specification.

Colombia; causal flow diagrams of different types of violence as drawn by groups of mainly young people; or perceptions of a violence actor such as the police in the form of a mapping exercise. Baker (2004: 170), working on different African countries, equally advocates and uses “participatory mapping as the tool to explore policing on the ground”. In Liberia and Sierra Leone, we also successfully used a mapping technique to identify representations of the constellation of major violence actors by different groups.

2.4 An outside perspective of oligopolies of violence

As noted earlier, the readiness to accept alternatives to governments as partners in international relations must still be rated low. African state elites and their partner donor organizations rarely differ in their official world view on non-state armed groups. In individual cases the interaction with informal actors in the field of security may be left to Northern NGOs, who get discreet government funding and may dare to entertain communication with *inter alia* rebel forces. Official sources may be explored by using text analysis methods; interviews with officials may be conducted and will only rarely produce anything other than a firm belief or a formal confirmation of interstate cooperation, even when doubts concerning their effectiveness were voiced informally.

The habitual leanings towards a Westphalian order, in which states and their more or less automatically deemed legitimate governments are the ones to negotiate with, are still very strong. A closer look at some arenas reveals, however, that first cracks have appeared. This is especially observable in Afghanistan, where donors and intervention troops entertain relationships of cooperation with individual warlords and militias (Schetter/Mielke 2008: 83).

In doing so, they *de facto* support oligopolies of violence (or at least more than one oligopolist). State actors are not the only outside forces interfering with local affairs on the “Westphalian periphery” (Biró 2007). In the literature on shadow states, the cross-border trade networks of warlords and armed groups play an important role. The works of William Reno have particularly contributed in elucidating these connections. Some elements of organized crime always play a role with this. The legalization of this sort of business by electing the warlord president – as happened with Charles Taylor in Liberia – is certainly an extreme case.

What is largely absent from the academic debate, however, is a view from the inside, the constellation of actors of violence, their ways to compete and to cooperate, as well as their efforts to be legitimate. The view from outside, both by policymakers and academics, is still very much influenced by normative thinking. Deviations from the Weberian state are differing from the norm. However they are not always ignored, but when identified, they are marked as the sources of evil. Thus the rotten façade of the state, which one might consider to be still intact, is a much greater part of the problem than it is of the solution.

2.5 Critique and discussion of the oligopolies of violence paradigm

The concept as it is used here has received criticism during two project workshops organized in 2006 and 2007.⁷ The main argument advanced by critical colleagues was that the market analogy has limitations when it comes to security. There is indeed no doubt that

7 Both funded by the German Foundation for Peace Research, both held in Hamburg. The first (Security in the Context of Precarious Statehood, Hamburg, 14 July 2006) offered a review of current approaches on security beyond the state; the second (Hamburg, 19-20 March 2007) was a smaller project-related workshop on legitimate oligopolies of violence in Liberia and Sierra Leone.

the contravening factors of habitual behavior, politics of belonging and charismatic factors pose limits to a pure rational-choice explanation that seems to underlie all market exchange relations. And all those contravening factors need to be explored case by case.

However, with regard to the economic terminology chosen, it is important to stress that the oligopoly of violence perspective comes with an "imperfect security market" as groups and individuals looking for protection are probably not entirely free in choosing their security provider. This is, by the way, also true for most oligopolies in the ordinary sense meaning on capitalist markets. Oligopolies reduce the choice and the logic of the market; they represent imperfect markets. Thus, even by standards of this school of thought, a 100% rational behavior under those circumstances may not be expected. Therefore, it could be claimed that limited rationality is compatible with the market terminology and the paradigm of oligopolies of violence. Lambach (2007: 7) sees the usefulness of the concept primarily in the invitation to "consider the strategic environment in which armed groups (inter-)act, and which they create through their interaction."

There is more substance to the critique when turning to the expected weight of irrational motivations of actors, which has to be incorporated in some way:

As noted: Not all violence actors/protectors/security providers have exclusively material motivations or would act purely rational (i.e. how can I maximize my influence and thereby political and material gain?). Culture, habit and identity related motivations of behavior are not negligible, particularly when it comes to the forms of violence used. Can these factors be weighed against rational behavior?

Conversely, on the demand side, rational reflections are not the only ones at play (i.e. where can I find security for an acceptable price?). Pre-established preferences, based on cultural and political dispositions may have an important weight. Again, it seems impossible to isolate factors clearly and attribute measures of importance.

However, and with those limitations, the term oligopoly of violence has many advantages compared to other concepts, including the paradigm of a "market of violence" (Elwert 1999). It opens the analysis to diverging strategies of stakeholders, such as the "oligopolists" or the cost-benefit analysis of those looking for protection. The described sub-types of oligopolies described offer better frameworks of analysis suiting to the complex interplay of agency and structure. Oligopolies of violence establish themselves on a "security market" and not on a "market of violence".

It is undeniable that what is presented here picks up some ideas from the approaches and terminologies of von Trotha (2000). Von Trotha distinguishes between two basic forms of ordering violence - the order of violent self-help and the state with its claim of a monopoly on the use of force - and between four types of social orders of violence - the "neo-despotic", "para-state", "post-acephalous-constitutional" and the "constitutional-welfare-state" order - the purpose of the "oligopolies of violence" paradigm is to focus on the functional logic of a) the relations between the oligopolists themselves and b) between the oligopolist of violence and groups of the population.

The "cultural anthropology" critique of von Trotha and Elwert also applies to the oligopolies of violence paradigm - as psychological approaches do postulate the use of violence as a non-purposeful act. Those approaches argue with either symbolic and habitual behavior or a disposition to violence (of individual perpetrators), for example. While individual behavior may be analyzed in this light, it is not helpful to explain social phenomena (of violence and security) of a size that we do not only face in Africa but in other regions of the world as well. Cultural and psychological explanations of violence get lost in very small spaces of validity and are certainly not satisfactory for anybody looking for universal validity.

One further critique has been voiced concerning the term “security as a good”. However, it must be noted that the use of the “public good” terminology when talking about security (employed, for example, by Luckham 1998) is not even debated by policymakers. In most OECD societies, both internal and external security are dealt with exactly from this perspective: as an indivisible, inclusive good, either to protect “the people” or “the nation”. Empirically, the evidence is not convincing, even in OECD countries. It might be tempting to transpose the suggested category of “collective good” from Africa to the developed world as well, where “gated communities” are a clear sign of the fading claim of the state to provide sufficient protection to all. The added value of this perspective is to enable a discussion of public or not so public goods from below, i.e. to leave the dominant discourse on security as the security of the state, its institutions and leaders behind. The democratic control of the security sector may be functioning more or less in OECD countries, yet it is certainly rare in African states, in which the colonial imprint on police and armies meant distance and a primary mission to repress unrest from below. Therefore this is not at all a recent development or a consequence of the supposedly ongoing privatization of violence.

The discussion of security as a public or collective good has important implications. It helps in formulating an “entitlement to be protected” which may be the essential element of a security concept “from below” and at the same time is rarely a well-established perspective of elites on security. The actual scope of security provision does not meet the requirements in the societies that are analyzed in this study. An implicit pressure to state elites to better satisfy the demand arises as consequence. But the questions have to be taken further: It is of vital interest to know how much security is provided by whom and for whom in this situation of critical shortage. From this perspective, another research objective emerges: to analyze and describe better the forms of interconnection, of antagonistic rivalry or mere competition as well as patterns of cooperation between different actors of violence/protectors. A “patchwork structure” (Lock 2004) of such actors can indeed be expected, but this description still needs more analytical depth. And one may expect further dynamic changes: From a political science perspective, it is of special interest whether interrelations between violent actors can be institutionalized and serve as the beginning of a state-building process from the bottom-up. Furthermore, the empirical legitimacy of a political order beyond the state would be of interest for further research. Only opinion polls could deliver a solid base for judgments on legitimacy; in their absence some room for speculation still remain. Our own research on oligopolies of violence in Liberia and Sierra Leone made clear that it is possible to get a clear picture of the popular appraisal of main actors of violence. It was, however, difficult to come up with a general appreciation of an existing oligopoly of violence as a political order. Fluidity is another conceptual problem: Although an oligopoly of violence is not an unremovable system as competition between the oligopolists on “market shares” continues, the actors frequently transform themselves, become more or less exchangeable towards the surrounding population or more or less responsive. Longitudinal analyses of violent actors (see e.g. Rodgers 2007 on Latin American youth gangs or Meagher 2007 on the Bakassi Boys) support this theory.

