

**A COMPARATIVE PERSPECTIVE OF ECOMOG PEACE
OPERATIONS IN LIBERIA AND SIERRA LEONE**

by

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Masters in International Affairs and Diplomacy

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DECLARATION

I, Rabi Isma, hereby declare that this project is a record of my research work. References to works by other authors have been duly acknowledged. This project has not been submitted to any other institution other than Ahmadu Bello University for examination.

.....
Rabi Isma

2001

CERTIFICATION

This thesis entitled 'A comparative perspective of ECOMOG peace operations in Liberia and Sierra Leone' by Rabi Isma MIAD/SOC.SCI/19336/99-2000 meets the requirements governing the award of the Masters degree in International Affairs and diplomacy

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DEDICATION

This work is dedicated to all the people who strive to make the world a peaceful place to live in.

ACKNOWLEDGEMENT

- God, with whom all things are possible.

And:

- Thank you to my supervisor, Dr Hudu for his guidance.
- To my friends and colleagues for the work and play - the trip around West Africa was an exciting adventure
- Special thanks to my sister Maryam for the laughs... and for reminding me in so many ways not to take life too seriously.

ABSTRACT

This study is a comparative analysis of ECOMOG peacekeeping efforts in Liberia and Sierra Leone with a view to highlighting the differences and similarities in approaches, the difficulties faced, and resulting consequences for the region while attempting to answer questions such as: should the UN be directly involved or should it just provide material and monetary support for ECOMOG? ECOMOG's initial deployment, interventions, and operations in Liberia and Sierra Leone until 2000 are the focus of this study.

The study will analyse in a comparative manner ECOMOG's peace efforts in Liberia and Sierra Leone by providing an in-depth picture of the situation vis-à-vis problems and peculiarities with a view to learning from past mistakes and aiding plans for future interventions.

The first chapter traces the emergence of peacekeeping on the international scale and relates it to the birth of ECOMOG. Chapter two gives an overview of the some of the literature available on the subject and the trend in thinking. In chapter three the mandate of ECOMOG is considered in detail from which the operations in the two countries Liberia and Sierra Leone are analysed in Chapter four.

In the final chapter is the conclusion drawn from the study, lessons to be taken from the case, and recommendations for the future.

GLOSSARY OF ACRONYMS

AAFC	Allied Armed Forces of the Community
AFRC	Armed Forces Revolutionary Council
CDFs	Civilian Defense Forces
DDR	Disarmament, Demobilization, and Reintegration programme
ECOMOG	Economic Community of West African States Monitoring Group
ECOWAS	Economic Community of West African States
INPFL	Independent National Patriotic Front of Liberia
LRRRC	Liberian Repatriation, Resettlement and Rehabilitation Committee
NPFL	National Patriotic Front of Liberia
OAU	Organisation of African Unity
RUF	Revolutionary United Front
SMC	Standing Mediation Committee
UN	United Nations
UNHCR	United Nations High Commissioner for Refugees
UNAMSIL	United Nations Assistance Mission to Sierra Leone
UNOMSIL	United Nations Observer Mission to Sierra Leone

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CHAPTER ONE

INTRODUCTION

1.1 Background

As a corporate body, the military is the easiest tool employed by political leaders to achieve the success that may elude them through diplomatic means.

International peacekeeping operations refer to the use of the armed forces as a stopgap and part of an overall process of peacemaking (Ritke). It is the beginning of a new stage in the peaceful resolution of conflict and not a culmination of the conflict. It is an extra-ordinary military action because it calls for the use of soldiers not to fight and win, but to prevent fighting, to maintain cease-fires, and to provide order while negotiations are being conducted (Cox).

1.2 The United Nations

The concept of peacekeeping was developed by the United Nations Organization (UNO) as part of its mechanism for the resolution of international conflicts. It has increasingly found acceptance and use as a means of pursuing collective security goals.

Following the victory by the allied forces during the Second World War, the leaders of the alliance to establish a United Nations' Organization to maintain international peace and security reached a decision. Chapter seven of the organization's charter provides some comprehensive provisions on how to deal

with actions vis-à-vis threats to the peace, breaches of the peace, and acts of aggression. Article 41 empowers the security council to take measures not involving the use of armed force to give effect to its decision and Article 42 authorizes the council to 'take such action by air, land, or sea forces as may be necessary to maintain or restore international peace and security' where measures taken under Article 41 would be inadequate.

Soon after the establishment of the U.N, the Cold War surfaced, limiting the capacity of the Security Council to employ force to maintain international security. Thus, with the exception of Korea, made possible by Soviet walk out from the council and Iraq in the post cold war era, the council had never agreed to enforce peace. It had to look for other measures short of direct use of force to maintain international security by resorting to non-enforcement military missions as part of its effort to maintain international security.

The UN Charter has provided a wide leverage for the Security Council to take whatever peaceful measures it considers necessary to maintain international peace and security providing the legal cover for peacekeeping operations as part of the mechanism for settlement of disputes.

In the U.N, the principle of peacekeeping dictates that enforcement plays no part (Ritke); the tool is persuasion. Once a soldier is deployed for peacekeeping operations, he becomes a diplomat using the gun solely in self-defense.

Other principles that have evolved with the UN peacekeeping operations include deployment with the consent of the host state; objectivity, neutrality, and non-alignment with negotiation as the main weapon.

In addition, peacekeeping is to be an arrangement under which the peacekeepers are to withdraw as soon as an agreement is reached and implementation is completed or reaches an acceptable stage.

The U.N Charter has also recognized the need to encourage regional arrangements for the maintenance of peace and security as provided for in Article 53 of the Charter.

However, whereas the U.N peacekeeping operation evolved as a non-enforcement measure, regional arrangements depend on the initiators, ranging from peaceful operation to outright forcible enforcement.

