



Economic Community of West African States (ECOWAS) and Sub-Regional Conflict Management and Peacekeeping Missions in West Africa

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Abstract. This paper titled “Economic Community of West African States (ECOWAS) and Sub-Regional Conflict Management and Peacekeeping Missions in West Africa” focused mainly on ECOWAS’s involvement in the resolution of intrastate conflicts in West Africa. The paper therefore seeks to bring to the limelight and analyze the basic problems with respect to Conflict management in Africa. The first is the inability of Peace keeping operation’s to adequately resolve Africa’s conflicts. The study analyzed most of the conflicts in the sub-region but major emphasis was only on examples drawn from the ECOMOG intervention in Liberia, Sierra Leone and Guinea Bissau. After reviewing the evolution of UN peacekeeping and peacemaking missions in Africa during the Cold War era and post-Cold-War periods, the paper analyzed ECOWAS’ first three interventions, in Liberia, Sierra Leone and Guinea-Bissau, setting out its achievements and shortcomings. Through an analysis of more recent interventions in Cote d’Ivoire and Liberia, Sierra Leone and Guinea Bissau by ECOWAS, the paper revealed that sub-regional intervention to enforce law and order is a complex task, even in such small states. The unpreparedness of ECOWAS to engage in peace keeping operations was evident in the lack of rule-enforcing mechanisms to deal with such cases of indiscipline amongst its troops. The study found out that the reaction of the international community through the aegis of the UN, AU, ECOWAS and other multilateral bodies to conflicts in Africa was found to be ineffective to achieve lasting peace and stability for the continent. While the ECOWAS have been making efforts to deploy troops to Africa to contain conflict situations and nip fresh conflicts in the bud, the organisation has lacked the necessary funding required to execute this mission on time. The

paper recommended the creation of awareness on peace agreements, developing professional security forces, Provision of expert training for mediators, Adoption of realistic frameworks and implementation schedules and Exposure those who foment insurgencies as the way-forward for ECOWAS and conflict management and Peace-building in West Africa.

Keywords: Conflict, Management, Peacebuilding, Peacekeeping, Regional Integration

1. Introduction

The lure of regionalism as a regional cooperation and integration where country shared political, economic and security interests has had a collaborative effect on the foreign policy of African countries. After the end of the cold war and the marginalization of Africa, coupled with the vicious cycle of poverty, underdevelopment, disease and internecine conflicts have generally been cited as the fundamental reasons for the aggressive effort for such architects of regional integration and the establishment of an African peace and security mechanism (Abbas, 2017). There have been many attempts at regional integration. The most probably known instance is the European Union (EU), which in some issues has grown beyond an intergovernmental approach to decision making at a supra-state level, and in the recent time New Partnership for African development (NEPAD) in the African context. But argument are put forward that many of this regional cooperation are homegrown, given specific history, political economics and regional context.

There is no doubt that the UN peacekeeping role in Africa has changed over the last four decades. During

the Cold War era, efforts towards peacekeeping were often marred by political competition between the United States and the Soviet Union due to their support of their respective allies in the region (Adebajo, 2019). These two superpowers were generally opposed to UN involvement in the domestic affairs of their respective allies and client states, being more concerned with maintaining the integrity of their own spheres of influence. The spread of their respective ideologies and the preservation of their national interests influenced the way the UN perceived peacemaking and peacekeeping operations in conflicts throughout the world. Both the United States and the Soviet Union were reluctant to support any UN initiatives unless their national interests were satisfied. As a result, only one UN peacekeeping operation (Congo 1960-1964) took place in Africa before 1989. Despite the particular influences of the two superpowers during the Cold War, the UN tried to act independently in managing regional conflicts (Adedeji, 2017).

In some cases, the UN became heavily dependent on the willingness and commitment of the United States and the Soviet Union to participate in the settlement of such conflicts. In other cases, the rivalry between the two superpowers prevented the Security Council from taking any urgent and concrete actions. After the Cold War, the recrudescence of intra-state conflicts became a crucial problem for regional security. The withdrawal of the two superpowers from Africa had a destabilizing role on many countries. Such countries received, over the period of the Cold War, military and financial support to sustain their regimes. Therefore the shrinkage of external support, in addition to other domestic problems, contributed to the degradation of social, economic and security in many countries, which resulted in internal strives and conflicts (Wilson, 2013). The eruption of many civil wars created a huge burden on the UN and the Organization of African Unity (OAU) to prevent and solve these conflicts. Neither the UN nor the OAU were able to intervene in a timely manner in order to secure peace and lessen the impacts of civil wars. The delay of response led to the emergence of sub regional organizations as an alternative to enhance regional peacemaking and peacekeeping capabilities and ensure peace and stability.

The UN and the international community played only a passive role in stopping the recurrence of internal conflicts in Africa, and helping to reduce the violence prevalent in many West African countries. The perceived inadequacy of their combined response, however, prompted sub-regional organizations, such as the Economic Community of the West African

States (ECOWAS), to intervene in many countries to halt the fighting between various factions and attempt to reach a peaceful resolution to these conflicts (Gambari, 2011). In West Africa, ECOWAS emerged as a new actor in dealing with security issues on the regional level. Previously ECOWAS has been devoted entirely to economic development. Consequently, ECOWAS attempted to play a more significant role in Conflict management and peacekeeping missions, first in Liberia, Sierra Leone and Guinea- Bissau, then in Cote d' Ivoire and again a second effort in Liberia. ECOWAS underwent various transformations over the intervening years in an effort to improve its effectiveness in meeting the needs of securing peace and stability in the sub-region.

