The Phenomenon of Ambiguous Mandate in Conflict Management: An Analysis of ECOMOG's Intervention in the Liberian Civil-War

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Abstract

There are two unmistakable dimensions to the immediate post cold-war international relations in Africa- these are the prevalence of intra-state conflicts, and secondly, the unwillingness of non-African actors to spearhead conflict management on the continent. Thus emerged a new wave of recourse to Africa's solution to its own problems. It is in the light of such occurrences that we examine the role of the Economic Community Of West African States in conflict management by drawing critical insight from the Liberian civil-war. The paper investigates the motivation for the sudden inclusion of politico-military focus to the regional economic mandate of ECOWAS. Arguably, the pressing need to restore peace in Liberia and by extension, ensure sub-regional security encouraged the conflict management adventure of ECOWAS in Liberia. However, the ambiguous, unclear and unenforceable mandate of the ECOWAS Monitoring Group (ECOMOG) took the shine off the noble intentions of ECOWAS. In the final analysis, the war became prolonged and led to avoidable loss of human lives, civil and social dislocation. The article therefore concludes that while the ECOMOG machinery was put to adequate use in the second attempt (Sierra-Leone) with corresponding positive results, Liberia could have avoided an unmitigated disaster if ECOWAS had proposed and worked through a peace process on the basis of a clear, enforceable and unambiguous mandate.

Keywords: Mandate, Ecomog, Conflict, Peace, Civil-War

Introduction

Territorial propinquity is a critical factor in the consideration of a state's national security conditions. Instructively, the snowballing effects of crisis in a single state, especially the influx of refugees, and the possible political instability, coupled with socio-economic disruptions could have damning consequences on neighbouring states. Hence, states are compelled to be wary of crisis in their immediate environments. In the quest for regional peace therefore, state-actors are wont to intervene in intra-state conflicts when it is presumed that all internal conflict management mechanisms have failed.

The civil-war in Liberia in the early 1990s provided the appropriate platform for intervention by a third-party actor. The vacillation of the United Nations and the United States (a special relationship exists between the US and Liberia) and the security implication for the sub-region, prompted the Economic Community of West African States to rise to the occasion, and intervene in Liberia's internal crisis.

The article provides a conceptual clarification for the various forms of peace-initiative mechanism in order to highlight the lack of clarity and focus of the ECOWAS Monitoring Group charged with the responsibility of peacekeeping in Liberia. Through the summary of the conditions that led to the Liberian civil-war and the complex nature of political and diplomatic interactions within the West Africa region, the work analyses the role of ECOMOG against the dynamics of political and military development in civil-war Liberia. Finally, the work highlights the consequences of the ambiguity in defining ECOMOG's mandate in Liberia.

International Conflict Management- The Route to Enduring Peace

By the nature of the international system, state-actors are susceptible to conflict situations. The constant quest for the projection, promotion and protection of national interests induces the possibilities of inter-state conflicts. Hence, the character traits of all international conflicts in human history are symptomatic of clashes in the processes of the advancement of the national interests of a particular state or a group of states. Whereas inter-state conflicts are in the strictest sense related to the pursuit of national interests, intra-state conflicts are mainly driven by the desire to protect and advance group interests (political, economic, religious or class). In cases where the contest for dominant political power drives intra-state conflicts, the results have been devastating. Under such circumstances, it is not uncommon that the issues of genocide, ethnic-cleansing, rape, murder, religious-persecution, among others, become the order of the day. Consequent upon the breakdown of law and order, and by extension, collapse of domestic institutional mechanisms for managing conflicts, third-party intervention (solicited or otherwise), has emerged as an effective tool for providing the enabling environment for conflict management processes.