In the American hemisphere, the Organization of American States (OAS) has managed conflicts between Costa Rica and Nicaragua (1948-1979), Honduras and El Salvador (1969), and the Dominican Republic (1965) basically along the

lines of U.N arrangements. The Middle East experience has been that of using the arrangement by the Arab League to give cover to Syria, which invaded part of Lebanon. In the case of the O.A.U, the attempt at setting up a peacekeeping force for Chad in 1979 was largely a failure due to poor planning, logistics, and political direction (Pelcovits, 1983)

1.3 The International Community

Under different circumstances the 'international community' refers to different subsets of the world population.

The international community could be regarded as the UN Security Council: when the Security Council debates an issue and passes a resolution, the 'international community' is said to have responded.

However, the decisions are not necessarily representative of the opinions of many in the world, while the permanent members' veto powers do not give the appearance of fairness to the decision-making.

The international community may also refer to members of the Organisation of Economic Co-operation and Development (OECD).

In certain cases international aid organizations, both non-governmental (e.g. Red Cross and the Save the Children Fund) and inter-governmental (e.g. UNICEF and UNHCR) are often seen as the international community in a war.

The media and International business organizations are also an important part of the international community. The media because they pick up the stories and carry the news, the international business community because the nature, amount, timing, and location of their investments and related business decisions may be crucial factors in the start of a war, the funding of a war, and recovery after a war.

Thus, many different groups make up what is known as the international community and they play roles any major conflict around the world today.

1.4 ECOMOG

In August 1990, West African leaders (including the secretary general of the OAU) met in Banjul, Gambia under the aegis of the Economic Community of West African States (ECOWAS) and under Nigeria's political, economic, and military leadership, established the ECOWAS Ceasefire Monitoring Group (ECOMOG), which provided the military wherewithal to intercede between the warring factions in Liberia's internecine civil war.

The cease fire monitoring role was later expanded to include the enforcement of the many ephemeral peace accords signed by the armed factions and later still the ECOMOG mission was deployed to Sierra Leone which was engulfed in crises.

Although the decision to deploy troops was political, ECOMOGs operations have been for the most part military.

Nigeria remains the largest contributor to ECOMOG's troop and logistical requirements as well as the key player in the peace initiatives, which has frequently brought leaders of the warring factions together for a negotiated settlement of issues fuelling crises.

The events in Liberia and later Sierra Leone are enough evidence of the role of economic unions in peace keeping.

One of the most memorable achievements of ECOMOG is the restoration of peace and political stability in the war torn mineral rich country of Liberia which had been flung into seven years of bitter fighting exacting a huge toll on the entire country and its people with an average *negative* GDP drop of 8% per annum over the seven year period.

The peacekeeping initiatives developed and practiced in the form of ECOMOG are unique and show the seriousness of purpose to bring about collective security. Other regional organizations (except for the Warsaw Pact's intervention in Eastern Europe) have not taken the bold step to enforce peace in their respective areas.

The idea to launch the ECOMOG operation in Liberia was an attempt by ECOWAS to employ peacekeeping operations as part of its approach to finding a peaceful solution to the Liberian crisis in line with the practice already established by the UN.

1.5 Justification for the study

Peacekeeping is an issue of immense national and international relevance especially in this age of globalization and successful peacekeeping operations ensures the security of lives and property as well as promoting the well being of the populace and the international community in general.

This study will provide an in-depth picture of the situation vis-à-vis problems and peculiarities with a view to learning from past mistakes and aiding plans for future interventions.

1.6 Scope And Limitations of the study

The study made use of available materials including published works, magazines, the Internet and personal interviews with veterans; it may be limited by the non-accessibility of some relevant information as well as bias/prejudice in some source materials although all attempts were made to guard against this and maintain objectivity.

1.7 Methodology

Both primary and secondary sources of information were utilized: interviews, books, documentary records, academic publications, and some non-academic publications such as newspapers, magazines, newsletters, circulars, journals, and official records (see literature review and bibliography).

1.8 References

- The United Nations – A Short Political Guide (S. Bailey)
- The Evolution and Conduct of ECOMOG Operations in West Africa (Khobe: 2000)
- A brief History of Sierra Leone (www.cryfreetown.org)
- Report on the crisis in Sierra Leone (www.sierra-leone.org)
- International Peace and Security: The Nigerian Contribution (edited by Maj Gen Chris Garuba)
- Whither peacekeeping in Africa? (Hutchful: 1999)
- Human Rights Watch World Report (1999)

CHAPTER TWO

LITERATURE REVIEW

There have been numerous publications and reports on the Liberian and Sierra Leonean crises ... on different levels. ECOMOG has its share of critics on some of its operational procedure. By and large it is recognized, despite the challenges and problems it faced in Liberia and Sierra Leone, as a well-intentioned initiative that has made significant achievements within the West African region.

Excerpts from a Time article titled 'World faces a brutal choice in Sierra Leone':
'... in Sierra Leone the international community appears unable to muster the will and resources to stop a ragtag guerrilla band that has already killed and mutilated tens of thousands more people than Slobodan Milosevic's forces ever did ... the only successful effort, partial at least, to keep peace in Sierra Leone came when a Nigerian-led force, known as ECOMOG, intervened ... to stop the rebels from overrunning the country' (Karon: 2000)

Excerpt from a CNN report in 2000: '... the United States and the United Nations had approached Nigeria about providing troops to bolster the UN peacekeeping force. Nigeria led the regional intervention force, ECOMOG, which was maintaining peace in the West African nations prior to the arrival of the UN peacekeepers' (CNN: 2000)

In an article titled 'Whither peacekeeping Africa?' Eboe Hutchful was skeptical about the effectiveness and sustainability of ECOMOG:

“The ECOMOG operation and its challenges can only be understood against the background of the ‘geopolitical facts’ of the region. Five of these were particularly important.

