

THE ECONOMIC COMMUNITY OF WEST-AFRICAN STATES’ PEACE AGREEMENTS AND ACCORD ON LIBERIA: A RETROSPECTIVE ANALYSIS

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ABSTRACT

In the 1990s armed conflict of great magnitude broke out in Liberia between a rebel group led by Charles Taylor and the national government led by Samuel Doe. Over two hundred thousand persons were killed in the war. The enormity of the human waste occasioned by the war prompted the intervention of the Economic Community of the West African States (ECOWAS). Although the intervention of ECOWAS led to the formation of the Economic Community Monitoring Group (ECOMOG), the crisis was not resolved until after over six years of negotiation and mediation. This paper takes a retrospective look at the causes of the war and the efforts at resolving it. The paper noted that the war dragged on unnecessarily because of the attitude of the rebel leader.

INTRODUCTION

On April 12, 1980 Samuel K. Doe, a master sergeant in the Liberian army overthrew the government of President Tolbert in a bloody coup. By 1985 Samuel Doe who was of the Krahn descent became Liberia's 20th president. The Doe administration was bogged by controversy of electoral malpractices and charges of vote rigging. The controversy created a state of uncertainty and distrust between Doe and his erstwhile political allies. By November 1985, the political crisis in the country led to an attempted coup plot against President Doe by Thomas Quiwonkpa, Doe's former second-in-command. (The Nigerian Army Briefs, 1999: 10).

The failed coup attempt against the Doe regime led to the killing of Quiwonkpa as well as government reprisals against the natives of the Gio and Mano ethnic group of Quiwonkpa's tribal Nimba County. The public outcry and disenchantment that followed the decimation of the minority tribes of Gio and Mano resulted in a protracted civil war in December of 1989. The Liberian civil war, which lasted several years, led to the death of more than 200,000

Liberians, the displacement of hundreds of thousands of others, and the destruction of the country's infrastructure (ABC-News 2002).

In stemming the tide of killings of innocent civilians, destruction of life and property as well as ensuring the return of Liberia to a state of normalcy, the Economic Community of West-African States (ECOWAS) initiated series of talks, conferences, agreements and accords with the various warring parties in the country. The peace agreements were; the Banjul Communiqué and the ECOWAS Peace Plan of 7 August 1990; The Bamako Cease-fire of 28 November 1990; the Banjul Joint Statement of 21 December 1990; the Lomé Agreement of 13 February 1991; The Yamoussoukro Accords I - IV of June to October 1991; the Geneva Cease-fire of 17 July 1993; the Cotonou Accord of 25 July 1993; the Akosombo Agreement of 12 September 1994; the Accra Clarification of 12 December 1994; the Abuja Accord of 26 August 1995 and the supplement to the Abuja Accord of 17 August 1996.

While the ECOWAS initiatives have been acclaimed as a bold attempt at ensuring security in the sub-region, the point must also be made that the processes involved in the peace talks and agreement were fraught with problems of varying magnitude. The issue of legality of the ECOWAS involvement, the technicality of the ECOWAS conflict resolution mechanisms, the distrust of the ECOWAS moves by the warring factions, the mutual distrust generated even amongst the member states of ECOWAS that is, the Anglophone- Francophone divide among others, created a situation whereby the various agreements were flagrantly violated and disregarded by virtually all the warring factions at different points in time.

The task of this study, is to analyze the import of the ECOWAS peace plan in Liberia and, by so doing, undertake a critical evaluation of the problems that were engendered in the processes and implementation of the ECOWAS peace agreements and accord in Liberia.

DISCOURSES ON THE FRAMEWORKK OF THE ECOWAS PEACE PLAN IN LIBERIA

Efforts by ECOWAS leaders to end the carnage in Liberia under the “neighbourhood watch” of the ECOWAS were conducted through series of talks and meetings, signing of agreements and accords. These moves were based on the framework of an African effort to maintain peace and security in the West African Sub-Region. In creating a peace plan in Liberia, the

concept of peacemaking and the application of certain provisions of the ECOWAS Mutual Assistance on Defense (MAD) are highly instructive in this respect.

Peacemaking has been variously described as the initiation and conduct of various political and diplomatic machineries by external parties such as international organizations as the U.N, A.U., ECOWAS, or third party states, towards the creation of a stabilized environment in a crisis or war-torn country. The peace-making process is conducted between the parties to the conflict, usually under a third party so as to ensure a peaceful resolution to the conflict on ground. Peacemaking is an on-going process, for it keeps going as long as an enduring or relative peace is achieved. This peacemaking process is comprised of confidence building, reconstruction and rehabilitation vital for the return to normalcy (Erskine, 1996:54).