1.1 Justification of the Paper

The state of affairs in West Africa can simply be described as a paradox, mind-boggling, and hence worth studying about in order to understand and find a solution to it. The member states are endowed with several rich natural resources like petroleum, gold, diamond, timber, rivers and so forth, and yet the member states are part of the poorest countries in the world. The problems of the challenges of incessant violence and killing of people in the sub-region organized by militant terror, ethnic group, rebel and religious groups in demanding for social justice, sustainable development and economic empowerment has call for global attention as it is already taking it tolls on the global security and international economy issues in the African nations and if not look into properly will give a bad images for the cooperation by this stakeholder in the region. The multiplication of conflicts in Africa and the inability of Peacekeeping Operation (PKO) to resolve these conflicts remains a great challenge to African governments, ECOWAS and the United Nations. Following the end of the Cold War, peacekeeping has become central to the international community's response to many complex violent conflicts including those in Africa. Consequently, it has become more common for Conflict management theorist to refer to peacekeeping as an important instrument of positive Conflict transformation. This has led to the re-emergence of such conflicts. Another problem is the failure of the international community to promptly fund PKO in African Continent. The ECOMOG missions in Liberia and Sierra Leone revealed that sub-regional intervention to enforce law and order is a complex task, even in such small states. How then will the Community deal with a similar conflict situation if it arose in a bigger member state like Nigeria? The unpreparedness of ECOWAS to engage

in peace keeping operations was evident in the lack of rule-enforcing mechanisms to deal with such cases of indiscipline amongst its troops. Perhaps, one of the major failures was the inability of ECOMOG to apply the lessons learnt in Liberia to the Sierra Leone operation and other interventions; consequently, such errors were repeated in Sierra Leone (Zartman 2015).

2. Literature Review

The study of regional integration in the third world has indicated that little success has been achieved largely due to limited authority of their institutional structures. Okolo pointed out that in most cases member-states retain the right to veto legislations approved by their representatives at the regional level (Okolo, 2015). Nye has also argued that strong extra-regional actors have played a tremendous role to either promote or hamper progress towards integration in the third world countries (Nye, 2011), since it is a truism that third world countries are highly dependent upon industrialized states for development capital, markets for raw materials and technology. This asymmetrical relationship on the rest of the world renders third world countries particularly vulnerable to external economic influences and impedes regional cooperation. These factors oftentimes provide significant impediments in the way of a successful integration process.

Ravenhill, 1979 views conflict management in three combine elements: prevention, containment and termination. The first relates to avoiding the conflict situation, the containment refer to restrain in the use of force with the aim to deny victory to the aggressor and to prevent the spread of conflict and the last which is the termination involves two stages i.e involving both settlement and resolution. This settlement involves bringing violent hostilities to an end and the resolution which is far more than settlement is very difficult to control, so with the help of this regional integration, cooperation will help in preventing the conflicts.

Most conflict management in African countries adopts realist, legalist or humanitarian approaches to conflicts management. Author like (Ayasi, 2014) focus on the institutional evolution and legal arrangement of regional and sub-regional organization, but implicit in the assumption that the success or the failure of this integration depends on the structure implemented by the institution like the present AU protocol on politics, defence and security and defence pact of the SADC on August 2003. Somerville (2010) in 10 in realist perspective argues that the third party intervention outsiders actors are

determined by the structure of the international system and predicated on colonial and cold war issues. Some authors (Adebajo 2012, Alao, Mackinlay and Olonisakin 2019) focus on the power carryout by some African leaders in explanation of third party involvement, thus analyses by the realities on the ground especially in the DRC region.

3. Theoretical Framework - Collective Security Theory of the United Nations

The concept of "collective security" forwarded by men such as Michael Joseph Savage, Martin Wight, Immanuel Kant, and Woodrow Wilson, are deemed to apply interests in security in a broad manner, to "avoid grouping powers into opposing camps, and refusing to draw dividing lines that would leave anyone out." The term "collective security" has also been cited as a principle of the United Nations, and the League of Nations before that. By employing a system of collective security, the UN hopes to dissuade any member state from acting in a manner likely to threaten peace, thereby avoiding any conflict (Bourquin, 1936).

Collective security can be understood as a security arrangement in which all states cooperate collectively to provide security for all by the actions of all against any states within the groups which might challenge the existing order by using force. This contrasts with self-help strategies of engaging in war for purely immediate national interest. While collective security is possible, several prerequisites have to be met for it to work. Sovereign nations eager to maintain the status quo, willingly cooperate, accepting a degree of vulnerability and in some cases of minor nations, also accede to the interests of the chief contributing nations organizing the collective security. Collective Security is achieved by setting up an international cooperative organization, under the auspices of international law and this gives rise to a form of international collective governance, albeit limited in scope and effectiveness (Ghosh, 2019). The collective security organization then becomes an arena for diplomacy, balance of power and exercise of soft power. The use of hard power by states, unless legitimized by the Collective Security organization, is considered illegitimate, reprehensible and needing remediation of some kind. The collective security organization not only gives cheaper security, but also may be the only practicable means of security for smaller nations against more powerful threatening neighbours without the need of joining the camp of the nations balancing their neighbours.

5. Methodology

This paper adopted the rigorous method of content analysis of written records as a means of ensuring the validity and reliability of our data. Content analysis is a research for the objective, systematic and quantitative description of the manifest content of communication. (Festinger and Katz, 1996), argue that content analysis and coding are used interchangeably to refer to the objective systematic and qualitative description of any symbolic behaviour.

6. Evolution of ECOWAS/ECOMOG'S Institutional Structures for Regional Conflict Management

In the aftermath of the three interventions in Liberia, Sierra Leone and Guinea Bissau, ECOWAS initiated several processes to improve the effectiveness of its organizational structure. This was accomplished through the institution of a standing and permanent structure to better deal with regional security issues. Its efforts finally succeeded when the Mechanism for Conflict Prevention Management and Resolution Peacekeeping and Security were established. The Mechanism replaced previous protocols relating to security matters; it was adopted by the majority of member states during their Summit in Lome in 1999. The Mechanism is comprised of many institutions and organs, all aiming at improving economic development, stability, peace and security in West African countries. Wheeler, (2012) highlighted the factors dealing with the consolidation of peace and security as the following:

i. **Institutions:** The Mediation and Security Council, made up of nine members, is responsible for overseeing the activities of the organs and for making decisions relating to security issues, particularly the deployment of ECOMOG, and appointment of Force Commander. The Executive Secretary, among other responsibilities, is accountable for the functioning of the Community and for the implementation of decisions of the Authority; he also has power to initiate actions for conflict prevention, management, resolution, peacekeeping and security in the sub region peace operation and recommend the appointment of the Special Representative of the ECOWAS and the Force Commander.

ii. **Organs Supporting those Institutions:** The Defense and Security Commission is comprised of defense chiefs of staff of member states of ECOWAS, and is responsible for the preparation of the mission and the generation of forces to be deployed for peace operations.