The first was the Anglophone/Francophone cleavage in the region, a cleavage as linguistic as it is cultural and political. Of the sixteen members of ECOWAS, nine are French-speaking, five are English-speaking, while two (Guinea-Bissau and Cape Verde) are Lusophone. Previous attempts at regional co-operation within West Africa have reflected, and continue to do so, these colonial linguistic and political affinities, particularly among the Francophone states.

ECOWAS itself was the first attempt to overcome these historical alignments and to initiate some form of overarching regional integration. Its limited success was an indication of the durability of some of these colonial relationships.

A second factor was the dominance of Nigeria within the region, in terms of population and economic resources, a dominance, which was greatly augmented by the oil boom in the 1970s ... A final geopolitical factor of significance was the pervasive praetorianism in the region; this, it is suggested, was germane to both explaining that provoke the ECOMOG intervention, as well as the manner in

which ECOMOG states rationalized and conducted their operations. (Hutchful: 1999)

A 1998 Human Rights Watch report maintained that 'ECOMOG's poor human rights record in the past raises questions about its appropriateness as trainer of the new Sierra Leonean army, unless it is closely monitored and assisted by qualified UNOMSIL personnel ... UNOMSIL should insist that ECOMOG respect the rights of demobilized combatants and that high standards are maintained ...'

The report conceded however that 'ECOWAS and ECOMOG have played key roles in recent political negotiations and military interventions respectively in Sierra Leone'

In 1999, Human Rights Watch maintained that 'prisoners taken by ECOMOG, some of whom had surrendered and many of whom were wounded, were frequently executed on the spot often with little or no effort to establish their guilt or innocence. Officers to the level of captain were present and participated in the executions ... ECOMOG officials have yet to initiate a formal investigations into the killing ... all sides in the conflict showed little respect for prisoners of war, with extra judicial execution following surrender being common' (HRW: 1999)

On the legitimacy of ECOMOG operations:

'... While well intentioned, these decisions, in effect, meant that a small group of member states, lacking the required mandate, committed the regional organization to what turned out to be a protracted and expensive military enterprise. These origins led to a bitter legal wrangling and questions about the legitimacy of the ECOMOG initiative. Some countries felt that adequate consultations had not been undertaken before the force was deployed.

More fundamentally, they questioned what they saw as an illegal extension of the mandate of ECOWAS from economic issues, as enshrined in the charter, to military concerns. They argued that an organization established primarily, if not solely, for the facilitation of economic integration, had no mandate to take on political and security related responsibilities, even for humanitarian reasons.

There were also questions whether the 1981 protocol on mutual defence, on which the entire concept of intervention was built, provided enough scope and authority for actions of this magnitude. There were several responses to these objections:

The first was that the conflict became internationalized when Cote d'Ivoire and Burkina Faso allowed Taylor to launch his attack from within their borders. Secondly, the deployment of ECOMOG was the only option left for these sub regional states in a situation of complete breakdown of sovereign authority. Third, to those who argued that the mandate of ECOWAS was limited to economic

objectives, it was retorted that economic integration could not take place in a security vacuum.

'To further complicate the picture, there was a similar lack of consensus among the rebels in relation to the ECOWAS intervention. While Doe and other Liberian factions accepted the Banjul Accord, Taylor, whose forces were at the gates of Monrovia, and who suspected that the intervention was designed to cheat him out of victory, rejected it.

The subsequent landing by ECOMOG was welcomed (and indeed assisted) by Prince Johnson and his faction, the INPFL (a breakaway from the NPFL), but opposed by Taylor, whose faction declared ECOMOG an invading force and fired on it as it landed, causing several casualties.

ECOMOG thus broke with a cardinal principle of traditional peacekeeping: the necessity of obtaining the agreement of all warring parties to external intervention. Consequently, it was forced to take sides and ally itself with some of the very warlords and political forces that it was designed to restrain, and was thus compromised from the very beginning by a perceived lack of neutrality (Hutchful: 2000)

A paper entitled 'The Evolution and Conduct of ECOMOG operations in West Africa' written by the ECOMOG force commander in Sierra Leone highlighted

ECOMOG operations and achievements and addressed some of the challenges and problems the force faces. Excerpt:

'The success of the force – despite numerous shortcomings and some failures – has attracted international attention ... The effectiveness of ECOMOG depends directly on the level of political consensus existing within the community on how the mission it is engaged in should be handled. Achieving this consensus has been one of the biggest problems to plague ECOMOG operations. In Liberia, there was a clear division between the five members of the standing mediation committee and the other eleven members of ECOWAS. In Sierra Leone, there was deep disagreement on when force should be employed and to what extent. This has led to situations where some member states actually offer their territories and give extensive support to the insurgent movements against which ECOMOG is conducting military operations.

ECOMOG should ideally be constituted and deployed at the sole discretion of member states. This again has not been the case because of the enormous influence and interest of the external economic investors in the politics of the sub region. Consequently, all ECOMOG operations are considerably influenced by extraregional interests ... ECOMOG member states lack the economic resources to sustain the kind of large-scale military operations that are dictated by situations on the ground.

Where the necessary political will is lacking among the western powers, the level of logistics needed by commanders on the ground to get the job done, becomes equally absent. Consequently, ECOMOG military operations usually start off on a sound footing and then get bogged down by insufficient logistics. This creates the opportunity for Western powers to force negotiations and settlements that represent such a compromise that, in most cases, they satisfy no one. (Khobe: 2000).