3. The case studies (Liberia and Sierra Leone)

3.1 Case selection and aspects of comparison

The comparative case study method was applied for selecting the two post-conflict societies of Liberia and Sierra Leone as field research sites. The cases were considered comparable because they shared certain contextual similarities while at the same time being at various stages of post-conflict reform and (re)construction:

1. Foremost, both West African countries had emerged from civil war and were thus formally considered post-conflict societies;
2. In both countries, numerous security actors have been vying for control and influence for several decades;
3. The national army and police were never able to establish or maintain a state monopoly on the use of force for any significant period of time;
4. Local civil defense forces, rebel groups and secret societies dominated the security sector in the hinterland. For citizens, these various actors could act as protectors but could also pose a threat;
5. Both have not only witnessed protracted phases of violence, but also actors from neighboring countries have also played a major role during periods of conflict escalation (e.g. through the deployment of mercenaries).
6. A final similarity between the two cases was the extensive involvement of international actors during the post-conflict phases, particularly the United Nations with its peacekeeping missions UNMIL and UNAMSIL.⁸ Though the intentions and achievements of the intervention troops (especially ECOMOG)⁹ remain questionable, they were, nonetheless, ultimately successful in imposing a much-needed peace, largely through the use of force.

The two case studies were chosen due to the empirical evidence of the presence of oligopolies of violence and their related dynamics. At first sight the prevalence of a number of different types of security actors could be detected. Both countries experienced important transformations in the field of security since the end of their civil wars. Furthermore a continuing ambivalence of the security sector in the perceptions of the populations in the respective countries can be observed. Moreover, the fact that the post-conflict phase in Sierra Leone lasts longer than that of Liberia facilitates the identification of the dynamics – i.e. emergence and transformation – of both positive and negative security actors in post-conflict societies. The cases were compared using three different analytical levels:

- *Diachronic*: comparing along the timeline between the past and the present situation in both countries. i.e. Liberia just before the end of the civil war in 2003 compared to the period from 2003-2006 during the so-called “peacebuilding” phase. Sierra Leone before the end of its civil war in 2001 in comparison to both the period from 2001-2005 (the “peacebuilding” phase with heavy international involvement – up until the withdrawal of the last UN troops) as well as the period after the withdrawal of the United Nations peacekeeping force in 2006.

8 United Nations Mission in Liberia and United Nations Mission in Sierra Leone, respectively.

9 Economic Community of West African States Monitoring Group.

- *Diachronic-binary*: refers to the comparison of both countries as they emerged from violent conflict compared to the situation prior to the cessation of conflict, i.e. between Sierra Leone as it emerged from violent conflict at the turn of the millennium to Liberia as it is today.
- Synchronic: a comparison of the current situation in both countries.

The two country cases were subjected to a structured and focused comparison. The focus of the comparison includes a selected aspect of each of the cases, i.e. the security sector. The structure, however, covers the same set of research questions which were posed for both cases (George and Bennett 2005: 67f):

1. Which actors or groups of actors provide for both, personal and national security?
2. What modes of interaction exist between these various security actors? Are these relationships cooperative or hostile?
3. How has the security situation changed compared to how it was before the end of the civil war? And how is it perceived today?
4. Which security actors are considered as a threat, and which are considered valuable for ensuring security? In other words, do citizens in need of security perceived the actions of particular actors legitimate?

3.2 Methods

The field research that was conducted in Liberia and Sierra Leone provided empirically based insights into the existence of oligopolies of violence in societies emerging from conflict. The study took a mixed-methods approach to collect data, combining both quantitative and qualitative tools to summon empirical information on the status of the security sector in both case studies. Field research was placed in both countries over a period of three months each.¹⁰ The following qualitative and quantitative methods were used:

- A survey poll was carried out in three urban areas in both countries;
- Four in-depth focus group discussions (FGDs) were conducted in each country;
- Approximately 60 focused, semi-structured interviews were conducted with elites as well as with national and international experts
- The available non-conventional literature and key documents (“grey literature”, e.g. internal reports, government documents, newsletters, fact sheets, crime statistics) were gathered to substantiate the performance of security actors.

As a typical quantitative data-gathering tool, the survey poll enables the generalization of findings to the population from which a sample is drawn, with the samples generally being larger than that for qualitative research. A total of 700 respondents were interviewed in three urban areas in each of the two countries. In Liberia, the capital Monrovia (500) and the two second-largest cities Tubmanburg and Buchanan (100 each) were selected. In Sierra Leone, interviews were conducted in the cities of Freetown (500), Makeni (100) and Koidu Town (100). Due to practical consideration, field researches were limited to urban areas; therefore the results reflect the perceptions of each country’s urban population. However, people who had migrated from the hinterland participated in the focus group

¹⁰ Fieldwork in Liberia was carried out from late November 2005 to mid-February 2006, the field research in Sierra Leone followed a few months later from early April until the end of June 2006.

discussions, thus enabling an – albeit partial – impression of conditions in the rural areas.¹¹ To ensure that the sample was representative, four suburbs were selected within each city. In addition, interviewers applied a randomized technique for the selection of the interviewer teams, starting points and households. In order to guarantee a gender balance, every second respondent had to be of a female gender.¹²

The survey was intended to give an impression of the perceptions of general and personal security of the urban citizens in each country, as well as revealing citizens' assessment of different security actors regarding their role in providing public and personal security. The questionnaire included a number of items on the socioeconomic background of respondents, allowing a more differentiated analysis of the security needs and the perceptions in terms of various criteria such as age, gender, ethnic group, religion and occupation.

Focus group discussions are a data collection tool that utilizes the interaction in a group discussion as a source of data, with the researcher playing an active role in creating the group discussion for the purposes of collecting data (Morgan 1996: 129). The FGDs, conducted during the field researches, zoomed in on security perceptions and included issues such as security actors involved in providing or threatening security. The FGDs identified as well the relationships between the various actors. In both countries, four focus group discussions were held, each comprising 6-8 participants. Concerning the moderation of the focus groups, the distinctiveness of the settings under study – subject sensitivity, language barrier (local dialect) – no researcher from the core team (DSF project members) occupied the role of the moderator. Instead, an experienced local moderator was employed.

Careful consideration was also made concerning the composition of the groups. In both countries, four FGDs were held, each comprising six to eight participants. Discussants were chosen according to two criteria: the members of each respective group had to be 1) homogeneous and 2) virtual. The first criterion denotes similarities among each group's participants in terms of their social, educational and economic background. Hence one FGD included people from the educational sector ("teachers and students"). The second FGD's members were all (previously) employed in the health sector ("health workers"). The third discussion group was conducted amongst market women ("market women") whilst members of the last group were either community or youth leaders ("community and youth leaders"). The second criterion – namely that the groups had to be virtual as opposed to real – merely meant that debaters within each group should not be familiar with each other. The composition of the focus groups was intended to reduce the risk of status-related barriers or entrenched roles unduly influencing participants' responses.

Each round of discussion lasted one day. During that time it was possible to explore the assumed motivation and legitimacy of the actors as well as other issues relevant to the security sector. A systematic comparison with the security situation in the past (i.e. before the end of the civil wars) was initiated in order to map the extent of the transformation in the configuration of actors.

The key outcome of the FGDs was a graphical mapping of security actors which shall depict the identity and relative significance of and the interactions between these various actors.

Semi-structured interviews – a classic form of data collection in political science – were conducted with local elites as well as local and international experts. This included security

11 For details on the composition of the focus groups, see below.

12 Guidelines to the Liberian and Sierra Leonean interviewers for randomizing the survey included further provisions not detailed here.

actors such as representatives of the national security forces, traditional societies and private security companies. Unlike the specific questions posed in the survey, the interviews were guided by a set of open-ended, semi-structured questions. The interviews conducted with elites, such as local government representatives, traditional authorities and key representatives from civil society, enabled a comparison of perceptions “from below” with those “from above”.