The concept of peacekeeping has also been described as a process, which comes into play when preventive diplomacy has failed. The essence of peacemaking however, is to bring hostile parties to agreement; peacemaking is more effective when conducted through a multilateral arrangement. The purpose of peacemaking involves the initiation of agreements and various peace talks and diplomatic shuttling among countries aimed at preventing disputes from arising between hostile parties. It is also aimed at the utilization of peace initiative and agreement to prevent existing disputes from escalating into conflicts and above all, it tends to limit the spread of conflicts when they occur.

The conclusion that could be drawn from the foregoing analysis is that the imperatives to maintain the peace and in the long run, find a lasting solution to the carnage occasioned by the civil war in Liberia, was what motivated the ECOWAS member states (through their peacemaking initiatives) to resort to the application of the 1978 non-aggression protocol and the 1981 Mutual Assistance on Defense as a platform for launching the plethora of peace initiatives and accords (peace plan) in Liberia.

The 1981 Protocol on Mutual Assistance on Defense (MAD) signed in Freetown, Sierra Leone, provides for a non-standing military force for the purpose of mutual military assistance to members of the Community attacked by external aggressors. The Protocol provides for collective response when external forces attack a member state and when such attack is likely to endanger the peace and security of other member states (**Ochoche, 2002:**

23). In articles 13 and 14, the Protocol made provisions for the nature and composition of the non-standing army called, Allied Army Forces of the Community (AAFC). The operations and functions of the AAFC were for peacekeeping and intervention. Although, the Protocol was invoked during the Liberian crisis still, the AAFC never materialized. Instead of the AAFC however, the ECOWAS established the ECOWAS Monitoring Group (ECOMOG) to keep the peace and ultimately enforce all the peace agreements reached in Liberia.

The essentials of the various Articles of the 1978 protocol on non-aggression became highly relevant and thus, provided a reminder and correlation of the happenings in Liberia. For instance, the Article 2 of the protocol stipulated that (Benjamin, 1996: **103**), ‘Each member state shall refrain from committing, encouraging or condoning acts of subversion, hostility or aggression against the territorial integrity or political independence of the other member state’.

To reinforce Article 2, Article 3 also provides that: ‘Each member state shall undertake to prevent foreigners’ resident on its territory from using its territory as a base for committing acts (referred to in Article 2) against the sovereignty and territorial integrity of member states’.

The potential external involvement in the Liberian crisis clearly brought to fore the relevance of the provisions of the ECOWAS protocol on Non-aggression of 1978. The conclusion that could be drawn from Articles 2 and 3 with emphasis on Liberia at the time is that the Liberian civil war from its very inception had lost the character of domestic or internal conflict and that the rebel incursions into Liberia from outside (that is, from Libya, Burkina Faso and Cote D’Ivoire) seemed to have contravened the provisions of the ECOWAS protocol of 1978 (Benjamin, 1996:103) (Adisa, 1993: 167-170).

The Mutual Assistance on Defense (MAD), which was adopted by member states of the ECOWAS on 29 May 1981, also provided an enabling framework environment for the involvement of ECOWAS through the formation of the ECOMOG in 1990 and the consequent involvement of ECOWAS in the efforts to end the Liberian civil war. The MAD was a complement to the earlier protocol on non-aggression signed in Lagos on 22 April 1978. The implication of the protocol as a building block of a viable framework of collective

security and common defense mechanism for Africa cannot be over emphasized (Omede, 1995:46), (Erskine, 1996:77). The character of the crisis in Liberia and the composition of the AFL and NPFL indicated certain elements that threatened the peace and security of not only Liberia but also, the entire West African Sub-Region.

The protocol (MAD) of 1981 defined four possible areas for armed intervention by the community. The protocol particularly directed that appropriate measures such as specified in articles 11 and 12 of the protocol be taken in any of the following circumstances (ECOWAS, 1981):

- (i) Any case of armed threat or aggression directed against any member state shall constitute a threat or aggression against the entire community.
- (ii) An armed conflict between the two or several member states in respect of which the settlement procedure of the non-aggression protocol had proved ineffective.
- (iii) An armed conflict within a member state which has been engineered and supported actively from outside likely to endanger the peace and security of the entire community, and
- (iv) A purely internal conflict.