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- The Return of Peace in Liberia (Nigerian Army Information Briefs)
- Managing Chaos in the West African Sub-region: Assessing the role of ECOMOG in Liberia (Draman, Carment: 2000)
- Defense Studies (July 1995)
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- The Evolution and Conduct of ECOMOG Operations in West Africa (Khobe: 2000)
- State Rebuilding after State Collapse. Security, Democracy & Development in Post-War Liberia (CDD: 1998)
- International Peace and Security: The Nigerian Contribution (edited by Maj Gen Chris Garuba)

- War and health in Liberia and beyond (Yip: 2000)
- Human Rights Watch World Report (1999)
- Whither peacekeeping in Africa? (Hutchful: 1999)
- Magazines and Journals (see bibliography)

CHAPTER THREE

THE ECOMOG MANDATE

3.1 Background

The Economic community of West African States (ECOWAS) Monitoring Group (ECOMOG) is a 'non-standing' (Khobe: 2000) military force comprising of land, sea, and air components set up by the member states of the ECOWAS to deal with the security problem that followed the collapse of the formal state structure in Liberia in 1990.

ECOWAS itself consists of sixteen member states with a total population size of about 220 million people. The official languages of member states are: English, French, Arabic, and Portuguese.

The population of ECOWAS states is mainly made up of young people most of whom lack education, technical skills and the general requirements to function effectively in modern economies. There is a wide gap between the rich and the poor/ uneven distribution of wealth, and between urban and rural areas. The governments generally 'lack the resources' (Khobe: 2000) to provide for the needs of the teeming populations and, as a result, constant agitation for change thrives.

The region is thus a hotbed of political, economic, and social unrest that has spawned revolutionary movements driven mainly by disadvantaged youths and often funded by elites out of favour with incumbent governments.

Governments tend towards autocracy and repression, undermining any opposing forces – through military rule or one party structures; the main priority being the preservation of the regime.

Compounding the political setting is the multiethnic/tribal nature of the states, which without exception are composed of different nationalities some with very different cultural values. The origins of this can be traced to the colonial powers (Britain, France, Portugal, and Germany), set up for their administrative and economic purposes.

By the late 1970s, West African leaders had recognized the need to pool some resources to address various internal security problems, many of which tended to spill over to neighbouring countries.

They signed a non-aggression pact in Lagos in 1978. The non-aggression treaty failed to provide for mutual security against the threat of internal insurrections. An ECOWAS mutual defence treaty, signed in Freetown in 1981, recognized any aggression against a member state as aggression against the whole community. It anticipated three possible scenarios:

- An internal armed conflict in a member state organized and actively supported from without
- An armed conflict between two or more member states; or
- An external armed threat or aggression

The treaty provided for certain organizational structures around which intervention would be built. These national units would be based in their respective countries, but organized for joint military exercises or deployed for armed intervention and/or assistance¹.

However, the ECOWAS intervention in Liberia did not follow the script envisaged by the 1981 treaty. One reason was that the treaty itself was never implemented. Rather the intervention was initiated by the Standing Mediation Committee (SMC), a specialized body formed by ECOWAS three months earlier with the limited and specific mandate of mediating disputes between two or more member states. The members of the SMC consisted of three Anglophone states (Nigeria, Ghana, and Gambia) and two Francophone states (Togo and Mali). No reference was made to civil wars in the mandate of the SMC.

¹ Significantly, the 1981 treaty was preceded by the establishment in June 1978 of L'ANAD (Accord de non aggression et d'assistance en matiere de defense, or Treaty of Non-Aggression, Assistance, and Mutual Defence), in Abidjan by seven Francophone countries: Burkina Faso, Mali, Mauritania, Niger, Cote d'Ivoire, Senegal and Togo, with Guinea Conakry and Benin as observers. This mechanism mediated the conflict between Mali and Burkina Faso in 1985-1986.

Once the decision had been taken to send in the monitoring force, the two Francophone members of the SMC (Mali and Togo) declined to contribute forces. Of the Francophone West African states, only Guinea (though not originally a member of the SMC) consented to contribute troops, partly because of its membership (together with Liberia and Sierra Leone) of the Mano River Union, and partly in reaction to the slaughter of Mandingo traders from Guinea by Taylor's forces.

This partnership was formalized when ECOWAS split the command between the three countries contributing the largest forces, with Ghana contributing the force commander, Guinea the deputy force commander, and Nigeria the chief of staff.

Spearheaded by Nigeria and Ghana, the states negotiated and signed the Protocol on Mutual Defence Assistance in Freetown on 29 May 1989.

The protocol provided for 'a non-standing military force to be used to render mutual military aid and assistance to a member state that falls victim to external aggression and provides for a collective response where a member state is a victim of internal armed conflict that is engineered and supported actively from outside, and which is likely to endanger the peace and security of other member states' (Khobe: 2000)

Under the protocol, member states are not entitled to intervene militarily if the internal armed conflict poses no danger outside the borders of the afflicted state, and if not supported from outside.

In order to secure the military assistance of the community, the head of state of the country desiring assistance is required to ask for it in writing through the chairperson of ECOWAS.

3.2 Allied Armed Forces of the Community (AAFC)

Each member state was required to earmark units from its national armed forces that could, in an emergency, be placed at the service of the community. The military force was to be known as the Allied Armed Forces of the Community (AAFC).

According to the protocol, the AAFC would be used as follows:

- Where two member states are in conflict, the Community will interpose the AAFC between them as a peacekeeping force.
- Where a member state is the victim of internal armed conflict supported from outside and its head of state has requested military assistance from the community in writing, the AAFC would be sent to it as an intervention force.

Although the Protocol was set up with respect to the Liberian crisis of 1989/1990, the AAFC never materialized. Rather, a smaller group of ECOWAS member states put together the intervention force known as ECOMOG.

3.3 ECOMOG

ECOMOG is deployed and operates under the directives of the authority of the heads of states of ECOWAS. This authority is usually exercised, on behalf of all the heads of states, by the head of state who has been elected by his colleagues as the current chairperson of the community.

Day to day issues and political directives are handled by the ECOWAS secretariat, which is headed by an executive secretary. Military operations are entrusted to a force commander.

There are two other supervisory political structures: the Defence council and the Defence commission. The Defence council consists of the ministers of Defence and Foreign Affairs of the member states and is headed by the current chairperson of the community. It is this council that should examine the situation on the ground, decide the strategy to be adopted, and the means of intervention to be used. The Defence Commission consists of chiefs of defence staff of the armed forces member states. It is a technical committee that advises on military operations.