3.3 Results of the Field Research

Table 1 below reveals that, by and large, there has been a predictably dramatic shift in security perceptions of Liberians and Sierra Leoneans compared to the period prior to the end of their respective civil wars (Table 1). In both cases, a significant number of respondents considered their personal security situation to be “somewhat better” or “much better” (90.8% total in Sierra Leone; 86.1% total in Liberia). Similar results were obtained regarding public security.

Table 1: Perceptions of Security in Urban Liberia and Sierra Leone: Past and Present Compared

	General Security (in %)*		Personal Security (in %)**	
	<i>Liberia</i>	<i>Sierra Leone</i>	<i>Liberia</i>	<i>Sierra Leone</i>
Much better	33.7	31.8	28.4	27.4
Somewhat better	51.3	60	57.7	63.4
No Change	6.3	4.6	5.6	4.4
Worse	4.4	2.1	4.6	2.6
Much worse	2.6	0.4	2.4	1.6
No answer	1.7	1.1	1.3	0.7

N (Liberia) = 698; N (Sierra Leone) = 702

* Question: “In your opinion, compared to before the end of the last war, what is the general state of security like in the country today?”

** Question: “Compared to before the end of the last war, how is your personal safety today?”

The end of the civil war in Liberia (2003) is more recent than in Sierra Leone (1999). We have no clear data on whether the security situation as perceived by the citizens had steadily improved before. While our one-off survey can only create a snapshot of the particular security situation at a given point in time, a tentative conclusion would be that the period extending from the peace agreement to the moment of our opinion poll is relevant to build a sense of security.

Table 2: Perceptions of Security in Urban Liberia and Sierra Leone: Present Situation

	General Security (in %)*		Personal Security (in %)**	
	<i>Liberia</i>	<i>Sierra Leone</i>	<i>Liberia</i>	<i>Sierra Leone</i>
Very safe	20.3	14.7	25.6	20.7
It's okay	40.1	32.3	43.7	40.9
Fairly unsafe	26.9	37.9	23.5	27.5
Not safe at all	10.5	13.4	6.2	10.3
No answer	2.2	1.7	1.0	0.7

N (Liberia) = 698; N (Sierra Leone) = 702

* Question: "In your opinion, how safe is the country today?"

** Question: "How safe do you feel personally in the country today?"

Table 2 shows that despite significant progress, the general perception in both countries is that security is still not guaranteed. In contrast to the results from Table 1, Table 2 shows that the relative success is not matched with an absolute sense of security, as Sierra Leone fares worse in the eyes of the (urban) population – both in general as well as in personal terms.

Regarding the existence and identification of actors that provide security in the post-conflict setting, the comparison of the two case studies produced the following four key results:

First, the intervention of an external peacekeeping force had a resounding impact on the security arena in these post-conflict settings. The international actors have taken the lead in providing security in both countries as they each emerged from civil war. In Liberia, for instance, the international peacekeeping force – the United Nations Mission in Liberia (UNMIL) – was considered to be the most important security provider by an overwhelming majority of survey poll respondents. As many as 75.9% considered UNMIL to be the most important security actor in the country, and 94.9% considered them to be either "very important" or "somewhat important" for their personal security (compare Tables 3 and 4).¹³

13 The first figure (75.9%) is based on an open-ended question from the survey, i.e. the question was posed in such a way as to encourage the respondents to name the most important group in each case without being influenced or guided towards any particular answer. If respondents had been asked to choose from a list of specific actors, one may have unwittingly excluded certain actors who in fact play a key role in security from the respondents' perspective. These results were tested with a second, "closed" question: through multiple-choice options, respondents were asked to rate each listed actor according to its impact – both positive and negative – on their security, as illustrated by the second figure (94.9%).

Table 3: Perceptions of Security Actors in Urban Liberia: Most Important Actors

Actors	Percentage
UNMIL	75.9
Liberia National Police (LNP)	17.9
Armed Forces of Liberia (AFL)	2
Ex-Combatants	0.1
ECOWAS	0.1
Poros/Sandee	0.1
Vigilante Teams	0.1
Family	0.1
<i>No answer/don't know</i>	3.4

N: 698; Question: "We have spoken to many Liberians and they all have different feelings about which groups in the country protect them and which are a threat to them. Could you please tell us which group is the most important one for your personal safety?"

Table 4: Perceptions of Security Actors in Urban Liberia (ranked in %)

Types of Actors		very/somewhat important to personal security	does not affect my personal security	somewhat/a big threat to personal security
International	UNMIL	94.9	2	1.4
State	Liberia National Police	91.9	4.6	2.9
	Armed Forces of Liberia	64.8	23.8	9.3
International/commercial non-state	Private Security Companies	38.3	52.2	3.8
Domestic non-State	Community Watch Teams	56.6	17.9	15.5
	Poros/Secret Societies	15.7	46.4	26.1
	Political Party Militias	7.2	36.3	42.8
	Street Boys	0.4	6.3	78.6
	Ex-Combatants	3.3	6.9	86.8

N = 698; Question: "Now, I'm going to read out a list of groups which are said to affect security in one way or another. For each one, could you tell me whether you feel protected or threatened by them or not?" Percentages of 'don't know' and 'no answer' responses are not shown in the table.

Findings from the FGDs further demonstrated the prominence of UNMIL in the perception of the population. In the mapping exercises that were conducted as part of the discussion, participants were asked, among other questions, to identify the various security actors as either positive or negative, that is, whether they provided security or condoned violence. UNMIL featured prominently in all four mapping exercises and was identified as positive in three, with only the fourth group unable to agree on the role that the peacekeepers played.

In Sierra Leone, the external actors featured less prominently in the security arena. Table 4 shows that, here, the external actors – UNAMSIL, ECOMOG, and IMATT¹⁴ – did not play as significant a role in the provision of security. Although some respondents still considered them to be the most important security providers, they were considerably less prominent than their Liberian counterparts.

A second, and certainly the most remarkable finding was the relatively favorable perception of the state security actors in both cases under study. State security actors – both the police and the military forces – received surprisingly positive ratings despite obvious shortcomings in terms of equipment and training as well as their general history of violence and oppression. These perceptions are most probably less a reflection of these actors' actual performance, but can in fact be interpreted as an indication of the high expectations citizens have towards these actors. There is little doubt that there is a pronounced preference for state security actors to provide for security in both countries

As illustrated in Tables 2 and 3, most urban dwellers in Liberia, if left to choose, would prefer the state's own security forces – the Liberia National Police (LNP) and the Armed Forces of Liberia (AFL) – instead of informal or private security actors. Yet the fairly favorable assessment of the AFL can hardly be attributed to their actual performance, due to their current reorganization.¹⁵ This is partly reflected in the finding that while some 20% believed the armed forces had no impact on their security, almost two-thirds regarded the AFL as important for their personal security. This seemed to reflect a wish among the respondents for the AFL to play a prominent role rather than a rating of their actual performance. In our opinion, the relative importance allotted to the AFL in Table 3 is not due to previous experiences with government troops, but in fact indicates the expectations of respondents in terms of the future role to be played by this actor.

As in Liberia, the Sierra Leone government and its security forces scored high in the respondents' expectations for the provision of national security (see Table 5). Unlike in Liberia, however, the armed forces of Sierra Leone were not dissolved, but undergone extensive retraining over the past five years. Surprisingly, it was the fact that the Republic of Sierra Leone Armed Forces (RSLAF) stayed out of sight and soldiers were confined to their barracks that accounts for the focus group discussants' favorable assessment. This to some extent explains why over 80% of survey poll respondents considered the RSLAF as "very" or "somewhat" important for their personal security, despite the violent, even criminal, history of the military in the country.

14 The United Nations Mission in Sierra Leone, the Economic Community of West African States Monitoring Group and the (British-led) International Military Advisory and Training Team, respectively.

15 A note as regards our inclusion of the AFL in the multiple-choice question, despite its dissolution, is due here. Prior to the implementation of the survey, discussions with our project partners revealed that the AFL was considered as a significant security actor, hence its inclusion in our questionnaire.