7. ECOWAS' Peacekeeping and Enforcement Operations in the West African Region

ECOWAS' peacekeeping operations effectively commenced with its mission in Liberia, however, the framework for its involvement in peacekeeping and peace enforcement developed over a long period of time. This is traceable right from its adoption of the Protocol on Non-Aggression (1978) which was aimed at facilitating security and defence cooperation as well as enhancing peace among its members. Though the Protocol on Non-Aggression was vital for enhancing security cooperation, it was not sufficient for dealing with the major security challenges facing the community. Therefore, the Protocol relating to Mutual Assistance on Defence (1981) was created to provide the mechanism for a combined military action during a major threat to sub-regional security (Frempong 2013).

The Protocol of Mutual Assistance on Defence (Articles 2 and 3) adopted the principles of collective security and collective defence. It declared (Article 2) that a threat against a member state will be considered a threat against the entire community. Also, the protocol (Article 13) provided for an Allied Armed Forces of the community to be provided by units from the defence forces of member states during emergencies. Unlike NATO, ECOWAS does not have a standby army. The Protocol of Mutual Assistance on Defence only provided for voluntary contributions by national forces during emergencies. This has proven to be a major challenge getting the member states to comply with the requirement of this protocol. During the Liberian crisis, the bulk of the forces were provided by Nigeria as some of the members did not provide forces initially or provided only few personnel (UNECA, 2014). Also, this trend was visible during the recent crisis in Mali. Though, ECOWAS member states agreed in principle to deploy peacekeeping troops to Mali, the time required for the mobilization of the troops from the various member states was forecasted to be up to a six months period. Consequently, the French came to the rescue; which has raised questions about ECOWAS's position to respond on a timely basis to conflicts in the sub-region.

At the outbreak of the Liberian civil war, the only available reference materials for ECOWAS's peacekeeping operation were the Protocol on Non-Aggression (1978) and the Protocol relating to Mutual Assistance on Defense (1981). The practical situation of its effort in Liberia revealed the inadequacy of ECOWAS's preparedness for

peacekeeping operations, especially as its Treaty (1975) did not envisage such a situation. Therefore, the ECOWAS Revised Treaty (1993), which dealt with the new challenges, was adopted. Under the revised Treaty, the two existing protocols on defence matters were reviewed and made operational to handle the defense cooperation program and to ensure regional peace and security (Bundu 2017). Though ECOWAS's peacekeeping operation is a nascent phenomenon, peacekeeping operations in Africa can be traced as far back as the 1960 establishment of a United Nations peace keeping mission in Congo following the United Nations Security Council Resolution 143 of July 14, 1960. Contrary to the general perception that peacekeeping and peace enforcement are the responsibility of the United Nations, ECOWAS emerged as the major peacekeeping body in West Africa following its experimental mission in Liberia, which was later extended to Sierra Leone and Guinea Bissau.

One of the major challenges of ECOWAS's military mission has been the absence of a clear mandate and the fact that the operations were difficult to define. ECOWAS's military missions oscillated between peacekeeping and peace enforcement, raising questions about the mandate of the mission (Denis and Brown, 2013). However, the nature of the conflicts (in Liberia and Sierra Leone) required ECOWAS to adopt both peacekeeping and peace-enforcement strategies at different stages of the conflict. Peace enforcement will not be possible without the peace enforcer having the capacity and might to induce compliance. ECOWAS has exhibited both the characters of a peacekeeper and an enforcer. Also its knowledge of the area gives a certain advantage over any outside intervener that may not be knowledgeable of the political, economic, social and cultural dynamics of the area (Kieh, 2012).

8. ECOWAS's Ceasefire Monitoring Group (ECOMOG) and Conflict Management in the West African Region

The ECOWAS Ceasefire Monitoring Group (ECOMOG) was established during the 13th ECOWAS Summit in Banjul, the Gambia (6–7 August 1990) and was mandated to intervene militarily to facilitate a ceasefire agreement between the parties in the Liberian conflict. The crisis in Liberia was deeply rooted in a long existing political and socio-economic discontent which manifested initially in riots, including the rice riots (1979) and later resulting in the emergence of Samuel Doe (1980) following a military coup (Reno 2019). This situation developed into a major conflict in 1989

following an insurrection by Charles Taylor's National Patriotic Front of Liberia (NPFL) which sought to overthrow President Samuel Doe. Following the assassination of President Doe (September 9, 1990), the NPFL controlled about ninety percent of the entire country. However, the situation became more complex with several new entrants into the conflict, including the 1991 entry of the Revolutionary United Front (RUF) and the formation of the United Liberation Movement for Democracy in Liberia (ULIMO) in 1996 as well as other factions that emerged from the NPFL (Adebajo 2012).

The emergence of ECOMOG and its military intervention in sub-regional conflicts was an unprecedented action by an African regional organization. During the formation and tasking of ECOMOG, ECOWAS leaders observed that the conflict in Liberia has led to the massive destruction of lives properties, particularly; it has caused the massacre of thousands of innocent civilians, including foreign nationals, women and children. They also argued that the conflict has trapped thousands of ECOWAS citizens and other foreign nationals without any means of escape or protection. They also declared that the ECOMOG operation in Liberia was imperative due to the fact that the Liberian government was unable to deal with the situation in the country, creating a mass exodus of traumatized Liberian refugees to other West African countries. Therefore, on 25 August 1990 about 3,000 ECOMOG forces arrived in Liberia to commence a historical operation that launched ECOWAS into a sub-regional peace keeping body (Khobe, 2010).