In justifying the ECOWAS peace initiatives in Liberia with special reference to the 1978 non-aggression Protocol and the 1981 protocol on mutual assistance on defense, certain facts emerged and provided the rationale for the ECOWAS involvement in the peace process in Liberia. For example, President Doe signed the protocol in 1981 and ratified in 1983 on behalf of Liberia. Furthermore, when the civil war reached disastrous proportions and the country was confronted with imminent civil war in 1990, President Doe submitted a written request to ECOWAS on July 14, 1990. The Doe letter (request) implored the ECOWAS to (Bundu, 1997:22):

Assist in finding a constitutional and reasonable resolution of the crisis in our country (Liberia) ... it would seem expedient at this time to introduce an ECOWAS peacekeeping force into Liberia to forestall increasing terror and tension and to assure a peaceful transition environment.

The Doe request created a technical error because it was not addressed to the Chairman and members of the authority but to the Chairman of members of the Ministerial Committee of

the SMC that the authority had earlier established in May 1990. The point of note here is that, the Doe letter provided the impetus for the political, moral and legal basis for the various ECOWAS peace initiatives in Liberia.

Another point of note is that evidences (as earlier stated in the preceding text) abound then that the Liberian civil war was evidently externally engineered and supported and was likely to endanger peace and security in the region (Bundu, 1997:23). The Civil war also witnessed the various factions receiving active support in the form of arms, financial and moral assistance from certain countries such as Ivory Coast. Also abundance evidence showed that most of the rebel fighters were non-Liberian national while other warring factions such as the National Patriotic Front of Liberia (NPFL) received active support of neighbouring states like Libya, Ivory Coast and Burkina Faso (Benjamin 1996, 103), (Adisa, 1993: 167-170).

What is more, the crisis in Liberia was also acknowledged by the U.N as a threat to international peace and security particularly in the West African Sub-Region. In spite of this revelation, many Western nations particularly the United States, United Kingdom, France and Russia and even the UN did not focus so much on the way out of the Liberian logjam. Instead, they were saddled with the challenges of security and peace-building in others parts of the world as in Yugoslavia, the Gulf and the Middle-East (Aminu 1996: 113 – 114) (Nwokedi 1997: 79) (Adeniji: 1997:34) & (Lancaster 1993: 6 – 7).

Under the circumstances examined so far, one could not but appreciate that ECOWAS got involved in the Liberian crisis in order to arrange a cessation of hostilities and ultimately ensured peace in Liberia through humanitarian, military, political and series of diplomatic processes that included peace talks, agreements, initiatives and accords.

ECOWAS PEACE AGREEMENTS AND ACCORDS IN LIBERIA

An examination of the peace process embarked upon by ECOWAS in Liberia can be undertaken through the analysis of the various initiatives, agreements and accords reached between the ECOWAS and the various warring factions in Liberia.

The outbreak of the conflict elicited a series of mediation processes from indigenous Liberians. Religious leaders initiated the first peace process, which later led to the sub-regional response by ECOWAS. The Liberian Council of Churches, an association of

Catholic and Protestant groups and the National Muslim Council, the leading representative national body of Muslim organizations eventually initiated the Interfaith Mediation Committee (IFMC) process to resolve the crisis. Starting from February 1990, the IFMC began a concerted campaign of consultations and negotiation amongst the major contending parties to the conflict (Yoroms, 2002 :8).

After series of diplomatic negotiations, the IFMC eventually came out with a comprehensive set of proposals aimed at resolving the Liberian conflict. Major elements of the initiatives included (Sawyer, 1997: 18 - 20):

- * A declaration of cease fire by all sides;
- * Disarming all warring factions;
- * The formation of an interim government through negotiations; and
- * The holding of elections in the shortest possible time.

Although the IFMC could not achieve much yet, its (IFMC) proposals were adopted as the first ECOWAS peace plan. The Committee subsequently chaired the national conferences of August 1990 and March 1991, which determined the composition of the initial interim government. It has also engaged in shuttle diplomacy throughout West Africa and held observer status at many ECOWAS meetings. As the armed factions became drawn into government, the IFMC expressed growing unease with ECOWAS diplomacy. In response, it has concentrated its efforts on coordinating pressure for disarmament, galvanising civic institutions, and organising non-violent protests at the militarisation of Liberian society (Boley in, <http://www.c-r.org/http://www.c-r.org/>)

Characteristic of what was to plague subsequent peace efforts, civic society groups, including the NPFL accepted these proposals, in principle. Within three weeks of the presentation of these proposals, the conflicts escalated and the first of a series of factionalization began.