Conflict management refers to the whole gamut of "limitation, mitigation and containment of violent conflicts" (Golwa, 2009: 279). As a tool for achieving peace, conflict management connotes the application of "both forcible (coercive) and non-forcible (non-coercive) instruments to stop violence and avoid humanitarian emergency situations" (Golwa, 2009: 279). In acknowledging the role of parties to a conflict in the process of conflict management, Bercovitch & Regan (1999) regard conflict management as "an attempt by actors involved in conflict to reduce the level of hostility and generate some order in their relations". In other words, "conflict management is a rational and conscious decisional process whereby parties to a conflict, with or without the aid of outsiders, take steps to transform, deescalate or terminate a conflict in a mutually acceptable way" (Bercovitch & Regan, 1999). While the role of parties to conflict in the management of such conflict cannot be deemphasized, one must equally appreciate the influences of third-parties in ensuring the de-escalation of conflicts.

For a regular conflict management situation, the philosophy behind third- party intervention is for a neutral actor to facilitate the processes of a return to peace in conflict environments. According to the Report of the International Commission on Intervention and State Sovereignty (2001: 3):

> *"Above all, the issue of international intervention for human protection purposes is a clear and compelling example of concerted action urgently being needed to bring international norm and institutions in line with international needs and expectations".*

This process is carried out through the clear and unambiguous legal mandate obtained by the interveners. In principle, the content of the mandate must be acceptable to at least one of the parties to the conflict. The mandate could either be the activation of one or more peace measures at once, or sometimes, the components of the mandate could be graduated from one level of peace process to another. The various levels of peace process usually explored by third-party mandates include; peace-making, peace-building, peacekeeping and peace-enforcement.

Theoretically, peace-making efforts may be the first step taken when the conflict environment becomes extremely volatile for both the belligerents and the neutrals. Peace-making efforts essentially deals with the process of erecting the platform for communication among parties. The process involves diplomatic negotiation and other non-military efforts to achieve ceasefire among the belligerents by showing that a lose-all scenario awaits all in the event of conflict prolongation. Thus, the process of peace-making commences when the interventionists are able to establish communication links with each of the warring-parties, where efforts are made to bring all to the discussion table, where the main agenda would be the cessation of hostilities. At this stage, every diplomatic and political measures are expended to ensure that the belligerents are compelled to discuss an initial ceasefire. At the peace-making talks, all parties are mandated to cease hostilities before negotiation/talks on the process of peace-building takes place.

Peace-building is essentially meant to consolidate on the fragile peace that must have been achieved at the level of cessation of hostilities. At this stage of the peace process, salient issues of political, humanitarian and human rights conditions, among others, are discussed, so that efforts, such as, disarmament, demining, re-integration of internally displaced persons, economic and social rehabilitation, and the rebuilding of infrastructures can be undertaken in an atmosphere of relative safety. However, in order to forestall the possibilities of new hostilities, the peace already 'built' must be kept.

Peacekeeping is fundamentally concerned with efforts towards keeping the extant fragile peace and also forestalling the possibilities of a relapse to crisis situation. Essentially, peacekeeping refers to ...,

> *"operations conducted with the consent of the belligerent parties, designed to maintain a negotiated truce and help promote conditions which support diplomatic efforts to establish a long-term peace in areas of conflict" (Field Manual, 1005-5).*

Invariably, peacekeeping operations is calculated to enhance diplomatic efforts in achieving the objective of restoring or maintaining peace in areas of potential or actual conflict. Basically therefore, the essence of peacekeeping is to maintain a negotiated truce and to facilitate a diplomatic resolution of conflicts. Hence, the functions of peacekeepers include; the expansion of the axis of the demilitarised zones, encouraging civil engagements, helping to establish deeper contacts among warring parties and continually working for the consolidation of the peace already achieved, which ultimately leads to political stability

through democratic processes and the establishment of institutions. Thus, the peacekeeping mission usually focuses on such issues as; withdrawals and disengagements, cease-fires, prisoner-of-war exchanges, arms control, demilitarisation and demobilisation. Accordingly, the essential ingredients of a peace-keeping operation includes:

- Success based on willingness of belligerents to abide by truce;
- An interim step towards resolution of conflict;
- Peacekeeping force must be perceived as neutral by all disputing parties.