Table 5: Perceptions of Security Actors in Urban Sierra Leone: Most Important Actors

Actors	Percentage
Republic of Sierra Leone Armed Forces	34.5
Police	33.2
UNAMSIL	10.8
ECOMOG	3
Government	2
Former Warring Faction 1: CDF	1.6
Husband/family/individual	1
God	1
Rebel/Ex-Combatant	0.9
President	0.9
Youth Groups	0.6
Foreign troops (general)	0.4
Traditional Authorities (Paramount Chief/village authorities)	0.3
Private Security	0.3
SLP Operational Support Division	0.3
IMATT	0.1
Mende	0.1
Former Warring Faction 2: RUF	0.1
<i>Other</i>	<i>1</i>
<i>None</i>	<i>0.7</i>
<i>No answer/Don't know</i>	<i>7.2</i>

N: 702, Question: "We have spoken to many Sierra Leoneans and they all have different feelings about which groups in the country protect them and which are a threat to them. Could you please tell us which group is the most important one for your personal safety?"

Table 6: Perceptions of Security Actors in Urban Sierra Leone
(ranked in %)

Types of Actors		very/somewhat important to personal security	does not affect my personal security	somewhat/a big threat to personal security
State	Sierra Leone Police	87.8	3.4	8
	Rep. of SL Armed Forces	81.4	5	10
	Mines Monitoring Officers	22.7	55	5.2
	Traffic Wardens	51.2	34	7.9
International/ commercial non-state	Private Security Companies	54.6	38.6	1.6
Domestic non-state	Secret Societies	26.6	50.9	19.7
	Youth Wings of Pol. Parties	30.6	33.5	30.3
	Ghetto Boys	4.4	16.2	76.8
	Bike Riders	39.1	30.1	26.6
	<i>West Side Boys</i>	2.9	17	74.6
	<i>Civil Defence Forces</i>	20.5	20.5	54.1
	<i>Revolutionary United Front</i>	2.3	16.1	78

N = 702; Percentages of 'Don't know' and 'no answer' responses not shown in table. Question: "Now, I'm going to read out a list of groups that are said to affect security in one way or another. For each one, could you tell me whether you feel protected or threatened by them?"

Focus group discussants had a relatively negative opinion of the Sierra Leone Police (SLP). This deviates from the positive ratings given to the SLP in the survey poll, where 71.1% of respondents considered them to be very important for their personal security. Interviews conducted with local and international experts on security-related issues revealed that, despite their high expectations about the role of national security forces, Sierra Leoneans were very aware of the shortcomings of police forces in particular. As with their Liberian counterparts, the SLP receive external support and training, in this case from the Commonwealth Police and the civilian police section of UNAMSIL. However, their ability to perform their duties is hampered by a lack of equipment and insufficient remuneration for their services.

Thirdly, and as noted above, the field research confirmed the existence and significance of non-state security actors, particularly following the withdrawal of the external peacekeeping forces. Since the departure of the last contingent of UNAMSIL troops in December 2005, which had provided for the bulk of security during its deployment in urban Sierra Leone,

informal security actors have come to play a more significant role in the security arena. Given that the fieldwork was conducted shortly after UNAMSIL's withdrawal, the sustainability of the current post-conflict phase cannot be verified. However, the results reveal the significant vacuum left by the multinational forces and exposes the inability of the national security forces to fill it.

The comparison of security perceptions after the war with and without UNAMSIL's presence reflects a shift in respondents' attitudes marked by UNAMSIL's withdrawal. The mapping exercises in the focus groups produced some striking results and led to the identification of additional actors who were considered relevant in the security sector; most prominent among them were the Community Watch Teams. When the various maps - depicting the security actors in Sierra Leone over the last five years - were compared, it was apparent that far fewer actors were providing security in Sierra Leone during the involvement of UNAMSIL than compared to the situation since the mission's withdrawal. Similarly, more actors were involved in the period before 2001, prior to the end of the civil war (Table 7). This implies that with the presence of UN troops, the need for security was covered. Moreover, the withdrawal of UNAMSIL troops produced a security vacuum that was not filled by state actors but rather by private, non-state actors. Some of them have only been established recently – such as the *Police Partnership Boards* or the *Community Night Watch*, while others have “re-emerged” – such as the secret societies (*Poro* and *Sowe*). The Table on the next page lists all the security actors identified by focus group discussants since 2001.¹⁶

Finally, the most clear-cut parallel between the two countries in terms of non-state actors can be drawn with regard to informal groups of young men – such as ex-combatants, Street Boys and Ghetto Boys – who were undoubtedly considered as the most serious threats. This finding also points to the urgent need to (re-)integrate them into society by creating job opportunities. However it is obvious that both Liberia and Sierra Leone face similar challenges in the social and economic arena in tackling the eradication of violent conflict.

In Liberia, an overwhelming majority of 86.8% perceived ex-combatants to be a threat or a “big threat” to their personal security. Similar clear-cut results were obtained for the Street Boys, whom 78.6% considered to be a threat or big threat (see Table 2).

In Sierra Leone, the Ghetto Boys, many of whom are ex-combatants, were given the worst ratings: more than half of the respondents considered them as a big threat to their personal security. Likewise, 74.6% of respondents considered the West Side Boys – a rogue army faction that emerged at the end of the 1990s but which has been officially disbanded – to be a threat or a big threat to their security. The focus groups confirmed these views, and discussants agreed that the West Side Boys were capable of recruiting and reorganizing at any given time.

16 Note that in transferring the information into a table, the level of interaction between the various security actors could not be illustrated. For an example of a diagram depicting this information, see Figure 2 below.

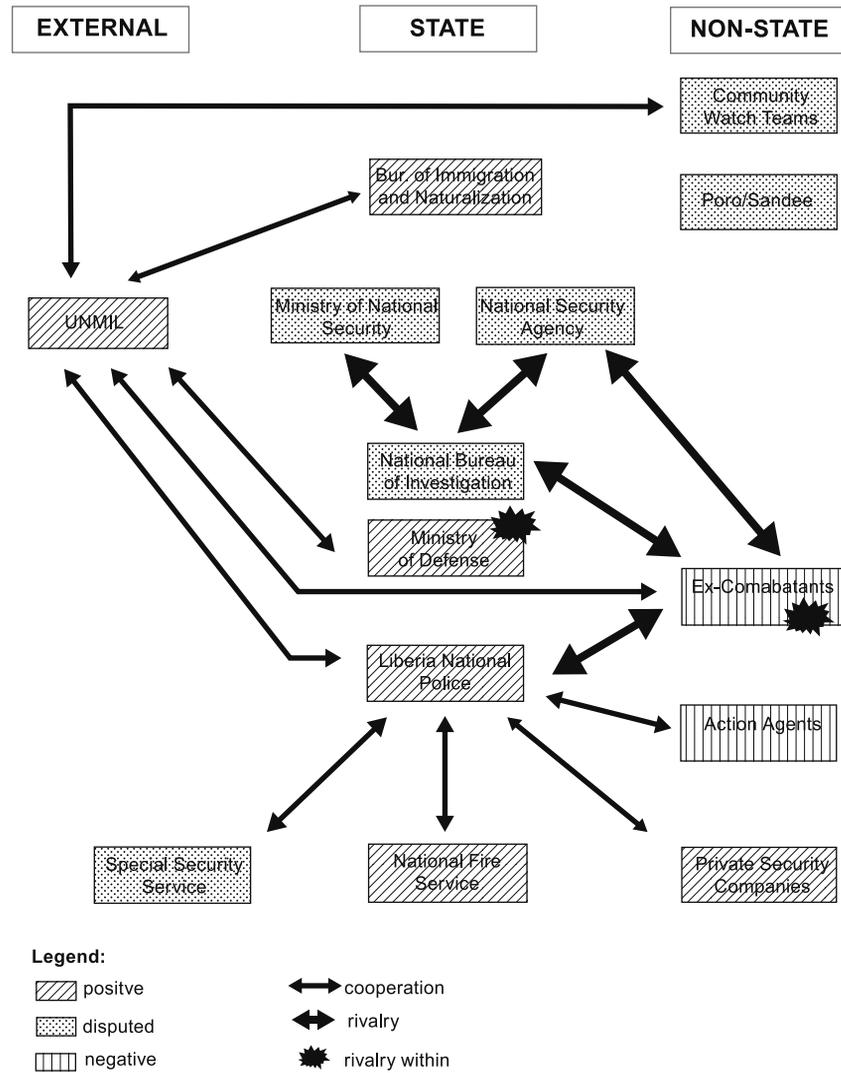
All mapping exercises conducted in the FGDs confirmed that the security arena in each country comprises a group of partly competing, partly cooperating actors (see e.g. Figure 2). In other words, in both Liberia and Sierra Leone, the security market can be characterized as an oligopoly of violence.