The Banjul and Standing Mediation Committee (SMC) Phase

It was against the backdrop of the quagmire in Liberia that the 13th Summit of ECOWAS Heads of state and Government opened in Banjul, The Gambian capital. During this meeting, General Ibrahim Babangida a former Nigerian Head of State suggested the formation of the SMC with a view to tackling any conflicts between ‘two or more member states.

The ECOWAS standing mediation Committee (SMC) that was established at the 13th Summit meeting of the ECOWAS in Banjul in May, 1990 was entrusted with the responsibilities of looking into the disputes and conflicts among ECOWAS member states which have a disruptive effect on peace and security within member states and on the smooth functioning of the community (ECOWAS, 1990: 4&5; Benjamin 1996:98). The task of the SMC reaffirmed and recalled the provisions of the ECOWAS protocol on an aggression adopted in Dakar on 22 April 1978 (ECOWAS, 1990). The SMC also called on the two major warring factions the Armed Forces of Liberia (AFL) and the National Patriotic Front of Liberia (NPFL) to agree to an immediate cease fire and to end the armed conflict in Liberia. The SMC initiated a kind of fast track diplomacy and the traditional mediation strategy to deal with the crisis (Yoroms, 2002: 10). The Secretary General of the ECOWAS was given the assignment of informing the various factions particularly Charles Taylor of the NPFL of the intention and the eventual decision of the ECOWAS Heads of State and Government to mediate in the Liberian conflict with a view to ensuring peace and security within the nation.

Major components of the Banjul talks are immediate cessation of hostilities by all the factions; the formation and immediate deployment of ECOMOG to Liberia; general disarmament of the warring parties by ECOMOG; an embargo on the importation and acquisition of arms by the warring parties in Liberia; the formation of an interim government of National Unity pending the conduct of general elections; and establishing an atmosphere conducive for the conduct of general and presidential election in Liberia (ECOWAS, 1990; ECOWAS Journal, 1992: 41 & 47).

Also endorsed at the Banjul Meeting in August 1990 and adopted as the military option of the peace plan for Liberia, was the establishment of the ECOMOG as the primary mechanism for achieving the aims of engendering stability in Liberia (ECOWAS, 1990). The legal framework establishing this force specified that troop contributions were to come from the member states of the SMC as well as from Guinea and Sierra Leone two of the three contiguous states “bearing the burden of refugee flows and, at the same time sufficiently neutral to bring a balance into the composition of the peacekeeping force” (Yorms, 2002: 13).

The ECOMOG mandate among other things was to maintain, enforce and monitor ceasefire; protect life and property; maintain essential services; provide security to the interim administration in Liberia; monitor elections; and, conduct normal policing duties (ECOWAS, 1991:6-10; Omede, 1995:48).

The formation of the ECOMOG was greeted with fierce resistance from the Charles Taylor led NPFL. Apparently alarmed at the tide of events and the imminent involvement of ECOWAS in the Liberian crisis, Taylor gave five pre-conditions upon which an international peacekeeping force would be allowed to operate in the country. These were (Bassey, 1993:191):

- ☐ The immediate departure of embattled President Doe;
- ☐ The inclusion of Taylor/NPFL in any interim government (the NPFL has effective control of the economic pulse of Liberia)
- ☐ A protest against the composition of the SMC and the need for re-organization;
- ☐ Effective participation of the OAU and UN in the peacekeeping effort and, a better interaction between the chairman of ECOWAS and the warring parties to obtain a commitment to cease-fire.

In spite of the good intentions of the ECOWAS as attested to by the situation on ground in Liberia, the major warring faction that is, the NPFL strongly opposed the intervention by the sub-regional group. Seemingly, the major point of dissension could be found on such issues as the appropriateness of a cease-fire; the practicalities of shaping an interim government; and the effectiveness, if any, of deploying a sub-regional peacekeeping force. By the end of the Dakar summit however, it became clear that the NPFL was the major actor in the prolongation of the conflict as well as, the main obstacle to the achievement of peace and normalcy in Liberia.

Other salient issues that were expressed by the SMC, were a call for a supposedly more encompassing Liberian national conference of all identifiable national groups, hopefully including representatives of the NPFL to be convened within sixty days and interim talks to be held in Banjul, The Gambia in December 1990. Throughout the year, the Liberian factions took part in a series of meetings to discuss peace and elections. Much of the groundwork was

laid in November 1990 with the cease-fire, signed in Bamako, which was based on an ECOWAS peace plan. The cease-fire was followed by a meeting of the warring factions in Banjul Gambia in December 1990, and also, in Lomé, Togo, in February 1991. In Lomé, it was decided that an All Liberia Conference would begin in Monrovia on March 15 (Human Rights Watch, 2004).