ECOMOG operations comprise three main methods: intervention, peacekeeping and peace enforcement, which have been applied to deal with a series of sub-regional conflicts. The ECOWAS intervention missions were based on express invitation by member states that were facing armed confrontation with rebels. ECOWAS troops were deployed with the expressed aim of preventing a humanitarian crisis and total breakdown of law and order. However, these missions were focused on protecting the government of a member state from the embarrassing consequences of a potential overthrow by rebel forces.

ECOMOG peacekeeping missions were a follow up of an intervention mission or peace enforcement mission and eventually peace keeping. ECOWAS peace and enforcement missions mostly started as mere intervention following an invitation from the government of the member state. However, these

missions transformed to peace enforcement missions when the rival armed groups did not accept the proposed agreement for the resolution of the conflict. An ECOMOG peace enforcement operation is aimed at compelling the parties to comply with a ceasefire proposal (Malu 2015).

The emergence of ECOMOG was not a planned initiative but a response by ECOWAS leaders to a conflict that was capable of destabilizing the sub-region. “The decision to intervene in Liberia was not taken unanimously, and nor had the highest-level committee of ECOWAS approved Operation Liberty when the troops landed in Monrovia” (Duyvesteyn, 2014). The Liberian conflict became a major concern as the country was sliding into anarchy. The Liberian government, under Samuel Doe completely lost control of the situation, giving the two rebel factions, the Yomie Johnson faction and the Charles Taylor faction, the chance to intimidate the populace.

The rebels were almost over running the unpopular government of Samuel Doe. Consequently, President Doe requested for ECOWAS assistance in accordance with the ECOWAS Protocol on Mutual Defence Assistance. Doe’s request divided the West African Heads of States. Côte d’Ivoire, that was at ill terms with Doe’s government, led most francophone countries to reject the request, while the Nigerian government under Ibrahim Babangida, a friend of Samuel Doe, led some Anglophone countries to respond to this request (Khobe 2010).

In order to develop an understanding of the integrative nature of ECOWAS in its emerging peace and security format, the linguistic differences in the region played a very important role. It is illustrated in the following way: A meeting of the ECOWAS Standing Mediation Committee, which was dominated by the Anglophone West African countries, was held in Banjul, Gambia on 7 August 1990. A decision was made to intervene in the Liberian conflict by the immediate dispatch of their military to bring the situation under control. Apart from Guinea, the other francophone countries objected to military intervention and called for a diplomatic solution. Despite this objection, the anglophone countries as well as Guinea proceeded with the mission, dispatching a military intervention force named ECOMOG with military personnel from Nigeria, The Gambia, Ghana, Sierra Leone and Guinea, under the command of General Quinoo of the Ghanaian armed forces.

The troops arrived in Liberia on 24 August 1990 and immediately occupied the Freeport in Monrovia. Though ECOMOG may be called a multinational

force, most of its military, equipment and finance was provided by Nigeria. The mandate of ECOMOG was to restore law and order, to create a conducive environment for humanitarian operations, and to facilitate a cease-fire. Though the initial troops to the ECOMOG mission were contributed by only members of the ECOWAS Standing Mediation Committee, Senegal was later persuaded by Nigeria to contribute troops but they withdrew after losing five of their soldiers, with some of their men held hostage by the rebels.

ECOMOG received the cooperation of President Samuel Doe and Prince Yormie Johnson’s rebel faction. They were opposed by the Charles Taylor’s rebel faction which disagreed with the intention of ECOMOG to disarm his forces. “Taylor viewed disarmament as a threat to his claims to leadership. ECOMOG interference was a threat to his almost unstoppable advance and military success. To counter this threat, Taylor decided to attack and strive to expel the ECOMOG forces from Liberia” (Duyvesteyn, 2014).

8.1 ECOMOG Mission in Liberia (ECOMIL)

In December 1989 Charles Taylor’s National Patriotic Front of Liberia (NPFL) which has established a base in Côte d’Ivoire invaded Liberia in an attempt to overthrow the government of Samuel Doe. The ensuing fight led to a severe destruction of lives and property as well as an imminent humanitarian crisis with thousands of refugees fleeing to neighbouring countries. Consequently, ECOWAS attempted a diplomatic solution to the crisis by establishing a Standing Mediation Committee (SMC) to facilitate resolution of the conflict.

Due to the slow pace of the diplomatic effort in light of the intensity of the violence, the SMC chose to discard the diplomatic effort for military intervention and on August 7th 1990, ECOMOG was created to intervene in the conflict (Tuck, 2010). The mandate of the ECOMOG mission in Liberia was to repress the warring factions, disarm the rebels, to facilitate a cease-fire, to release prisoners of war and to stop importation of arms to the conflict area. The Liberian operation commenced in Monrovia with 3,000 ECOMOG soldiers on 24 August 1990. The Liberian mission was targeted to last for six months but it extended to a period of nine years.

ECOMOG mission in Liberia was generally an experimental mission; it was the first time that ECOWAS embarked on a multinational military

mission. Lessons learnt from this mission were supposed to be applied to subsequent missions. Though the members of the SMC were the sole contributors of troops at the beginning of the mission, other West Africa states eventually sent troops to participate in the mission. Eventually a series of countries participated in the Liberian mission at one stage of the conflict. These included Nigeria, Sierra Leone, Guinea, Ghana, Senegal, Gambia, Mali, Benin, Burkina Faso, Côte d'Ivoire, Uganda, Tanzania and Niger. However, the bulk of the troops and equipment as well as the finance for the mission were provided by Nigeria.

By 1995 ECOMOG's strength was a force of 8,430 soldiers with more than 50 per cent of these troops (4,908) coming from Nigeria (Tuck 2010). The ECOMOG operations in Liberia involved the protection of humanitarian aid, disarming of factions, cantonment, mediation and peace enforcement. Though ECOMOG peacekeeping operations were officially terminated in February 1998, about 5,000 troops remained in Liberia to train the Liberia military and to assist with peace building activities (Tuck 2010).