Table 7: Mapping of Security Actors in Urban Sierra Leone – Change over Time

Period	External	State	Non-State
Before 2001	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - ECOMOG^(P) - Executive Outcomes^(D) 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - SLP Operational Support Division (OSD)^(P) - Chiefdom Police^(P) - Police^(D) - Sierra Leone Army^(D) - City Council Police^(D) - Armed Forces Revolutionary Council (AFRC)^(N) 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Private Security Companies^(P) - Civil Defence Unit (Youth)^(P) - Gbethis^(P) - CDF^(N) - RUF^(N)
2001 – Dec. 2005	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - UNAMSIL^(P) 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Chiefdom Police^(P) - OSD^(P) - Police^(D) - City Council Police^(D) - RSLAF^(D) 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Private Security Companies^(P)
Since January 2006		<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - RSLAF^(P) - Chiefdom Police^(P) - OSD^(D) - Council^(D) - Police^(N) 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Community^(P) - Chief^(P) - Headman^(P) - Soweis^(P) - Community Night Watch^(D) - Market Women^(D) - Ojeh^(D) - Poro^(D) - Hunter militia^(D)

Source: FGD2 Sierra Leone, Teachers & Students;
P = positive; D = disputed; N = neutral

Figure 2: Mapping of Security Actors in Urban Liberia Today



Source: FGD1 Liberia, Teachers & Students; Copyright: Judy Smith-Höhn

4. The Desk Study

4.1 Comparative design and hypotheses

In order to assess whether the data obtained from the field researches were representative of post-conflict societies in general or whether Liberia and Sierra Leone were – in some ways – special cases, a desk study of other post-conflict situations was conducted. Initially, a sample of six additional cases was selected: Afghanistan, Bosnia and Herzegovina, Guatemala, Nigeria (the Sharia riots), Pakistan (the Sindh/Karachi conflict) and Somaliland. These cases were drawn from Chojnacki's Warlist (2005) and the Uppsala Conflict Data Program (UCDP)¹⁷ which were coded as having ended by 2004. They were selected to represent as many cases as possible: from large-scale wars (Afghanistan, Bosnia, Guatemala, Somaliland) to low-intensity conflicts (Nigeria, Pakistan). In two of the additional cases (Afghanistan, Bosnia), an international military intervention had been conducted; in the other four, it had not. In each case, the security market was analyzed three to four years after the end of conflict. This timeframe was chosen to allow a comparison of the results with data gathered in field researches in Sierra Leone and Liberia between 2005 and 2006. It also represents a point where post-conflict structures have begun to solidify. Several hypotheses about the determinants of the outcome variable (the structure of the security market) were formulated. Data was gathered from secondary literature and through a series of semi-structured interviews with German-based country experts.

Comparison between cases followed a Most Similar/Most Different Systems Design (MSSD/MDSD). Liberia and Sierra Leone were compared with Bosnia and Afghanistan through the lens of an MSSD logic. In these cases two key variables (intensity of conflict, presence of international troops) were held constant, therefore any variation on the dependent variable must be attributed to other variables. As a second step, these four cases were then compared with Guatemala, Nigeria, Pakistan and Somaliland. The use of the MDSD approach meant that variation of independent variables could be discounted as the outcome variables remained the same between cases from both groups.

Results from this first round of analysis were inconclusive due to the high level of variation between cases. It was particularly difficult to compare the low-intensity conflicts with other cases in any meaningful way. However, discarding these cases meant that the remaining number of cases was too low (and too biased towards the MSSD group) for an extensive test of the hypotheses. However, it also became apparent that cases could be divided into three groups as a working typology of post-conflict societies: high-intensity conflict with international military intervention (Type I), high-intensity conflict without intervention (Type II), and low-intensity conflict (Type III) (see Table 8).

17 <<http://www.ucdp.uu.se/>>.

Table 8: Types of Post-Conflict Countries

	Intervention	No Intervention
High Intensity	Type I	Type II
Low Intensity	---	Type III

Source: Own compilation.

To support these preliminary results, a second round of case studies was conducted. First of all, there was a need to add further cases from types II and III since the present number (two cases each) was too small to confidently assert the typology's validity. Case studies were conducted on Peru (Type II), Niger (the Tuareg conflict) and Mexico (Chiapas) (both Type III). Results clearly indicated a high level of intra-type similarity. Thereafter, a decision was taken to only test hypotheses within a given type in order to minimize the number of possible explanatory variables. Three additional cases were added to the four Type I cases already analyzed in the first part: Kosovo, Mozambique and Cambodia (see Table 9).

Table 9: Post-Conflict Societies by Type

Type	Country	Conflict Timespan	Intervention	Intensity
I 'High Intensity, External Intervention'	Afghanistan	1979-2001	Yes	High
	Bosnia-	1992-1995	Yes	High
	Cambodia	1979-1991	Yes	High
	Kosovo	1998-1999	Yes	High
	Liberia	1990-1996, 2001-	Yes	High
	Mozambique	1979-1992	Yes	High
	Sierra Leone	1991-2002	Yes	High
II 'High Intensity, No intervention'	Guatemala	1962-1995	No	High
	Peru	1981-1999	No	High
	Somalia (Somaliland)	1988-1991	No	High
III 'Low Intensity'	Mexico (Chiapas)	1994-1995	No	Low
	Niger (Tuareg)	1990-1995	No	Low
	Nigeria (Sharia)	1999-2003	No	Low
	Pakistan (Mohajir)	1994-1997	No	Low

Source: Own compilation based on Chojnacki 2005, UCDP database, Arbeitsgemeinschaft Kriegsursachenforschung (AKUF) database¹⁸

¹⁸ <<http://www.sozialwiss.uni-hamburg.de/publish/lpw/Akuf/index.htm>>.

The following hypotheses were tested:

H1: Intervention troops are market leaders or monopolists.

H1 is based on the assumption that intervention forces are usually of sufficient strength to quickly assert dominance on the security market. This proceeds from the international community's preferred strategy of "saturating" a post-conflict country with troops to deter would-be spoilers from attacking the international forces. In addition, intervention troops are usually better armed, better trained, and better led than most non-state armed actors, further improving their leverage on the market.

H2: Peace agreements increase market concentration and/or improve the quality of interaction.

This hypothesis derives from the assumption that a peace agreement supports the eventual emergence of a monopoly of violence either through the demobilization of fighters or their integration into a national army. A peace agreement is also supposed to reduce inter-group hostility, making interaction between market actors less conflictual, e.g. via power-sharing accords.

H3: DDR programs support market concentration.

Disarmament, Demobilization, and Reintegration (DDR) programs reduce the potential of all participating parties to employ violence. Since those programs never target all conflict actors equally, the market position of particular parties (usually state forces or international troops) is strengthened relatively to the position of others.

H4a: The higher the number of parties to the conflict, the lower the market concentration and the more conflictual the relations.

H4a claims that a fragmented, non-cooperative market will basically stay the same during the transition from the conflict to the post-conflict phase. This is based on the observation that conflicts destroy social capital and leave a legacy of inter-group tension that is difficult to overcome. The higher the number of actors, the higher the degree of uncertainty on the market; which in turn acts as a disincentive to cooperation. Instead, the hypothesis argues that small groups of actors will entrench themselves and try to stabilize their market position.

H4b: The higher the number of parties to the conflict, the higher the market concentration.

This hypothesis is the opposite of H4a. It proceeds from the assumption that a fragmented security market is easier to dominate for intervention forces, since individual parties are of insufficient strength to resist the intervention troops' attempt to gain a share in the market.

The variables were defined as follows:

Market Structure

An oligopoly is present as long as no actor is able to dominate the market, but also when only a few (operationalized as: no more than six) actors control significant market shares on the national level. Since market share is impossible to measure on the security market, alternative indicators for market dominance are necessary: In a case in which a single actor dominates the market, other actors will avoid direct confrontation with the market leader while defending their ability to exert violence and provide security. A monopoly is present where only a single actor maintains a sizeable armed force on the national level.