True to type, the Liberian national conference was held in March 1991 in Virginia, Liberia. Active participants included six political parties, the INPFL and NPFL, fourteen major interest groups and thirty-six county representatives. Charles Taylor did not attend the All Liberia Conference. His abstinence was hinged on fears of insecurity on his life. In Taylor's stead, an NPFL delegation went to the conference, but walked out a week later. In April, at the conclusion of the conference, Amos Sawyer was elected president of the Interim Government of National Unity (IGNU). Since the NPFL did not participate in the voting, the group therefore refused to recognize the legitimacy of the IGNU (Human Rights Watch, 2004).

YAMMOUSSOUKRO ACCORDS

The uncertainty and insecurity that accompanied the previous peace plans led the ECOWAS to convene a summit in Abuja in 1991. The 14th ECOWAS summit held in Abuja in 1991, a committee of five was set up to proffer solutions to resolve the Liberian crisis. Former Ivorian president, Felix Houphouët Boigny was elected to serve as the chairman. The committee finding gave birth to the Yamoussoukro accord (named after the Ivorian administrative capital, Yamoussoukro where the accord was signed). The general agreement of the various accords however was for Taylor led NPFL and other warring factions to comply with the disarmament clause; create buffer zones and free movements, restrict the warring factions to their various bases (encampment) and eventually, create a conducive atmosphere for the conduct of general elections.

Four such Yamoussoukro meetings took place in 1991; in June, July, September and October. The Yamoussoukro I Accord signed in June 1991 secured an apparent rapprochement between the NPFL and IGNU and built the impetus for the three further accords signed by these parties. They were further facilitated by the involvement of the Atlanta-based

International Negotiations Network (INN) led by former US President Jimmy Carter (**Alao in, <http://www.c-r.org/http://www.c-r.org/>**) .

At the September 17 meeting in Yamoussoukro, Taylor agreed to disarm his troops under the supervision of an expanded peacekeeping force and to confine his fighters ("encampment") as part of the ongoing peace process. To facilitate the plan, Taylor added a caveat. Taylor emphasized the need to enlarge the composition of the ECOMOG with the inclusion of Senegalese troops. He also sought for the reduction in the number of Nigerian troops.

Taylor's demand was predicated on two major points. One that the former Nigerian President General Babangida (retired), was biased in favour of the embattled Liberian President Samuel Doe and two that the Nigerian contingents constituted more than eighty percent of the ECOMOG force. Senegal and the other Francophone countries of West Africa were perceived by Taylor to be more sympathetic to his cause of dislodging Doe from power in Liberia. The wrangling between the ECOMOG and the NPFL culminated in the Yamoussoukro IV agreement signed in October 1991. The agreement gave ECOMOG a more central role in securing the encampment, disarmament and demobilization of the warring factions within 60 days (Alao in, <http://www.c-r.org/http://www.c-r.org/>).

The October 30, 1991 agreement was more concrete and decisive of all the erstwhile ECOWAS peace plans. Specifically, the Yamoussoukro IV Accord was the first major accord entered into between ECOWAS and the warring factions in Liberia. The accord outlined steps through which the peace plan could be implemented. It included the encampment and disarmament of warring factions under the supervision of an expanded ECOMOG, as well as the establishment of transitional institutions to bring about democratic elections (**ABC-News, 2002**).

The Yamoussoukro IV also set a sixty-day timetable for disarmament, beginning November 15, with elections to follow in six months. The agreement included a provision for opening roads, ports and airports so refugees and displaced persons will be able to register to vote (Human Rights Watch, 2004).

While acknowledging the positive impact of Yamoussoukro IV, like its predecessors however, the agreement was (**Alao in, <http://www.c-r.org/http://www.c-r.org/>**):

Compromised by a lack of factional commitment and by antagonism within ECOWAS. Although technically flawed to some degree, it failed more due to continued NPFL aggression and Nigerian fears of francophone-NPFL collaboration.

COTONOU AGREEMENTS

On 25 July 1993, a three-day meeting was held in Cotonou, Benin, under the co-chairmanship of the Special Representative of the Secretary-General, President Canaan Banana of the Organization of African Unity (OAU). Present at the meeting were Abass Bundu, the Executive Secretary of ECOWAS and majority of the parties to the conflict in Liberia. After much deliberation participants at the meeting signed the Cotonou Peace Agreement.