Several factors contributed to make the Liberian expedition a complex and difficult task for ECOMOG. The various parties to the conflict exploited the ethnic division in the country to continuously keep the fighting aflame thus making it difficult to attain a cease fire. The parties to the conflict exhibited double standards during the cease fire negotiations and sometimes accepted a cease fire as a pretext to enable them to re-arm again. Also, the situation was further complicated by the number of factions to the conflict and the use of tribalism by the various factions to keep the conflict aflame.

At the commencement of the conflict, the major parties were the government forces, the Armed Forces of Liberia (AFL) under President Samuel Doe and Charles Taylor's National Patriotic Front of Liberia (NPFL). Whereas the government forces were mainly from the Krahn tribe, the NPFL forces were mainly from the Gio and Mano ethnic groups. However, the situation became more complex with the emergence of Yormie Johnson's Independent National Patriotic Front of Liberia (INPFL) which had broken away from the NPFL. By 1991, there were a series of factions fighting each other: the United Liberation Movement of Liberia for Democracy (ULIMO) which broke into two factions in 1994; the ULIMO-J from the Krahn tribe under the leadership of Roosevelt Johnston and the ULIMO-K by the Mandingo ethnic group under the leadership of Alhaji Kromah (Gambari, 2011).

In 1994, ECOMOG's effort in Liberia was supplemented by the establishment of the United Nations Observer Mission in Liberia (UNOMIL) following the Cotonou agreement in 1993. However, the ECOMOG and UNOMIL relationship was affected by disagreements over control of the joint ECOMOG - UNOMIL operations. There were also disagreements regarding the overall command of the joint operations. ECOMOG believed it should have the overall command since it started the mission and had a larger force than UNOMIL. However, UNOMIL position was based on the Cotonou agreement which gave it some implied supervisory and command responsibilities (Adebajo 2012)

8.2 ECOMOG's Intervention in Sierra Leone

Following its independence in 1961, the political leadership of Sierra Leone was dominated by the descendants of former African slaves who resettled in Sierra Leone after the abolition of the trans-Atlantic slave trade. Successive governments failed to provide the much needed economic growth in the country due to mismanagement and corruption. The situation in the country led to discontentment, violence and hostilities. Consequently the Revolutionary United Front (RUF), which comprised Sierra Leonean dissidents and Liberian NPFL rebels, began a revolt in March 1991 led by Foday Sankoh with the intention of overthrowing the Sierra Leonean government (Ekiyo, 2018).

However, the focus of the rebels was more inclined towards the control of diamond mining than any other political objective. The precarious situation in Sierra Leone was exacerbated by the May 25 1997 overthrow of the government of Ahmad Tejan Kabbah in a coup d'état led by Major Johnny Paul Koroma who appointed himself as Chairman of the newly constituted Armed Forces Revolutionary Council (AFRC). The new military regime allied itself with the RUF rebels. The situation in Sierra Leone was fuelled mainly by the Liberian conflict, especially as the NPFL rebel leader, Charles Taylor was an ally of the RUF rebel leader, Foday Sankoh (Ayasi 2014).

The ECOMOG intervention in Sierra Leone was not only due to the degrading volatile situation in the country but also due to the involvement of the Liberian NPFL rebels in fuelling the Sierra Leone conflict and the potential that an unstable Sierra Leone could undermine any ECOMOG achievement in Liberia. Though ECOMOG recorded a number of achievements in Sierra Leone, including the restoration of the elected government to power, this

did not translate into peace and security as the rebels continued to intimidate and harass both the Sierra Leonean government and the ECOMOG forces.

The ECOMOG effort to dislodge both the AFRC and the RUF from this location continued for a while without success, especially as ECOMOG troops were not well equipped to expel the AFRC and the RUF rebels from their strongholds in the densely forested areas. As the fighting continued, the rebels attained some temporal advantages and invaded Freetown in January 1999, leading to another round of severe fighting for control of the capital. The Nigerian ECOMOG forces bombarded rebel positions in Freetown, with ground troops repeatedly shelling the outskirts of eastern Freetown. After six weeks of fighting, the rebels were expelled by ECOMOG forces from the capital. The casualty rate included 3,000 civilians, 100 Nigerian soldiers and a vast destruction of Freetown by the retreating rebels. Due to this embarrassing situation, the previous ECOMOG strategy of focusing its operations in Freetown was revised. ECOMOG started to strategically deploy its soldiers in the entire country to mitigate any surprise attack by the rebels (Malu, 2015).

Perhaps the most important limitation of ECOMOG in its Sierra Leonean operations was its inability to learn from the Liberian experience as a series of tactical errors in the Liberian operation were repeated in Sierra Leone. The ECOMOG operation had limited knowledge of the forest terrain in Sierra Leone. The RUF took advantage of this in its guerrilla tactics to prolong the conflict and thus generate more disagreements amongst the West African leaders. Also, ECOMOG operations in Sierra Leone were viciously affected by the poor morale of most ECOMOG forces due to poor wages, allowances and rations. This situation created some disciplinary problems; some ECOMOG soldiers were accused of being involved with the illicit diamond trade.

8.3 ECOMOG Operations in Guinea Bissau

In June 1998, the armed forces of Guinea Bissau rebelled against President Joao Bernardo Vieira. Following negotiations led by the Economic Community of West African States (ECOWAS) and the Community of the Portuguese Speaking Countries (CPLP), a cease fire was attained to allow the deployment of a peacekeeping team to supervise the ceasefire. However, this ceasefire was short-lived as the rebel group under Ansumane Mane demanded for the peacekeeping troops to be withdrawn as a

condition for further negotiation with Nino Vieira's government. A subsequent peace agreement was signed in November 1998 allowing for the deployment of an ECOMOG peacekeeping force in the country. Unlike the previous ECOMOG deployments that were dominated by Nigeria, the ECOMOG mission to Guinea Bissau comprised mainly of francophone countries. (Esedebe, 2017).