Types of Interaction

Interaction is conflictual when there are frequent violent clashes between at least two of the major market actors. Where such clashes occur infrequently, interaction was labeled as conflictual-neutral. However interaction is neutral, as long as violence between major actors is very rare. Hostility is still widespread, but does not lead to fighting; actors are mostly segregated from each other. A cooperative-neutral mode of interaction includes (a) the absence of violence between major actors, and (b) frequent contacts between actors. Finally, in a cooperative market, major actors frequently interact in good faith and sometimes coordinate actions.

DDR

DDR was coded as 'Yes' where all major parties agreed on a DDR program (or submitted to an international one) and where no party defected from the program. This includes DDR programs which were targeted to particular (usually non-state) actors – not every actor has to be affected equally by a DDR program which would be considered then as successful for the purposes of this analysis. A 'partial' DDR program describes cases in which DDR was not wholly effective, usually because actors hid weapons and kept fighters from being demobilized. The variable was coded as 'No' when actors defected from the DDR program or where not all major actors were included in such a program.

Peace Agreement

This variable is coded as 'Yes' if a peace agreement is in place that all conflict parties have ratified. If such an agreement is absent or has not been accepted by all parties or excludes certain major actors (such as the Bonn Agreement on Afghanistan of 2001 where the Taliban had been excluded from the negotiations), it is coded as 'No'.

Number of Parties to the Previous Conflict

This variable is coded as 'Low' if there were only two major actors (or stable alliances of actors) during the conflict, as 'Medium' if there were three or four major actors, and as 'High' if there were five or more major factions to the conflict.

4.2 Results of the Desk Study

The results of the desk study are presented in Table 10 on the next page. In five out of seven cases, a market leader had emerged three to four years after the end of conflict. In three cases, the market leader was an international intervention force; in the other two, it was the respective government of the country following the withdrawal of international troops. The other two cases, Afghanistan and Cambodia, were characterized by oligopolies of violence and a return to conflict, albeit on a lower level and less openly than before the intervention. However central conflict actors (the Taliban and the Khmer Rouge, respectively) rejected peace and continued fighting. Types of interaction covered the spectrum from conflictual to cooperative-neutral relations. Cooperative interaction could not be observed.

As for the hypotheses, H1 is partly confirmed. In three cases, international troops were market leaders at the time of observation, in another two (Mozambique and Sierra Leone) they had been leaders before they were withdrawn and had handed over market dominance to government actors. However, Afghanistan and Cambodia contradict this hypothesis. Therefore, additional conditions seem to be necessary for intervention forces to successfully exert market dominance. A monopolization of force by external actors could not be observed and seems very unlikely in most post-conflict settings.¹⁹ This observation should make decision-makers cautious against false optimism that the impact of intervention troops can provide sustainability.

The proposition that a peace agreement contributes to market concentration and the peacefulness of interaction (H2) is also partly confirmed. In contrast to H1, only Cambodia contradicts this hypothesis. The 1991 Paris Agreement provided a basis for peace and had been signed by all major conflict parties. However, the Khmer Rouge defected from the agreement in 1992 when they found themselves sidelined after a realignment of political forces on the eve of UNTAC's (United Nations Transitional Authority in Cambodia) deployment. As a result, the hypothesis could be modified to say that 'working' peace agreements (i.e. including accords that are respected by all actors) have the desired effect. Unfortunately, the observation - peace agreements that are respected by all sides lead to amicable relations - is tautological and, hence, worthless.

H3 is confirmed in a very straightforward manner. The data shows that if a DDR program was at least partially successful, the security market was dominated by a market leader. However, the direction of causality is unclear: on the one hand, a DDR program contributes to market concentration by reducing the capacity of spoilers to employ violence, on the other hand, however an international force that dominates the market may be able to coerce other actors into submitting to a DDR process. Actually, this second proposition seems more likely, since DDR programs are generally only implemented *after* the intervention force has been fully deployed.

It cannot be confirmed with certainty whether the number of parties to the previous conflict has any effect on the post-conflict security market in one way or another (H4a and H4b). A higher number of parties seem to be associated with a less concentrated market due to the higher number of potential spoilers, but the relationship is far from being linear. If a correlation exists, it is, at best, a very weak one that would require further testing. No noticeable effect on the kind of interaction can be observed.

Generally, very little can be said about factors influencing the type of interaction, apart from the fact that relations on less concentrated markets tend to be more conflictual. This

19 With the possible exception of very small countries. One example of such a case would be the Australian-led Regional Assistance Mission to the Solomon Islands (RAMSI).

supports the argument that intervention forces establish themselves as market leaders mostly through their capacity to intimidate would-be spoilers. In cases when external forces have been withdrawn or are hampered by overly restrictive mandates or do not have sufficient strength, a conflictual mode of interaction is likely to continue into the post-conflict phase. Afghanistan is certainly a case where an insufficient number of troops contributed to the lack of control of international forces over the security market. Even though the international forces number more than 40,000, there are only 1.4 troops per 1,000 citizens. In comparison, most other missions had a higher *per capita* presence (Kosovo: 22.7, Bosnia-Herzegovina: 8.7, Sierra Leone: 3.2). Only two other missions had a similarly low presence on the ground, UNTAC (2.0) and ONUMOZ (Operations des Nations Unies au Mozambique) (0.4). While the first one failed, the second operated in a much more favorable environment in which both conflict parties showed an earnest commitment to peace.

Table 10: Determinants of Market Structure in Type I Cases

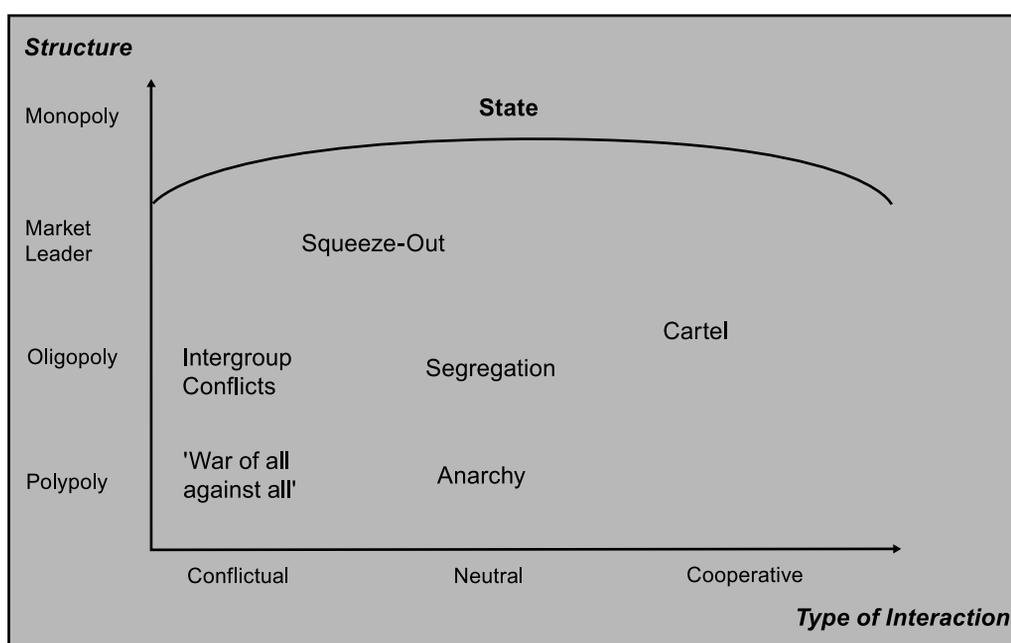
Case	Year	Outcome Variables			Independent Variables		
		Structure	Interaction	Differentiation	DDR	Peace Agreement	# Parties
Afghanistan	2005	Oligopoly	Conflictual	Homogenous	No	No	High
Bosnia-Herzegovina	1999	Market Leader (SFOR)	Neutral	Homogenous	Yes	Yes	Medium
Cambodia	1994	Oligopoly	Conflictual	Homogenous	No	Yes	Medium
Kosovo	2002	Market Leader (KFOR)	Conflictual-Neutral	Homogenous	Partial	Yes	Low
Liberia	2006	Market Leader (UNMIL)	Cooperative-Neutral	Heterogeneous	Partial	Yes	High
Mozambique	1995	Market Leader (Government)	Cooperative-Neutral	Homogenous	Yes	Yes	Low
Sierra Leone	2006	Market Leader (Government)	Cooperative-Neutral	Heterogeneous	Yes	Yes	Medium

Looking at the hypotheses together, it becomes clear that there is no monocausal explanation for market concentration. At first glance, even a partially successful DDR program appears to be sufficient. However, the success of such a program seems to be dependent on the deterrence effect of international forces acting in a peacekeeping function. Also, DDR programs are always part of broader peace arrangements, usually being only one part of a wide range of measures. Nevertheless, a DDR program seems to be a necessary condition for the sustainable improvement of public security: if such programs failed, the security market remained an oligopoly with a comparatively high level of violence.