The Cotonou agreement called for the establishment of a government of inclusion and a UN-sponsored cease-fire between the IGNU and the two warring factions that is, the United Liberation Movement for Democracy in Liberia (ULIMO) and the NPFL, following peace talks in Geneva, Switzerland (ABC-News, 2002).

The Cotonou agreement also provided for a cease-fire; the encampment, disarmament and demobilization of combatants of the warring parties; the release of prisoners; access for humanitarian assistance; the return of refugees; the establishment of a six-month transitional government to conduct free and fair elections; and amnesty for acts during military engagements (Amnesty International a, 1997).

The achievements of the Cotonou Agreement cannot be overemphasized. Indeed, the agreement has been described as (Alao in <http://www.c-r.org/http://www.c-r.org/>):

A major watershed in ECOWAS diplomacy ... it represents the end of the era in which factions signed accords merely as half-hearted or duplicitous responses to external pressure...With the Cotonou Accord, the peace process began to focus more specifically on the relationships and interests of the factions themselves, and hence acquired a much more 'Liberian' character. It ... sought to institute a power-sharing regime, which was genuinely inclusive of all armed interests. The Cotonou Accord (also) stipulated first that

ECOMOG be expanded to include troops from outside West Africa, and second, that it operate in close association with a United Nations Observer Mission (UNOMIL). Taken together, these developments represent an unequivocal effort on the part of ECOWAS to allay the fears of the factions and to accommodate their aspirations within the peace process.

AKOSOMBO PEACE TALKS

On 7 September 1994, the Chairman of ECOWAS, President Jerry Rawlings of Ghana, convened a meeting of the leaders of the warring factions at Akosombo, Ghana. The meeting was attended by the NPFL, both wings of ULIMO and AFL. Representatives of the Liberian National Transitional Government, OAU and the United Nations were present as facilitators. The agreement was a supplement and amendment to the Cotonou Peace Agreement and it involved members of the NPFL, ULIMO, and the Armed Forces of Liberia (AFL). The agreement also established an interim council of state as well as established a tentative timetable for elections (ABC-News, 2002).

Acting as a reaffirmation of the Cotonou Agreement, the Akosombo agreement has been hailed as one of the most viable framework for peace in Liberia. This is because it sought to strengthen the role of the Liberian National Transitional Government (LNTG) in governing the country during the transitional period through giving it a more central role in the supervision and monitoring of the implementation of the Cotonou Agreement. The Agreement permitted the factions to review the status of their appointees to the Council of State (Alao in, <http://www.c-r.org/http://www.c-r.org>):

The Akosombo Agreement also called for an immediate cease-fire and provided more details with regards to its implementation, the disengagement of forces and the responsibilities of each of the factions in respect of the disarmament of combatants. The Agreement also further outlined the peace enforcement powers of ECOMOG. The principal objective of the Akosombo accord was to (Alao in, <http://www.c-r.org/http://www.c-r.org>):

Grant the LNTG and the armed factions who dominated it a more central role in the management of Liberian state affairs. To this end, it amended the Cotonou Accord in a number of ways. First, it placed the responsibility of

overseeing the peace agreement not only on ECOMOG and UNOMIL, but also on the 'security forces' of the LNTG. Second, it ceded effective control of the Council of State to the more powerful factions, removing the requirement for consensus decision-making and instituting the authority of a simple majority. Thirdly, it also permitted factions to review the status of their appointees at all levels of the administration at any time.

The Akosombo accord floundered like all the previous peace processes in Liberia. A major area of dissension was the prominent role given to the NPFL and ULIMO-K in most of the appointments into the key sector of the Liberian economy under the new transition government. The growing relevance of armed factions within the LNTG also led to a realignment of forces and a violent scramble for public offices among the various interest and warring groups. In order to ameliorate the situation and thus create a more conducive environment for the return to civil governance in Liberia, the ECOWAS had to reconvene in Accra for a newer round of talks in Accra.

The Accra meeting also known as the Accra Clarification was more encompassing than the Akosombo agreement. While the agreement brought new groups into the peace process, along with those who had been left out of earlier accords, it did little, if anything, to advance the search for a solution. After signing the Accra Declaration, the parties failed to reach an agreement on the composition and chairmanship of the Council of State. In the long run, the implementation of the major aspects of the agreements became a source of acrimony among the various interest groups and factions. The inability to reach a compromise however, led to another effort at the peace process in Abuja, Nigeria.