3.4 Command structure of ECOMOG

At the top is the force commander and below him the deputy force commanders who are also the contingent commanders of their countries' troops. The force commander has a small planning staff headed by a chief of staff, who deals with common problems and co-ordinates the activities of the various contingents in close co-operation with deputies.

The central planning staff, under the directive of the force commander, designates various sectors of the mission area to the respective contingent commanders.

ECOMOG does not operate a central logistic administration system. Each country provides its own contingent with arms, ammunition, food, transport and communication equipment. Nigeria provides the entire force with petrol, oil, and lubricants. The US 'through a private company called Pacific Architect Engineers (PAE) has assisted ECOMOG operations with helicopter services, communication facilities, vehicles, and general repairs and maintenance' (Khobe: 2000).

In operations, the force commander's mission is given to the contingent commanders, then direct the various units of their contingents.

The military missions that ECOMOG has carried out may be categorized into:

- Intervention
- Peace enforcement
- Peacekeeping

3.5 Intervention missions

In its intervention missions, ECOMOG has usually been deployed at the request of a legal government to stop a situation from degenerating, e.g. where the de jure government was no longer able to carry out the function of governance.

ECOMOG intervention operations have involved combat action against insurgents or factions that resist the authority of the de jure government. Such intervention missions are aimed at securing a ceasefire, and creating a safe atmosphere for negotiations and the protection of non-combatants. Even though the principle of intervention is that the consent of the conflicting parties is needed before the intervention force can enter, situations prior to the intervention, in many cases, have not warranted securing the agreement of all the parties in the conflict.

3.6 Peace enforcement

Successful ECOMOG intervention operations have resulted in armed groups laying down their arms in a ceasefire and embarking in negotiations at the table. ECOMOG has the mandate to monitor and enforce the provisions of the ceasefire. Where there are violations, ECOMOG has sometimes had to use force to enforce what was agreed. This may involve outright military operations against

the violating party. The missions at this stage change from intervention to peace enforcement.

3.7 Peacekeeping

ECOMOG peacekeeping missions take time, effort, and diplomacy. The High command makes a deliberate effort to reach the leadership of the insurgent movements and to establish interpersonal relations. ECOMOG is many times perceived as a liberator by the larger society.

3.8 Challenges faced

Some of the challenges faced by ECOMOG since it began operations include:

- Control of contingents by home governments
- Language differences
- Lack of standardized equipment and arms
- Different training standards
- Poor sea and airlift capabilities
- Absence of air-to-ground support
- Inadequate resources for humanitarian purposes
- Poor coordination with international relief agencies
- The misrepresentation of force activities by mercenary organizations and the international mass media

(Khobe: 2000)

3.9 References:

- The Evolution and Conduct of ECOMOG Operations in West Africa (Khuba: 2000)
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- State Rebuilding after State Collapse. Security, Democracy & Development in Post-War Liberia (CDD: 1998)
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- Whither peacekeeping in Africa? (Hutchful: 1999)
- Focus on Africa (July – September 1998)
- Democracy and Development (September-December 2000)

CHAPTER FOUR

ECOMOG - LIBERIA, SIERRA LEONE

4.1 Liberia

4.1.1 Background

When, in August 1990, ECOWAS decided to embark on a peacekeeping mission in Liberia, it was more or less trying to address a similar problem which the O.A.U tried to solve in Chad (1979-1980); the circumstances were basically the same, notably civil war, factional fighting, a total breakdown of law and order, and basic utilities and services.

Liberia, first African colony to gain independence, started as a settler colony for freed slaves from America and the West Indies. The colony extended to incorporate the local population. After independence, the freed slaves known as Americo-Liberians constituting about 5% of the population took over the mantle of leadership, dominating the political, social, and economic life of the country.

The original inhabitants were relegated to the background and became resentful of the Americo-Liberians. This resentment sharpened until April 12, 1980 when a group of non-commissioned army officers, mainly descendants of the original inhabitants staged a bloody coup against the incumbent government of William

Tolbert (president since 1971). Tolbert was assassinated during the coup led by Samuel Doe, who aimed to replace 'black colonialism' with indigenous majority rule.

4.1.2 Master Sergeant Samuel Doe

The coup saw the emergence of Master Sergeant Samuel Doe as the new Head of State. Although a majority greeted his coming with joy and jubilation, massive corruption, indiscriminate elimination of alleged insurgents, persecution, and victimization generated a crisis that grew in proportion. Doe suspended the constitution, banned all political parties, and removed or executed officials of the previous administration to increase his own power.

Doe became president in October 1985 and an unsuccessful coup occurred only a month later. Even after a civilian government was installed in January 1986, Liberia had neither internal stability nor national acceptance.

4.1.3 Charles Taylor

The crisis gained momentum around December 1989 following the dismissal of Charles Taylor from Doe's Cabinet on corruption charges. Charles Taylor left the country (accused of embezzling funds) and later emerged at the Nimbu County to lead a rebellion against Doe's administration as the National Patriotic Front of Liberia. They fought against government troops and by May 1990 they controlled most of the country except the capital, Monrovia.

4.1.4 Prince Yomie Johnson

Soon, a breakaway faction led by Prince Yomie Johnson seized part of Monrovia, the nation's capital. The factional fighting, which had assumed an ethnic dimension, brought about a serious disruption of normal life. Food was in short supply and water and electricity erratic. The situation became so serious that the safety of life and property could not be guaranteed.

By July 1990, Charles Taylor had recorded so much success in his campaign, having taken over most of the country and had entered Monrovia on his way to capture the executive mansion.