4.3 Oligopolies of Violence and Human Security

What kind of effect do different kinds of market structure have on the human security of ordinary people in the country? The prediction was that the lower the market concentration, the higher the level of violence: “Oligopolies of violence lead to a moderately high level of violence since each violence actor has to prove *his or her* ability to use it effectively (as a rule: The more oligopolists the more violence)” (Mehler 2004: 545, italics in the original). The variations of oligopolies of violence can be systematized as in Figure 3:

Figure 3: Market Forms by Type of Interaction and Structure



However, it is exceptionally difficult to evaluate this claim since reliable data on violence is usually lacking in post-conflict countries. In most Low Income Countries – even those without a recent internal conflict – statistical capacity is generally low to non-existent. As a result, data such as homicide statistics are frequently missing, biased or unreliable and thus very hard to compare across countries (Human Security Centre 2005: 81). In spite of these shortcomings, economists have calculated that the homicide rate in the immediate post-conflict period is some 25% higher than before the outbreak of civil war. However, homicides gradually return to their pre-conflict levels; after 10 to 15 years the civil conflict no longer exerts a statistically significant influence on the homicide rate (Collier/Hoeffler 2004b: 10). Another study by Shaw (2002) shows that transition countries suffer from an overall increase in the level of crime. A significant proportion of this “new” crime will be facilitated by the lack of the state authorities’ capacity to effectively sanction deviant behavior. Broadhurst (2002) reports that crime rates in Cambodia were initially low after the end of the civil war, but began to rise again after UNTAC ceased supporting the Cambodian police forces.

There are several additional factors that have the potential to contribute to such a rise in crime and interpersonal violence. These include wartime grievances, easier access to

guns, a large pool of demobilized veterans, legacies of drug addiction, the emergence of new criminal actors, an erosion of social and legal norms sanctioning violence, the emergence of a “culture of violence”, and population displacement (Mueller 2003, Human Security Centre 2005: 80, UNODC 2005: 29).

Beyond direct violence, conflict also leads to psychological trauma. Epidemiological studies in post-conflict countries have shown that conflict leads to a higher prevalence of mental illness, including Post-Traumatic Stress Disorder (PTSD), mood disorders (such as depression), and other anxiety disorders. In most cases, the risks of suffering from one or more of these conditions was raised by a factor of three to ten compared with similar countries that had not experienced war (de Jong/Komproe/van Ommeren 2003: 2129).

Unfortunately, these studies only cover a limited number of countries and do not disaggregate their findings by country. Due to this lack of comparable data, we have to rely on indirect indicators and anecdotal evidence. For the five markets dominated by a market leader, this results in an uneven picture. In the Liberian survey (see Table 2), about 70% of respondents said that they personally felt somewhat or very safe. More than 85% reported that their personal security had improved since the war (see Table 1). Lastly, 94.9% of respondents said that UNMIL, the market leader, was important for their personal security, with only 1.4% considering it as a threat to their well-being. The poll taken in Sierra Leone showed comparable results, although respondents were generally a bit more pessimistic, likely due to the uncertainty created by the prior withdrawal of UNAMSIL forces and the handing over of security provision to government actors. In spite of public skepticism, the police (87.8%) and the Armed Forces (81.4%) were rated as important for citizens’ personal security. These figures confirm the results of surveys conducted by the United Nations (Krasno 2005, 2006).

Similar surveys in Kosovo showed a high degree of support for KFOR, particularly among minorities, as well as for para-state security organs like the Kosovo Police Service and the paramilitary Kosovo Protection Corps (ICG 2006: 3, Fn. 7). In general, interpersonal violence in Kosovo has been low in comparison with other post-conflict countries, despite well-publicized incidents suggesting the opposite. However, O’Neill rightly points out that this achievement of KFOR should be taken with a grain of salt: “It does no good to maintain, as did former U.S. secretary of state Albright, Lord Robertson of NATO, and others that the murder rate in Kosovo is lower than in Detroit, Berlin, Moscow, or wherever. This is irrelevant; ask a Serb or Roma if they feel safer today than they did in early 2000. Many incidents go unreported” (2002: 107).

Just as in Kosovo, the international forces in Bosnia and Herzegovina managed to deter open violence relatively successfully. After a few years, homicide rates were at a level comparable to most Western European nations, although experts suspect that unreported household violence was high. At the same time, the mobility of the population continued to be restricted by lasting fears about personal safety, with many citizens preferring to stay within their ethnically bounded areas.

Violent crime was the most salient security issue in Mozambique. After a very successful disarmament program, some demobilized veterans undoubtedly turned to banditry. According to human rights groups, certain criminals even enjoyed protection by high-ranking state officials. Coupled with the police’s ineffectiveness as a crime-fighting force and the largely inoperable judicial system, public fear about crime was very high. Public dissatisfaction with the crime surge in the immediate post-conflict period led to the dismissal of the minister of the interior in 1996.

Despite this inconsistent picture, violence levels seemed to be higher in the two “true”

oligopolies (markets without a market leader), thus supporting the general hypothesis. In Cambodia, open fighting between government forces and the Khmer Rouge, and also between different political factions, escalated after UNTAC's withdrawal in late 1993 and continued until at least 1998, albeit with declining intensity. Similarly, violent crime in Phnom Penh increased substantially during the same time period. Verkoren also reports that the war has left behind a "culture of violence where the instant reaction to an apparent crime is to kill the perpetrator, rather than waiting for a case to work its way through the politicized, weak, and often corrupt court system" (2005: 294). Particularly in rural areas, citizens were wary of the police and other state institutions. Similar observations can be made in Afghanistan where the ongoing war between the Taliban and the alliance of state forces and international troops continues to exact a high toll on the civilian population. There, distrust of the state and the international troops is widespread, particularly in the Pashtun south of the country. Even among ethnic groups favorable to the intervention, there is uncertainty as to whether the fledgling state and the international troops of the International Security Assistance Force (ISAF) and Operation Enduring Freedom (OEF) will be able to guarantee their security. As a result, alternative schemes of protection, of which the Taliban, the various warlords, and tribal militias are only three examples, continue to be in demand, further stabilizing the oligopoly of violence.

Distrust of state institutions is not uncommon in the aftermath of civil war and was widespread in the other five cases as well. Nevertheless, the open fighting that characterized the post-conflict security markets in Afghanistan and Cambodia certainly represented a greater threat (in quantity as well as quality) to human security than revenge killings and violent crime in the other five markets. In this sense, the hypothesis that concentrated markets are safer for ordinary citizens is corroborated.

5. Conclusion and Consequences for Political Practice

Both case studies and the desk study have shown that the term and concept of “oligopolies of violence” is of high utility to describe constellations of actors in the “security market” distinct from a monopoly on the use of violence. The different sub-forms of oligopolies may lead to diverse outcomes. In this project, the sub-form of an oligopoly of violence with a dominant market leader received most attention.

Concerning the policy-relevant questions posed at the outset, only some could be tentatively answered:

- Can oligopolies of violence reduce the susceptibility of post-conflict societies to resort to violence in order to solve conflicts?

Both the case studies on Liberia and Sierra Leone and the desk study confirm that at least those oligopolies of violence with a dominant market leader (usually the peacekeeping mission, later the state) have the potential to greatly reduce the level of insecurity, both in perceptions as well as in real terms.

- Are these oligopolies of violence, consequently, considered legitimate by the central players and, more generally, by the population?

This question could not be answered by the project, at least not directly. Instead of the legitimacy of the overall market structure, we could only gauge the legitimacy of individual violence actors. Apart from peacekeepers and state agencies, a predominant proportion of the population perceived private security companies and neighborhood watch teams as positive. This is an important finding that contradicts numerous normatively informed essays based on a blunt rejection of what is commonly described as privatization of security. The communalization of violence control in the absence of a strong state has to be observed more closely. It can be assumed that the resulting forms of security provision by neighborhood and village-based structures - not only in our case studies of Liberia and Sierra Leone – are frequently legitimate in the eyes of the majority of the population.