ABUJA ACCORD

The latest of the Accords entered into, before the transition to constitutional rule, was in Abuja, Nigeria on 26 August 1995. It provided for a six-member council, comprised of members of the various warring factions. The Accord set up a timetable for the return of a civilian constitutional government through a general election and further prohibited the seizure of power by any of the factions by force (Amnesty International, 2005)

In building upon the various agreements reached between ECOWAS and the major warlords in Liberia, the factional leaders finally made up their minds to settle for peace. Mrs. Ruth Perry was selected as head of the transition implementation council (ECOWAS, 1996). Other provisions of the Abuja rounds include, dissolution of all factions by January 31st, 1997; directives to all members of the council of state and other holders of public office who want to contest elections to step down and be replaced by an interim council of state and the demobilization and disarming of rebels before 31st January, 1997 (West-Africa, 1997: 140).

The accord also provided for the establishment of a war crimes tribunal and the imposition of sanctions (travel restrictions, and exclusion from the electoral process) on any faction that violated the terms of the peace accord. This was the last accord that finally ushered in Charles Taylor as the elected president of Liberia after seven years of mayhem on July 19, 1997 (ABC-News, 2002). Essentially, the Abuja Accord was an Agreement that amended and supplemented the Cotonou Accord, the Akosombo Agreement and its Accra Clarification. More importantly, the Abuja accord provided for **(ECOWAS, 1996)**:

A ceasefire and the parties agree that during the transitional period leading to the inauguration of an elected government, the executive powers of the Republic of Liberia shall be vested in a six-member Council of State to be composed of (a representative of) NPFL, ULIMO - LTG. Coalition, LNC, ... The Parties also agreed that the allocation of Ministries, Public Corporations and Autonomous Agencies agreed by the Parties in Cotonou, Benin on November 3-5, 1993 shall be maintained. The accord further established elections modalities and the establishment of an Elections Commission whose operations shall be monitored by ECOWAS, OAU and the UN.

This Accord, again like the preceding ones, was breached when fighting erupted in April 1996 among the warring factions. Between April and May 1997, when the hostilities continued, hundreds of people became internally displaced mostly in the capital Monrovia. These hostilities led to the adoption of yet another agreement, the Abuja Accord Supplement of 17 August 1996. The Supplement Accord provided, among other things, for disarmament, demobilization, reintegration and the holding of national elections (West-Africa, 1997:140).

The supplement to the Abuja Accord reaffirmed the Abuja Accord as the only viable means to the ECOWAS determination to achieve a peaceful resolution of the Liberian civil war. It also showed the ECOWAS resolve to fully implement the said Abuja agreement but with an emphasis on the appointment of the Chairman of the Council in the person of Mrs. Ruth Perry, while all other members shall be Vice-Chairmen of equal status (ECOWAS, 1997). To ensure its effectiveness and viability, the Abuja accord and its supplement were endorsed by the OAU and the United Nations as the best framework for peace in Liberia.

CONCLUDING REMARKS

The ECOWAS collective security and defense arrangement reflected the imperativeness of the survival of Africa. Its application in the Liberian Crisis clearly demonstrated that it is a model worthy of emulation by other African Sub-Regional Organizations (Benjamin, 1996:98). It is crucial to note however, that the lack of a viable conflict resolution mechanism or an existing collective security arrangement like the AAFC initially created a technical and legal hitch to the effectiveness of the ECOWAS intervention in Liberia. In fact, the protocols of the Non-Aggression pact of ECOWAS did not provide the appropriate institution to mandate the establishment and operations of peacekeeping operations. Nonetheless, this institution “The Authority” was ignored, thereby creating the initial political dilemma for ECOWAS and ECOMOG (Erskine, 1996: 57).

The lack of cohesiveness and the mutual suspicion amongst Anglophone and Francophone members of ECOWAS stalled the initial deployment of troops to keep peace in Liberia. For instance, when the embattled former President Doe requested for ECOWAS intervention, the organization could not accede to Doe’s request through the AAFC because of the sharp divide between francophone countries who were in support of Charles Taylor, the NPFL rebel leader and the Anglophone countries that were in support of Samuel Doe. The division resulted in a cold war between the Anglophone and francophone members.