4.1.5 ECOWAS Standing Mediation Committee

As the crisis mounted in intensity, the ECOWAS Standing Mediation Committee comprising of Nigeria, Ghana, Togo, Mali, Gambia, Guinea, and Sierra Leone was formed in May 1990 in Banjul to mobilize diplomatic efforts to resolve the crisis.

4.1.6 ECOMOG

Following the Banjul decision to establish the Economic Community of West African State (ECOWAS) Monitoring Group ECOMOG in August 1990, five countries (Nigeria, Ghana, Guinea, Sierra Leone, and Gambia agreed to

contribute to the multilateral force for the Liberian mission, which was code named **Operation Liberty**.

ECOMOG landed in Monrovia on August 24, 1990 with a force of 3,500. It was merely expected to monitor a cease-fire, which would have been successfully brokered by the Standing Mediation Committee.

Upon landing however, there was no peace to keep; rather, ECOMOG forces were confronted by an open declaration of war against it by the National Patriotic Front of Liberia (NPFL), Charles Taylor's faction, which was already convinced about its impending military victory.

Samuel Doe was captured and killed by forces of the Independent National Patriotic Front of Liberia (INPFL), Prince Yomie Johnson's faction on September 10, 1990 and on September 29, 1990 the mandate of ECOMOG was reviewed to include the use of force to impose a cease-fire. The fighting capability of ECOMOG was enhanced with the deployment of more men from Nigeria and Ghana.

While the Nigerians were seen as pro-Doe, the Ghanaians were disgusted with the Liberian president who, in their view, was playing the race card against the Americo-Liberian population, and whom they suspected to be an American

agent. They were more favourably inclined towards Major-General Quiwonkpa, Doe's main rival, and were repulsed by his brutal murder by Doe.

According to some accounts, General Quainoo, the first (Ghanaian) ECOMOG force commander, was under instructions not to resist Doe's capture by his enemies should the opportunity arise. If this version of events is true, Doe's capture (and subsequent murder) by Prince Johnson's men, right under the noses of ECOMOG troops at the force headquarters outside Monrovia, could not have been entirely fortuitous.

This may also have been the conclusion of the Nigerians, who insisted on the removal of Quainoo as force commander following this incident. Subsequently, the Nigerians staged their own 'coup' within ECOMOG, unilaterally replacing Quainoo with Josiah Dogonyaro while Quainoo was away in Accra.

For a long time, the Liberian crisis defied solution despite the military and political initiatives of ECOMOG. ECOWAS enabled a peace agreement to be signed in Cote d'Ivoire in October 1991, and subsequently it was to supervise disarmament and elections.

However Taylor refused to disarm his group. Meanwhile former supporters of Doe formed United Liberation Movement of Liberia for Democracy – in

neighbouring Sierra Leone. The movement entered Liberia in September 1991 to fight Taylor's NPFL.

Further attempts at disarmament in 1992 were largely unsuccessful, and the fighting continued. In November that year, the United Nations (UN) Security Council imposed an arms embargo on all factions except ECOMOG, which had moved from a peacekeeping role to one of peace enforcing and was fighting the NPFL.

Fighting continued over the next two years, despite a peace conference held in Switzerland in July 1993 under the auspices of the UN and ECOWAS, the establishment of the UN Observer Mission in Liberia (UNOMIL), and an increase in ECOMOG troops in December 1993.

Two more peace accords signed in Ghana in late 1994, followed by another in Nigeria in August 1995, had little effect. Yet another peace accord was signed in Nigeria in August 1996, and elections were scheduled.

With a reinforcement of ECOMOG troops in November 1996, disarmament resumed and at long last presidential elections were held in July 1997 without any serious incident and democracy was restored. A month later, having won 75.3% of the votes, Taylor was inaugurated as president and he and his parliamentarians were sworn into office.

After the dissolution of UNOMIL in September 1997, fighting decreased, allowing most ECOMOG troops to leave the country by early 1999. With sporadic fighting and many human rights abuses, Liberia was then left to pick up the pieces of years of armed conflict and instability.

While the civil war itself has been devastating, it has brought about other problems, many of which continue to the present day. There has been a deterioration of national government authority, mass population movements, macro-economic failure, and food insecurity.

The above five characteristics are the hallmarks of what has been called complex humanitarian emergencies, which affected at least 1.5 million people in Liberia, according to 1996 estimates.

The Liberian experience was a most harrowing one, with many lessons learnt but it served to establish the strength and leadership role of Nigeria and ECOMOG in the West African sub-region and the efficiency of ECOWAS itself.

4.2 Sierra Leone

4.2.1 Background

Sierra Leone was a British colony to which freed slaves returned in the late 1700s. They formed a social class, which hardly integrated with the indigenous people.

An auspicious beginning at independence in 1961, Sierra Leone began to slowly decline in the 1970s and the conditions for rebellion soon settled into place. After independence a small political elite who exclusively profited from the lucrative trade in diamonds dominated successive governments. Little of this income trickled down to benefit the rest of the population.

Inheriting a democratic constitution, following independence there were multiparty open processes with the state as guardian of civil society. Opposition parties acted freely, expressing their views and winning elections (Hayward: 1989). Local government chiefdoms and councils allowed ordinary people to participate in the development of their localities. The economy was growing at an annual rate higher than the world average (Abraham: 1994)

In the 1970s however, Siaska Stevens (opposition leader) won elections and centralized power. The democratic structure of the state became weakened, state intervention in elections eliminated opposition parties. Serious misuse of

state police and the army prevailed and thugs were introduced into the political landscape. Local government establishments were abolished and a one party state put in place in 1978.

Economic performance declined. Unable to raise revenue, the country saw endless shortages and galloping inflation. Hardest hit were the youth, which made them easy game for recruitment into the national army and later as combatants for the RUF.

By the 1980s, 'decay had become endemic' and the state had lost legitimacy (Hayward: 1989), paving the way for actual collapse.

4.2.2 Foday Sankoh and the Revolutionary United Front (RUF)

Reacting to the system of exclusive patronage, a political outsider, Foday Sankoh, formed the Revolutionary United Front (RUF), and started an armed insurrection.