The delays, logistics and operational problems witnessed in the ECOMOG operations in Liberia and Sierra Leone were again seen in Guinea-Bissau (December 1998 to June 1999). In this mission, the absence of Nigeria was clearly felt as the participating members could not muster enough personnel and the mission lacked vital logistical and financial strength. Though these deficiencies were also present in the Liberian and Sierra Leonean mission, the absence of Nigeria as the backbone of the other two missions, meant a worse scenario.

The conflict in Guinea-Bissau brought to light the existing rivalry between Portugal, the country's former colonial master, and France whose influence over the country surpassed Portugal after Vieira joined the CFA currency zone in 1997. Also, the membership of Guinea-Bissau in the CFA currency zone drew it closer to the francophone block, which saw the interest and involvement of more francophone states in the conflict. Senegal and Guinea supported by France, financed and transported the predominantly francophone ECOMOG force to Bissau (Esedebe 2017).

There were three main challenges to the peacemaking mission in Guinea-Bissau. At the domestic level, the two main opponents (Vieira and Mane) were reluctant to accept a peaceful resolution of their differences; they were more interested in the manipulation of the support of external forces. Despite the presence of ECOMOG peacekeepers, Mane utilized the military to accomplish his political objectives. At the sub-regional level, it became clear that Senegal and Guinea were not neutral, therefore could not be effective peacekeepers. Consequently, they were replaced by ECOMOG troops with no prior involvement in the conflict. However, the meager size of the ECOMOG troop (712 men) was not adequate to provide the needed protection of the capital and the disarming of the militants. At the extra-regional level, peace-building efforts could not be implemented despite the willingness of actors like the UN, the World Bank and the EU to support some peace-building efforts. The security situation was not conducive for donors to deliver on the pledges made at the 1999 Geneva conference (Ero, 2014).

Just like the Nigerian mistake in the Liberian and Sierra Leonean missions, Senegalese and Guinean peacekeepers overestimated their military capabilities to intervene in an existing armed conflict. They presumptuously thought the intervention will easily overcome and overpower the junta. Also, their neutrality was questioned by many who viewed their effort as a device to help a friend and neighbor (i.e. Vieira). However, they argued that their mission was justified based on an existing bilateral defense pact with Guinea Bissau. The above challenges forced them to withdraw their troops (March 1999) and were replaced by ECOMOG troops from Benin, Gambia, Niger, and Togo marking another chapter in ECOMOG peacekeeping operations (Adebajo 2019).

The departure of Senegal and Guinea did not end the interest of the francophone countries in the Guinea-Bissau conflict (though it is a lusophone country). As indicated previously, it is partly due to the interest of France in the area as well as Guinea-Bissau's membership of the CFA currency zone. Apart from the Gambia, all the other peacekeepers were from francophone countries. Even Nigeria, the leading ECOMOG peacekeeper, was absent from this mission, though the Nigerian absence was partly due to its overstretched responsibilities in the Liberian and Sierra Leonean conflicts. This shows that ECOWAS does not have the capacity to deal with several conflict situations at the same time. The conflicts in Liberia and Sierra Leone seem to have overstretched the sub-region to an extent that affected further deployment to Guinea-Bissau. The three countries combined are less than Nigeria and therefore it is almost impossible to think that ECOMOG can deploy a peacekeeping operation in a country like Nigeria Effect (Adebajo 2019).

9. Effectiveness or otherwise of ECOMOG in Conflict management during its Various Operations in the West African Region

ECOMOG, its glaring deficiencies notwithstanding, is an important example of the emerging modes of regionally based peacekeeping. Yet, the ECOMOG operations also demonstrate the difficulties and pitfalls of such regional peacekeeping. In a geopolitically fissured region like West Africa, regionalism proved to be a problematic vehicle for intervention. While regional self-interest forced ECOWAS to stay in the operation, factional frictions within the organisation (exploited in turn by the warlords), forced a prolongation of the conflict. On the other hand, many of the challenges faced by ECOWAS/ECOMOG were also inherent in the very

nature of post-Cold War conflicts and peacekeeping (Haas, 2011). The deep-seated causes of these conflicts, and the lack of overwhelming military advantage on the part of governments and intervention forces, make for protracted violence, and call for political commitment as well as open-endedness in the intervention agenda (in the ECOMOG case, the peacekeepers went in expecting the intervention to last between six and twelve months, and ended up with an involvement that lasted eight years) (Haas, 2011).

These challenges are likely to be exacerbated in the context of weak regional states and collectivities, as ECOWAS demonstrates. The ECOMOG operation occurred at a difficult moment for the states in the region. Firstly, the members of the regional organisation were themselves involved in complex political transitions, with most of their regimes under considerable challenge from their own civil societies. Secondly, the war generated huge resource demands — economic, military, political and diplomatic — that these states were ill-equipped to fulfill, and which the international community was disinclined to deliver. Thirdly, the structural and political crises that sustained these rebellions — economic stress, state decay and delegitimisation, the dislocation of youth — were present among other states in the region. There was thus a real danger that the conflict would spread beyond the borders of Liberia and Sierra Leone (Hettne, Bjorn and Fredrik, 2016).

The major dilemma of weak states is that they are vulnerable to such regional disturbances, but have limited power to stop or suppress them. Ironically, it was arguably this very sense of their own vulnerability and of the possibility of a 'domino effect' within the region, that furnished ECOWAS with the political will to remain engaged in the Liberian issue. Despite the often discouraging prospects, the ECOMOG operation was ultimately successful for several reasons. The first was the sheer political will and tenacity of ECOWAS. The organisation did not have the option of cutting and running, for reasons that were as much self-interested as humanitarian (Hettne, Bjorn and Fredrik, 2016).

The second was the ability to combine three phases of Conflict management: peacekeeping, peacemaking, and peace enforcement, thereby changing mandates of forces in the field as developments on the ground required (a flexibility due, ironically, to the autonomy enjoyed by the military command and as a result of the weak control exercised by the ECOWAS directorate). In addition, the subregional, regional, and international initiatives

each brought different strengths and weaknesses to the peace process.