The language divide crisis was however partly resolved when former Ivorian president, Felix Houghuet Boigny was elected to serve as the chairman of the committee of five set up at the 14th ECOWAS summit held in Abuja in 1991. Essentially, the incorporation of Biogny and by extension, the Francophone critics into the peace process strengthened immensely and

gave credibility to the ECOWAS and ECOMOG operations in Liberia (Adisa, 1993:176). Furthermore, the inclusion of the Francophone leaders situated the NPFL leader Charles Taylor in a dilemma because it undermined the (Adisa, 1993:178):

Support of his (Taylor's) allies within ECOWAS and forced them to take public positions directed against him. This gave ECOMOG added legitimacy and respectability in the court of international public opinion while raising the possibility that intransigence on Taylor's part could turn his erstwhile friends into enemies.

Another point of note was the concessions granted to factional leaders in their quest for political position and the spoils of war. In protecting their political ambition, all the factions were reluctant to disarm their troops, a condition made more pronounced by the unnecessary delays and shortfalls in the deployment of military observers and the lack of international enforcement of the conditions contained in the agreements.

In spite of the harmonious and concerted efforts by African leaders to ensure the peace in Liberia, the warring factions flagrantly violated and disregarded virtually, almost all the agreements entered into with the ECOWAS. This was made possible because most of the agreements were all open-ended and thus, lacked punitive sanctions on the part of ECOMOG and ECOWAS. The group's (ECOWAS) neutrality in the peace process was also called to question especially by the Charles Taylor led NPFL. In short, the urge to stay by agreements relied wholly on the goodwill of factional leaders. Indeed, "no sooner than the parties got back to Liberia than differences resurfaced on the interpretations of what was really agreed upon" (Bassey, 1993:194).

The non-committal of the warring factions to the peace plans and the subsequent eruption of fighting in different parts of Liberia, was what led a former ECOMOG commander Maj. Gen. John Innienger to admonished the factional warlords that ECOMOG might withdraw if they continue to disregard the peace accord (Cotonou agreement) reached between the groups and ECOWAS (New-African Year-Book, 1996:230&1)

Furthermore, the ECOWAS brokered agreements were flawed by their very nature. The bulk of the agreements did not stipulate how combatants or factional leaders were to be made accountable for human rights abuses. The most controversial of all the agreements and accords is the Cotonou Accord of 25 July 1993, which has been hailed as the most credible

and viable in the peace process. In particular, Article 19 of the Cotonou Accord stipulated that (ECOWAS, 1994):

The parties hereby agree that upon the execution of this agreement there shall be a general amnesty granted to all persons and parties involved in the Liberian civil conflict in course of actual military engagements. Accordingly, acts committed by parties in the course of actual combat are hereby granted amnesty.

The general amnesty, in the view of Amnesty International, does not cover acts such as attacks on civilians, torture, hostage-taking, rape and extra-judicial executions. Such acts are not only in contravention of international law, they are also prohibited by Common article 3 to the four Geneva Conventions of 1949 and Protocol II of 1977 (**Amnesty International, 2005**). In spite of the various encumbrances, the ECOWAS forged ahead with the peace process in Liberia. This task was made possible by the imposition and enforcement of an arms embargo and economic sanctions on the NPFL and other recalcitrant warring factions. The ECOWAS also got the backing of the UN Security Council. On 19 November 1992, the UN Security Council adopted Resolution 788, which endorsed the Yamoussoukro agreement, condemned violations of the cease-fire agreements and attacks on ECOMOG forces.

To further show its (UN) support for the ECOWAS as well as its commitment to peace in Liberia, the UN Secretary-General was mandated to dispatch urgently a special representative to Liberia. Consequently, with the recognition by the UN of the efforts of the ECOWAS and the subsequent collaboration between the two bodies, the Abuja accord, which set the modalities and framework for a transitional government, elections and other processes toward the return to a civil rule in Liberia came to fruition with relative ease amidst further controversies and, appreciation of the ECOWAS bold attempt at peacekeeping and security in the sub-region.

In sum, one could not but commend that the ECOWAS peace plan for Liberia was an example of how African leaders can (Benjamin, 1996:112):

Influence the shaping of foreign policy towards Africa as long as its leaders are able to speak with one voice on matters, which touch and concern the vital

interests of African development and prosperity, including the maintenance of regional or international peace and security.

It is important to point out at this point that Charles Taylor has since been handed over to the International Court of Justice for prosecution. This was after he had ruled the country in a democratic government that emerged after the crisis. The atrocity carried out by his rebel organization is the basis of the prosecution. This suggests that atrocities may no longer be carried out with impunity in the current modern society.

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