The RUF, sponsored by Muamar Gaddafi of Libya and Liberia's Charles Taylor (Abraham: 1999), led by Foday Sankoh, launched a war against Sierra Leone from Liberia in March 1991. According to Sankoh, it was the 'people's war' to 'liberate' the masses from 'the corruption and oppression of the APC'

government (Muana: 1997; Abraham: 1997). Dissatisfied with the government, the military took power in 1991.

Overshadowed by the conflict in Liberia and elsewhere, Sierra Leone largely escaped the attention of the international community.

By 1996, foreign and domestic pressure forced the military provisional governing council to hold general elections.

4.2.3 Ahmed Tejjan Kabbah

A civilian, Ahmed Tejjan Kabbah became the first freely elected president for 34 years. But within a year a group of renegade officers forced his government to flee the country.

4.2.4 The Armed Forces Revolutionary Council (AFRC)

In the early hours of 25 May 1997, a group of low ranked non-commissioned officers of the Sierra Leonean army mutinied, overthrowing the democratically elected incumbent government subsequently recruiting a few middle rank officers, and invited an armed rebel movement, the Revolutionary United Front (RUF) to join them in forming a self styled Armed Forces Revolutionary Council (AFRC) government which was widely opposed both internally and externally.

The international community rejected the coup and demanded the restoration of the legitimate government; the O.A.U asked the member states of the ECOWAS to do everything possible to restore power to the elected government.

Nigerian forces and Guinean forces were in Sierra Leone since 1995 to help the NPRC and, later, the Kabbah government to fight the RUF. The forces were in the country during the 25 May 1997 coup and later reinforced ECOMOG's efforts to oust the AFRC/RUF.

4.2.5 ECOMOG

After the 1997 coup, the Organisation of African Unity (OAU) called on ECOWAS to restore constitutional order to Sierra Leone. When negotiations with the AFRC/RUF failed, ECOWAS imposed economic sanctions, which was subsequently supported by a UN Security Council global arms and oil embargo and restrictions on travel. These sanctions were enforced by ECOMOG with the permission of ECOWAS and the UN Security Council and with the increasing tension; ECOMOG's mandate was upgraded from sanction enforcement to actual military intervention to oust the AFRC/RUF.

A three policy approach to the Sierra Leonean crisis was adopted; these were: dialogue and negotiations; economic sanctions and embargo; and finally the use of force where the other options fail.

Despite massive internal and external opposition, the AFRC refused to give up power with members of the regime hanging onto power primarily to further their economic interests via the illegal exploitation of the country's mineral deposits. They defied all efforts by leaders of the West African sub-region to resolve the crisis by peaceful means. Their violation of the provisions of the Conakry Accord, which demanded the restoration of power to the elected government, compelled ECOMOG to move in with the result that the legitimate government was restored in February 1998.

In the aftermath of the ousting of the AFRC military junta, they retreated to the countryside, laying waste to towns and surrounding villages and committing atrocities as they went. They became a second rebel faction. In uneasy cooperation with the RUF, the rebel armies financed their participation in the war by mining and selling diamonds through Liberia.

ECOMOG carried out 'mopping up' operations against the rebels with the government promising that the RUF/AFRC forces would be finished by Christmas.

That everything was not under control was made painfully obvious when the rebels returned on January 6, 1999 to wreak havoc on a grand scale. The RUF and its allies infiltrated Freetown and launched their attack, which caught ECOMOG, the UN, and the international community off guard. It took residents unawares because they had believed in the government, which had repeatedly

said that the rebels would not be able to take over the city because of the strong Nigerian presence there.

The onslaught was the beginning of several days of deadly street battles between ECOMOG troops and the rebels – with civilians caught in the middle. It was Freetown's worst nightmare as street after street was turned into ruin, with bodies and damaged vehicles strewn everywhere and thousands of residents left homeless.

President Kabbah announced that after talks with rebel leader Foday Sankoh, a cease-fire had been agreed. The deal brought some respite to the fighting and some relief for residents who had been holed up in their homes. By then, large parts of the city were ablaze; the rebels, upon entering Freetown, had immediately torched the Nigerian High Commission, and several public buildings.

Despite a recording of the agreement, at Conakry Foday Sankoh flatly denied ever agreeing to a cease-fire; to make matters worse, the rebel Field Commander, Sam Bockarie, said he would not agree to a cease-fire until his leader was released. He ordered his fighters to launch an all-out assault to capture the western end of Freetown, but ECOMOG was able to repel attacks on that end.

The determination of the rebels to flatten Freetown was relentless. No matter how many RUF fighters ECOMOG troops destroyed, there were many more ready to continue the destruction; the rebels were clearly prepared to sustain heavy casualties; but they had taken a gamble by attacking Freetown and, as it turned out, once the ECOMOG counter attack began, the rebels were unable to hold their lines once they were faced with the superior tactics and experience of ECOMOG.

After withdrawing from the capital, the RUF continued to commit large-scale violations as they moved eastward, particularly in the villages and towns of Masiaka and Port Loko. The massive displacement of civilians fleeing the fighting and the continued attacks by the RUF led to severe shortages in food and medicines for the 2.6 million people caught behind rebel lines.

The RUF perpetrated all kinds of violent acts against civilians. They launched operations in which they rounded up girls and women and forcibly 'married' to rebel combatants. The rebels also made frequent use of human shields, both while advancing toward ECOMOG positions and as a defense against ECOMOG air power.

4.2.6 The UN comes in

In December 1998, an extraordinary meeting of the five permanent members of the UN Security Council (P-5) was summoned at the behest of Nigeria's

Permanent Representative at the UN to discuss the situation in Sierra Leone. It was necessary to remind the P-5 that given the deteriorating situation in Sierra Leone, they had a special responsibility to prevail upon the rebels to abandon the objective of overthrowing the democratically elected government.