On the strength of its neutral appellation, a peacekeeping force must avoid clashing with any of the belligerents, and in order to guide against this, the military arm of the peacekeeping operation functions within defined areas as agreed to by the belligerents and the other parties involved in the conflict. However, in case of breaches and violations of the rules of the peace process, the mandate of the interventionists may graduate to peace enforcement, in order to prevent the possibilities of a degeneration to a crisis situation.

Peace-enforcement measures are activated when the signals of the return to violence are evident. The peace-enforcement process is meant to ensure that all parties to a conflict are compelled, forcefully, if need be, to embrace peace. It is strictly the use of armed force to ensure that cease-fire is created or to prevent the violation of existing cease-fire arrangements. While maintaining neutrality, peace-enforcers aim to militarily subdue any of the parties perceived to be working against non-compliance of the peace deals. In contrast to peacekeeping,

> *"peace-enforcement will require a full range of military capabilities that has the potential to meet or exceed that of the belligerents. Although the preferred objective is commitment of superior military force to dissuade belligerents from further conflict, forces deployed for these operations should assume for planning purposes that use of force will be necessary to restore peace. But unlike war, enforcement operations are more constrained by political factors designed to bring warring parties to the negotiating table. Settlement, not victory, is the goal" (Handbook for the Soldier in Operations Other Than War).*

After achieving its objectives, the peace-enforcement force should be evacuated from the conflict environment, because according to the Handbook, "the peace enforcement force is not suited for transition to a peacekeeping force primarily because it can never be considered neutral again". Thus, a new contingent must be mobilised for the peacekeeping mission of the conflict-prone zone. It is therefore apposite to emphasise that:

> *"Political and military decision-makers must understand and clearly specify the nature of the mission of forces deployed to assist in restoring peace. Further,* they *must continuously review the circumstances under which the force was committed to ensure it remains suited to that mission"* (Handbook for the Soldier in Operations Other Than War).

The absence of a clear mandate would normally result in faulty responses for the peace mission and most likely a hostile reception from the belligerents. In effect, an intervention mission must be organised around an immediate and adequate peace response theme, such that the dynamic demands of conflict can be appropriately handled. In order to avoid the negative consequences of unclear mandate, interventionists must weigh the pros and cons before deciding on the mandate to be pursued to a logical conclusion. The ECOWAS failed in that respect in its mission to Liberia and the consequence was a prolonged war, with devastating effects on the citizens of Liberia and to some extent, on the West-Africa sub-region.

Revisiting the Liberian Crisis

Contemporary Liberia has a unique history, shared only with Sierra-Leone as the two African countries that emerged from the "'philanthropic' movements in Europe and America in the wake of the abolition of the slave trade" (Sesay, 1992: 29) which granted opportunity to "free men of colour" to be repatriated to their ancestral homes in Africa where they could start life afresh. On the strength of the efforts of the American Colonisation Society (ACS), the first set of free African-Americans and freed slaves from the US, totalling eighty-six people were safely settled in today's Monrovia (formerly called Christopolis) on the 6th February, 1820. Thereafter, various other settlements within the area were signed off to the new arrivals through a treaty by six tribal kings (Umoden, 1992: 14). The ranks of the settlers were swelled by the arrival of immigrants from the West Indies, and most significantly, by the arrival of newly-freed slaves headed for Europe that were rescued by the British and American navies. The immigrant population became a combination of the Americo-Liberians and the freed-slaves, mostly from Congo. However, the relatively enlightened but minority Americo-Liberians gained prominence in the socio-economic and political terrain, giving the group undue advantage over other groups, as Liberia began to evolve into a modern State.

Politically, the emergent Commonwealth of Liberia was regarded as a colony of the ACS, especially by the European colonial powers. In its bid to reaffirm its independence, the Liberian Declaration of Independence, fashioned after the American version was signed on July 26, 1847, making Liberia the oldest Republic on the African continent. The reaffirmation of the independence and sovereignty of Liberia opened up the opportunity of political dominance by the minority Americo-Liberians. The dominance was given further impetus with the formation of the True Whig Party (TWP) in 1869, and the subsequent take-over of political power by the party in 1870. The TWP was the only recognised political party and therefore solely governed the country for over a century.