One of the more notable achievements of ECOMOG, in the long term, is its success in pushing the region from argument to consensus and from division to unity on matters of regional security. Prior to the Liberian crisis, as well as throughout the early stages of the intervention, ECOWAS members displayed little commitment to the ideals of regional security embodied in the 1981 treaty. This cynical disregard was apparent, on the one side, in the way in which certain Francophone states connived in the attack on Liberia and deliberately frustrated peace initiatives and, on the other side, in the way in which the intervening states (Nigeria in particular) acted unilaterally and resisted control by the regional political directorate. And as has been shown, the operation was bedevilled by linguistic and geopolitical rivalries, and undermined by questions about its legitimacy and format. Following the 'resolution' of the Liberian crisis, two crises have revived and extended these disputes in particular (Zartman, 2011).

The first is the 25 May 1997 *coup* that overthrew the newly installed democratic civilian government in Sierra Leone. The Nigerians responded to the *coup* with a naval bombardment of Freetown, followed by an invasion a year later to dislodge the Armed Forces Revolutionary Council (AFRC) *coup*-makers by force. While the earlier ECOMOG intervention into Sierra Leone had generated little controversy, largely because of the (mistaken) assumption that the RUF was merely a creature of the Liberian NPFL, these later events evoked very different responses. Those opposed to the second ECOMOG intervention in Sierra Leone pointed to the 'material' differences between Liberia and Sierra Leone: in the latter case, the civil war had ended, and a government had been elected into power. This made the event of 25 May an internal affair outside the competence of the 1981 Agreement. The intervention also raised fears once more of Nigerian unilateralism. However, there was unanimity within the ranks of ECOWAS, the OAU and the international community that the *coup* was intolerable and could not be allowed to stand. This rationalisation, missing in the 1981 treaty, suggests an expanding horizon of what constitutes 'regional security' and of the acceptable justifications for intervention. The second event is the civil war in Guinea-Bissau, which began as a military rebellion following an attempt by President Nino Vieira to remove his armed chief, General Asunmane Mane, on charges of trading arms with Casamance rebels across the border in Senegal. Forces from Senegal

and Guinea intervened to support Vieira's government, but unlike Liberia and Sierra Leone, ECOMOG forces were not committed (Kaufman, 1996:136-175).

One explanation was that the Anglophone countries in ECOMOG were anxious to pay back Senegal and the Francophone countries for their earlier lack of support to ECOMOG. It should be noted, however, that the mediation effort in Guinea-Bissau, by contrast, was not conducted exclusively by ECOWAS, but co-ordinated with the Community of Portuguese-speaking Countries (CPLP), which included Portugal, and there was some ill-disguised rivalry with ECOWAS.

These 'post-Liberia' developments have revived several issues. For example, what are the parameters for intervention (in other words, which conflicts in the region qualify for intervention and which not)? Who initiates intervention? Should intervention be unilateral, bilateral, or multilateral? With reference to Guinea-Bissau, how is 'region' to be defined? Is the criterion territorial, or linguistic? Another source of debate is how the mutual security mechanism is to be defined. It is noteworthy that the L'ANAD structure has continued to exist alongside the ECOWAS mutual defence arrangement (Khobe, 2010).

In December 1997, the Fourth Extraordinary Summit of the ECOWAS Heads of State and Government held in Lomé directly confronted these issues, approving the establishment of a regional mechanism for conflict prevention, management and resolution, and regional security. Following this, a meeting of experts in Banjul in July 1998 drafted a set of proposals for such a Mechanism for the approval of the ECOWAS Heads of State meeting in Ouagadougou in October. These proposals recognised that "... *though the organization [ECOWAS] was established for the primary purpose of economic integration of the region, economic development can only be effectively pursued in a secure and stable environment*", thus getting around the 'constitutional' issue that had earlier generated such heat.

The mechanism consisted of an elaborate set of structures, with a Mediation and Security Council of nine member states at the apex, elected from among the sixteen members of the organisation, and responsible for taking decisions on issues of regional peace and security on behalf of the ECOWAS Authority of Heads of State (Laursen, 2018). The military force would continue to be called ECOMOG. ECOMOG would be deployed in accordance with the terms of the 1981 treaty (see

above). But there was also a significant new twist. While the provisions for intervention would not extend to "... internal situations that are sustained and maintained from within", it would apply to those situations in which an internally-driven conflict:

- Threatened to trigger a humanitarian disaster;
- Posed a serious threat to peace and security in the subregion; or
- Erupted "... following the overthrow or attempted overthrow of a democratically-elected government."

These prescriptions are the result of a growing consensus within the region and between the various factions in ECOWAS that conflict is self-defeating. As a result, states in the region were able to demonstrate considerable flexibility, redefining their positions in order to promote consensus regarding the nature of regional security mechanisms. For the region, the conflicts in Liberia and Sierra Leone have been a traumatic experience, conferring both a sense of its vulnerability as well as its 'regionness'. After years of myopic focus on national sovereignty and security, West African states now see the connection between domestic anarchy and regional political instability much more clearly. States are ready to concede that 'my neighbour's business is my business' and, correspondingly, accepting the necessity of acting collaboratively within a regional framework to tackle these problems rather than attempting to seek favoured status and arrangements with external powers (Luttwak, 2016).

Notwithstanding this consensus, which helped to facilitate an end to the Liberian crisis, the ECOMOG experience teaches the important lesson that one should not conflate regional security and human security. The sharp polarisation that greeted Abacha's sudden death in June — with those who remembered him primarily for his contributions to regional peacekeeping (such as the OAU Secretary General and President Kabbah of Sierra Leone) celebrating him as a 'great statesman', while those (including the majority of Nigerians) who recalled his brutal repression of human rights and democracy at home rejoicing publicly — demonstrated the tension in the region between these two forms of security. The authoritarian structures prevalent in the region facilitated external intervention to support regional security but, at the same time, undermined human security on the domestic front. There have been further indications that, while regional political stability is a necessary condition for human security, it is far from sufficient.