In July 1999, all parties agreed to a regionally brokered cease-fire signed in Lome. It included a general amnesty for all crimes and human rights abuses committed during the war and a framework for the disarmament, demobilization and reintegration of all participants in the conflict. It also mandated the formulation of a Truth and Reconciliation Commission (TRC) and a National Human Rights Commission.

The United Nations Security Council passed a resolution in October 1999 to provide an armed peacekeeping force.

The primary responsibility for the maintenance of international peace and security everywhere in the world lies with the UN, which is an international organization. ECOWAS and ECOMOG, being regional organizations can be said to be peacekeeping on behalf of the UN, and yet the UN was not supporting the effort; rather, little effort was made to honour the pledge by the international community for post-conflict peace building in Sierra Leone, on the one hand, and to assist ECOMOG in the promotion of peace throughout Sierra Leone.

On July 5, 2000 the UN Security Council agreed on an eighteen month embargo on the export of diamonds mined by Sierra Leone's RUF at least until the democratically elected government regains control of the mines and can introduce a certification scheme for legally mined diamonds, although the embargo did not extend to Liberia, alleged to be the export route and base of the operation.

The UN drafted a multinational peacekeeping force for Sierra Leone with an Indian Force Commander, but the Sierra Leonean rebels attacked the UN peacekeepers with ease, at one point kidnapping 500 on their way to Freetown. As things worsened there were quarrels among the peacekeepers; a report written to the UN by the Indian Commander criticizing Nigerian officers resulted in Nigerian troops demanding for his replacement. Exploiting the squabble, the rebels extended their activities.

Although rebel incursions increased, the peacekeepers still managed to keep their heads above the water. Before they declared their desire to withdraw, British troops helped to rescue some of their own that had been kidnapped.

The UN Security Council voted for an increase in the peacekeeping force in Sierra Leone, but the force shrank as countries pulled out their troops faster than they could be replaced (e.g. the extra troops offered by Bangladesh, Ukraine,

and Ghana did not replace the Indians and Jordanians that have been pulled out, let alone expand the force).

With ECOMOG's professionalism proven beyond doubt, Britain rallied behind it, and so did other nations.

The ECOMOG contingent in Sierra Leone led by Nigerian commander Brigadier General Maxwell Khome composed of approximately 12,000 troops, predominantly Nigerian.

A majority of the residents of Freetown and Sierra Leonean refugees constantly maintained their welcome of ECOMOG's role in ousting the AFRC/RUF and enabling a return to civilian rule.

However, international humanitarian groups complained that ECOMOG activities led to a high number of civilian casualties. They maintained that even after ECOMOG had been provided with maps of high-density population areas, shelling continued in those areas.

Despite the human rights allegations, ECOMOG has been praised by the Sierra Leonean press and international community. ECOMOG holds the key responsibilities of disarming and demobilizing combatants as well as forming and training the new Sierra Leonean army.

In a war that has defied all logic, Sierra Leonean rebels have committed terrible war crimes including arson, murder, looting, rape, maiming, and of course they continue to deal in diamonds.

It has been suggested that the UN should change the mandate from peacekeeping to peace enforcement, as there is no peace to keep.

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CHAPTER FIVE

CONCLUSION

5.1 Conclusion

The restoration of constitutional governments in Liberia and Sierra Leone will mark the end of the active deployment of ECOMOG. In accordance with the framework under which the force operates, the contingents return to their respective countries.

ECOMOG has achieved a great deal of success and has provided evidence of what is possible if African states unite to address a problem.

The ECOMOG experience demonstrates the necessity to go beyond traditional peacekeeping narratives to new and broader fields of investigation, in particular in understanding how involvement in peacekeeping influences political processes in those states which are themselves engaged in these operations.

ECOMOG operations also demonstrate the difficulties and pitfalls of such regional peacekeeping. In a geographically fissured region like West Africa, regionalism proved to be a problematic vehicle for intervention. While regional self-interest made ECOWAS to stay in the operation, factional frictions within the organization (exploited in turn by warlords) forced a prolongation of the conflict.

On the other hand, many of the challenges faced by ECOMOG were also inherent in the very nature of post-cold war conflicts and peacekeeping.

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 (e.g. ECOMOG peacekeepers were first deployed in an intervention expected to last between six to twelve months, and ended up with an involvement that lasted eight years).

What does involvement in protracted and expensive peacekeeping operations imply for weak states and their fiscal and resource viability and state building processes? How would those states deal with the stresses and responsibility of regional peacekeeping? Why do some regimes become involved and others not, why do some withdraw and others stay on course?

Many of the countries of ECOWAS and involved in ECOMOG were themselves governed by military regimes with contested legitimacies. Peacekeeping operations are, after all, no longer episodic exercises, they serve certain domestic purposes and may involve domestic impacts.

5.2 Recommendations

Many observers are of the view that ECOMOG headquarters should be in a designated member state to consolidate the experience gained in the years of ECOMOG operations in Liberia, Sierra Leone and Guinea Bissau.

Other suggestions are that certain aspects of the force should be transformed to a permanent status in order to quicken reaction time in an emergency. This may include a logistic support organization, a joint training body for officers, and a joint intelligence agency.

It has been suggested that all member states should train their military cadets, staff officers and senior officers in one military academy, staff college, and war college to solve problems of different training standards, doctrines and staff procedures and to make for better co-ordination between the different units that make up the force.

Member states may also harmonize their procurement of different categories of military equipment so that their various contingents can operate and co-operate with less difficulty in the future.

These are positive signs that ECOMOG has created awareness among African leaders, intellectuals, military experts, and the international community that the force is a positive security development albeit one that requires some fine-tuning.

It is evidence of the fact that the right tool for conflict resolution in Africa can be found within Africa itself. With the unity and commitment of African governments Africa can address its own problems effectively

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