- Can legitimate oligopolies of violence be transformed into legitimate monopolies of violence?

Whether legitimate or not, in most post-conflict societies oligopolies of violence were – as a rule – not followed by monopolies of violence. However, in the “success cases”, they were succeeded by oligopolies of violence with a dominant market leader, either the state or an enduring peacekeeping mission. This finding can be considered as “better than nothing”. It should be remembered that, historically, the monopolization of violence was frequently associated with the widespread use of violence.

- Should we cling to the ideal of the state’s monopoly of violence even when state actors lack legitimacy, and have proven inefficient in providing security?

The answer to this question depends on the interpretation of our rather differentiated findings. On the one hand they urge us to reflect on “the factual force of norms”. Here, the respondents of the opinion polls in Liberia and Sierra Leone gave answers that must be interpreted as a clear preference for

“the” state. The ideal of the state (or of the ideal state) is still very much present in the mindset of people who have witnessed protracted phases of turmoil and war – an interesting finding in itself. However, the more qualitative research instruments revealed the distrust towards state agencies as they exist in reality. This mixed message is not easy to interpret: The research project as a whole invites policymakers to pay considerably more attention to alternative providers of security since they can be meaningful locally. This is also the thrust of the argument of Böge et al. (2009). Nevertheless, it would certainly go too far to portray oligopolies of violence as desirable outcomes of outside intervention.

The project further sought to identify criteria for selecting non-state armed actors as cooperation partners. The need for such cooperation was corroborated by our findings: Whoever wishes to avoid costly, enduring protectorates as a by-product of ever more complex UN missions should not ignore non-state actors and has to consider cooperation. Two main criteria for such cooperation come into play: efficiency and local legitimacy. This legitimacy may again partly be the outcome of efficient security provision (output legitimacy), or it may be based on charisma, ideology, symbols and myths, or the congruence in important norms and convictions between the protectors and the protected. It is obvious that most western governments will find it impossible to cooperate with actors who openly violate human rights or make appeals for genocide. But even actors who do not qualify as partners should not be left out of any analysis about the security situation. As a minimum, a sober assessment of their local appreciation is needed. Potential strategies to integrate difficult non-state actors into a holistic security sector strategy may include *inter alia* a strategy of “certification” and an obligation to respect core human rights in exchange for recognition and recurrent, trustful cooperation.

A separate finding concerns “post-conflict” situations in general: It is necessary to question the label “post-conflict” and avoid the mental dichotomies that lead to a handy identification of “post-conflict” with “peace”. We should strive to understand the particular logic of post-conflict situations instead of dismissing them as brief, transitory stages. Such a perspective would also improve the research basis for policy advice. Usually, political strategies for post-conflict strategies employ timeframes that are far too short. These approaches also grossly overestimate the possibilities for social engineering, imagining post-conflict societies as “clean slates” upon which a bright new future can be written. As a result, reform agendas usually include a list of measures that even highly industrialized countries would find hard to implement (Ottaway 2002: 1007ff). “Good governance” is simply not feasible in countries shattered by internal war; “good enough governance” (DFID 2005: 20) would be a much more realistic goal.

6. Directions for Further Research

Post-conflict societies are too rarely evaluated in their own right. Instead, research and policy often approach these societies as passive victims of external forces beyond their control. By treating post-conflict countries as mere objects of Western policy and as staging grounds for international interventions, agency is being denied to local political actors and ordinary citizens alike. That local actors are only relevant to the degree in which they interact with external forces is evident in the discourse which casts these actors as either “spoilers” (Stedman 1997) or “change agents” (Mitchell 2006). This also entails that we broaden our focus beyond those post-conflict countries that the international community has intervened in and include other countries into the analysis. While there are often excellent single-case studies by political scientists, anthropologists, sociologists, historians and area studies specialists about these other countries, they are usually not included in comparative research designs. Our project lays the groundwork for such a comparative endeavor in that it identifies three types of post-conflict societies. Further research would be necessary to see whether these three types also apply to other areas beyond security provision.

The research instruments that could be used for this project were broad in scope, but clearly limited in time and space. The empirical basis in both Liberia and Sierra Leone was limited to the urban sphere. It is obvious that living in the rural areas – with less exposure to the international intervention force as well as (maybe) Western-inspired norms about the best way to provide security – could have an impact on responses. Furthermore, a one-off opinion poll and equally one-off focus group discussions could only provide a snapshot of the security situation at a given point in time. This kind of exercise should be conducted at regular intervals if we wish to gain a more accurate picture of the market dynamics.

We also still know relatively little about how market dominance can be handed over from international forces to the new government of the country despite the fact that this phase is crucial for the overall success of any intervention. And even though the training of local security forces is a key component of all contemporary interventions in order to prepare them for the handover of security provision responsibilities, we do not know when and under what conditions such a withdrawal should take place. It might even be the case that the withdrawal puts the cart before the horse – it seems that international forces are not withdrawn if and when local conditions permit but rather when their domestic audiences demand it. As a result, local security forces are usually *declared* ready when international forces are leaving, not the other way around, turning the rationale of intervention on its head. What happens when international forces withdraw is relatively unknown, not least because the country suddenly becomes less relevant to Western interests. The theoretical framework based on Mehler’s “oligopoly” concept as well as this project’s empirical results suggest that with the exit of a major market actor, other actors will struggle to claim as much of the departing actor’s market share as possible. On the one hand, remaining major actors will try to improve their market position, sometimes through the use of violence. On the other hand, marginal actors will (re-)emerge to provide security for small sections of the population. This is a dynamic that is all too visible even outside post-conflict countries. For example, ethnic militias in Nigeria typically formed in those social or territorial spaces where the state had little to no presence (Agbu 2004: 15, Harnischfeger 2003). Similar processes could be observed in Karachi (Pakistan) and Sierra Leone after UNAMSIL’s withdrawal. Clearly, there is much that can still be learned about post-conflict societies. However, if these lacunae are addressed, there is reason to hope that the international treatment of these countries can be improved beyond their current state.

About the Authors:

Andreas Mehler, Ph.D, is director of the GIGA Institute of African Affairs in Hamburg since April 2002 after having served as senior researcher at the Conflict Prevention Network of the EU (managed by the Stiftung Wissenschaft und Politik in Berlin). He is co-editor (with Henning Melber and Klaas van Walraven) of the yearly 'Africa Yearbook. Politics, Economy and Society South of the Sahara' at Brill publishers (Leiden) and of the academic open access review 'Africa Spectrum' (together with Henning Melber). He has published extensively on conflict and security, state and statehood, French Africa policy and democratisation in Africa south of the Sahara. He has conducted numerous expert missions to African countries. He holds a Ph.D. in Political Science from the University of Hamburg and an M.A. in Political Science and History from the University of Mannheim.

Daniel Lambach, Ph.D. is a Research Fellow at the Institute of Political Science of the University of Duisburg-Essen. From 2007 to 2009, he was employed as a Research Fellow at the Institut for Development and Peace, also at the University of Duisburg-Essen. Prior to that, he worked at the GIGA Institute of African Affairs, Hamburg. He has published on fragile states, international security, post-conflict peacebuilding, development policy and the stability of authoritarian regimes. He holds a Ph.D. in Political Science from the University of Cologne and a diploma in Political Science from the University of Marburg.

Judy Smith-Höhn, Ph.D. is a Senior Researcher with the African Security Analysis Programme of the Institute for Security Studies (ISS). She completed her master's degree in Political Science at the University of Hamburg in 2005. She received her PhD from the University of Leipzig, Germany, for her dissertation entitled: "Challenges to Rebuilding the Security Sector in Post-Conflict Societies: Perceptions from Urban Liberia and Sierra Leone". Her thematic emphases lie on the analysis of violent conflicts, conflict prevention, peace-building and particularly security sector reform within a regional focus on Liberia, Sierra Leone, Zambia and Zimbabwe. From 2005-2007, Judy was a research fellow at the GIGA Institute of African Affairs in Hamburg, Germany. Prior to joining the ISS, she worked as a senior researcher at the Centre for Conflict Resolution in Cape Town. Judy also serves as an evaluator for various crisis early warning indexes.

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