The settlements that brought 'peace' to Liberia and Sierra Leone did not forcefully seek to address the domestic issues (of governance, economic justice and exclusion, etc.) at the root of regional conflagration. The end of hostilities in Liberia, capped by 'successful' elections, has not prevented the reappearance, under Taylor's government, of many of the same abuses which provoked the war in the first place. In many respects, the post-civil war government in Liberia has assumed the predatory hues common to the region's governments. After its prodigious sacrifices to ensure peace, ECOWAS has shown much less inclination or ability to impose acceptable standards of governance on the region. Without this, the 'regional security' mechanism is liable to degenerate into a protection racket for autocrats (Beer, 1970).

10. Conclusion and Recommendations

The emergence of ECOWAS as a regional force indicates that security communities in Africa cannot be fully explained by the traditional paradigms of international institutional politics. Unlike the African Union, the emergence of ECOWAS as a security community is better analyzed under the Collective Security theory of the UN. ECOWAS proved the possibility of the emergence of a security community from real politick. This paper set out and appraised the ECOWAS traditional peacekeeping operations in the West African region with the view to determine how effective they have been as a Conflict management tool in Africa. This is based on the role played by the ECOWAS which is charged with the responsibility for the maintenance and sustenance of peace and security in Africa.

In conclusion, peace agreements are fundamental to the management and resolution of conflicts because they provide the essence of resolutions of the UN Security Council and the ECOWAS Mediation and Security Council, and thus the legal basis for peacekeeping and peace enforcement. However, the assumption that leaders of armed factions are rational political actors driven by legitimate grievances and that they will therefore commit themselves to brokered agreements is fallacious. The dangling of carrots (the confidence-building approach) must therefore be accompanied by the wielding of a sizeable stick (robust diplomacy backed by a credible enforcement capacity) for peace implementation to succeed in the West African region.

The reasons for the inefficient response could be attributed to several factors. These include; the overburdening of the ECOWAS, financial handicap

by the ECOWAS, UN and AU, delay of intervention, lack of proper mandate and poor logistics. Others include legality of peacekeeping/peace enforcement, use of weak and inexperienced forces and the attitude of western countries. The challenges of peacekeeping in Africa which has to be addressed to ensure success of PKO in Africa were also noted. These include securing comprehensive political settlement, securing and sustaining consent, and understanding the sensitivity of the people. Others are rapid deployment capability, legality for peacekeeping/peace enforcement and use of weak and inexperienced forces. The apparent loss of interest in Africa by the super powers as Africa has lost her strategic importance since the end of the cold war cannot be ignored.

Nevertheless, much can be done to improve peace-making processes in the region as recommended below:

Awareness creation on peace agreements:

Concrete efforts should be made by ECOWAS, NGOs and prominent personalities involved in peace-making to educate parties to conflict on the essence of peace agreements. Signed agreements imply the willingness to show consent, commitment and responsibility to the peace-making process which are necessary and essential factors for eliciting compliance. An assumption of these factors only undermines agreements signed.

Avoid rewarding violence: Peace agreements should seek to resolve underlying (that is both immediate and root) causes of conflict without legitimizing insurgencies, encouraging complicity and condoning violence through granting amnesty and rewards to ex-combatants. Such acts negate the zero tolerance for unconstitutional changes under the ECOWAS Supplementary Protocol on Democracy and good governance.

Develop professional security forces: Non-state armed groups have challenged and undermined the capacity of states to defend and protect their citizens, and to generally maintain stability, law and order within their territories. Some ECOWAS member states, through bad governance practices, have also created conditions for instability. Human security of citizens and the sovereignty of states are thus threatened, creating avenues for non-compliance by both state and non-state actors with peace agreements. This happens in the face of a lack of credible peace enforcement options, as evident during the pre-Mechanism ECOWAS peace-making processes. A simultaneous process of security sector reform, both at national and regional levels focusing on appropriate oversight functions, the building of

capacity and equipping the security agencies will help address such security threats. In addition, member states must increase their defence budget expenditures to adequately resource the security sector towards providing credible security, rather than holding on to minimalist-state principles and concepts to the detriment of peace and security. Also, in line with its coercive diplomacy efforts, ECOWAS should ensure that a well-resourced, robust and credible ECOWAS Standby Force (ESF) could launch and sustain enforcement operations as an option of last resort.

Provide expert training for mediators: As part of measures to complement its coercive diplomacy efforts, training especially for ECOWAS Council of Elders and recognised ECOWAS mediators on effective negotiations and mediation before, during and after the eruption of conflicts would be timely. The United Kingdom (DfID) has allocated funding for a project to be undertaken in close consultation with the Executive Secretary and other senior staff of ECOWAS. It is envisaged that this project may include assistance to the Executive Secretariat to develop a mediation and negotiation unit as a component of the Executive Secretary's Cabinet. In addition, consideration will be given to developing a high-level mediation-training package for nominated senior West African politicians, diplomats and military commanders, the ECOWAS Council of Elders, and ECOWAS parliamentarians.

Adopt realistic frameworks and implementation schedules: The adoption and gradual implementation of the Mechanism has indeed enhanced peace-making processes in West Africa. Hitherto, intervention in conflict situations and the peace-making process was ad hoc and not clearly defined. The establishment of the Mechanism has, however, delineated when to intervene in a conflict and procedures to follow in conflict prevention, management and resolution. This notwithstanding, the ECOWAS conflict Mechanism is still in its infant stages, and yet to be fully operationalised. This factor should be considered in brokering over-ambitious framework-substantive and unrealistic implementation agreements in the peace-making process.

Expose those who foment insurgencies: Finally, peer review by states or a shadow review by civil society should be intensified, especially in the area of peace and security since this will play an effective role in naming and shaming states promoting or sponsoring insurgencies against other states. Efforts in this direction will enhance conflict prevention in the region.

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