Between the late 19th century until about the mid-twentieth century, the Americo-Liberians consolidated their hegemonic dominance over the political, economic, social and civil spheres of Liberia. The Americo-Liberian minority ensured a conscious institutionalised process and structure of marginalisation, alienation, segregation and dominance of both the majority indigenous Liberians and other immigrant groups. Sesay (1992: 30) alludes to this much in a submission:

> *"Although the Americo-Liberians at best represent only 5 percent of the total population of Liberia which was estimated at 1.8m in 1980, they nevertheless controlled political and economic power in the country almost to the exclusion of the majority citizens. Of the country's 19 Presidents before the April 12, 1980 coup, none was an indigenous Liberian".*

This demeaning arrangement had been perfected from the outset with the institutionalisation of a two-tier social structure in which the indigenous people were excluded from effective participation in the civil, political and social life of the country. As a matter of fact, there existed two separate set of laws that each governed the conducts of the Americo-Liberians and the indigenous people separately. It was not until 1946 that limited political participatory rights were granted to the indigenous tribes. This gesture did little in changing the economic or political fortunes of the indigenous tribes; for the levers of power remained closely guided by the Americo-Liberians.

While the last two regimes of Liberia's 'First Republic' headed by William Tubman (1944-1971) and William Tolbert (1971-1980) made efforts to marginally accommodate the indigenous tribes in the socio-economic and political existence of Liberia, the entrenched hegemonic character of marked differentials between the two set of peoples in Liberia

remained firmly rooted. Aside from the insensitivity displayed by the influential Americo-Liberians towards the indigenous tribes, the government of the True Whig Party was highly corrupt, intolerant and dictatorial. Sesay (1992: 31) refers to the pattern of political, economic and social domination as being based on "three concentric circles of power and influence" organised around the True Whig Party (political), the Church (religious) and the Masonic Temple (fraternity). Accordingly, "they provided important socialising avenues, they also played a very vital role in ensuring cohesion among the Americo-Liberians".

Riding on the wave of the unpopularity of the Tolbert regime among the majority indigenous tribes, a successful bloody military coup was executed in 1980 by low-ranking military officers of the Armed Forces of Liberia (AFL). The coup was greeted with elation and sighs of relief essentially by the majority indigenous tribes because for the first time since the creation of modern Liberia, the reins of government was now in the hands of the majority, but, hitherto disadvantaged and oppressed indigenous tribes. The elation was however short-lived because soon after the take-over of government, the Peoples' Redemption Council (PRC) under the headship of Master Sergeant Samuel Doe was exposed for its true character. The magazine, West Africa (1990, cited in Sesay, 1992) describes Doe's regime as one characterised by ...

> *"the misuse of state resources... alongside an arrogant contempt for minimal standards of human rights, state terror, arbitrary arrests, imprisonment, torture, secret and public executions and the wilful destruction of private property, wrongful dismissals, wanton raiding and raping, systematically organised to thoroughly intimidate the populace"*

Not too long into the life of the administration, it became obvious that the hopes on Doe's government were misplaced, because the regime ended up as a monumental failure. The initial populist stand and the accompanying accolades were wittered away on the altar of crass opportunism, indifference to the plight of the people and a brutal and repressive conduct. Arguably, Doe's atrocities make irrelevant, the combination of atrocities committed by the various Americo-Liberian regimes. There were charges of nepotism, corruption, murder, suppression of opposition, human-rights abuses and gagging of the press. In an unprecedented barbaric move, not known to a war-free post modern political entity, the Doe government publicly executed thirteen cabinet ministers of the previous regime in a day. Subsequently, the Doe regime moved beyond its undisguised hatred for the Americo-Liberians and the need to make the group pay for its perceived injustice against the indigenous tribes, but also engaged in an open display of favouritism for his Krahn group against the other indigenous tribes. The government's act of nepotism was evident in the appointment of people of Krahn origin into very sensitive positions in government and in the Army. Sesay (1992: 44) notes:

> *"Thus, with time, the regime assumed an embarrassing ethnic colour to the dislike of the other ethnic groups who formed the majority. This was followed by massive and blatant violations of human rights as Does began to "see" many imaginary as well as "real" enemies in almost every nook and corner in the country".*

In a similar tone, Pitts (1999) describes Doe thus:

> *"... the leader perpetuated a system of patron-client relationships benefitting both his ethnic group, the Krahn, and the Mandigo, an ethnic group that cooperated with the Krahn. His government proved particularly inept at managing the country's economy, and graft became increasingly blatant".*

Eventually, the ranks of the opposition against the Doe regime began to swell, leading to a vociferous call for a return to democracy, as promised the nation in the early days of the regime. Expectations were high that either an end to the regime was near, or that the worst case would be the curtailment of the arbitrariness of the regime through the emergence of a democratic constitution. In a flawed presidential election in 1985, Samuel Doe transmuted from a military Head of State to emerge an elected civilian President. The civilian garb appeared to have given Doe further leverage to deepen his unpopular, autocratic and oppressive style of leadership. In summary, Doe's regime in the approximately ten-year period suffered from political incompetence (brutal and mean), economic indecency (corruption in high places and misuse of public funds) and socio-cultural insensitivity (nepotism and ethnic sentimentalism). During his reign, Doe succeeded in mutilating the psyche of Liberians, thus, an expectation of a revolt was not misplaced.

It was not such a surprise therefore, when in December 1989, a rebel force entered Liberia through the Ivorian-Liberian border with the sole aim of ousting the government of Samuel Doe. The National Patriotic Front of Liberia (NPFL) was led by the irrepressible and determined Charles Ghankay Taylor. Taylor, is a former member of Doe's government who fled Liberia in the aftermath of the failed coup attempt by Thomas Quiwonkpa in 1985. Within six months of the first attack, Taylor had rattled the ill-equipped Armed Forces of Liberia (AFL), and was indeed believed to have taken control of ninety-eight percent of the country (Nass, 2000: 67). Monrovia, the seat of government, and specifically the highly fortified Executive Mansion provided the only safe haven for Doe.

In the midst of the chaos generated by the conflict, a splinter group named the Independent National Patriotic Front of Liberia (INPFL) led by Yormie Johnson emerged from Taylor's NPFL. At this point in time, three main groups had emerged; the NPFL, INPFL and the AFL. Under the conditions of the war, and the subsequent break down of law and order, and in view of the looming powerlessness of Samuel Doe, the US refused to lend support to the embattled former President or indeed, any of the other two factions. However, it is believed that on the strength of the widely publicised friendship between Nigeria's former military President Ibrahim Babangida and Samuel Doe, the Nigerian government agreed to assist in settling the Liberian imbroglio, but under the auspices of the Economic Community of West African States (ECOWAS). As the Chairman of the Organisation of African Unity (now African Union), President Babangida made a suggestion to the ECOWAS Heads of State and Government to set up the ECOWAS Mediation Standing Committee; the suggestion was approved in Banjul, The Gambia in May, 1990. The member-states of ECOWAS unanimously agreed on the decision to send a peacekeeping monitoring team (Economic Community of West African States Monitoring Group) to Liberia, thereby, providing a third-party intervention for the purposes of assisting in managing and settling the Liberian conflict.

Ecowas- Regional Economic Agenda 'cum' Conflict Management Agenda

The Economic Community of West African States (ECOWAS) is a regional economic community set-up in 1975 through the prompting and exertions of Nigeria, and with the active support of the Republic of Togo. The strategic inclusion of a French-speaking African state in Nigeria's dream of an economic community for the region was intended, on the one hand, to douse the tension raised by the unproved perceptions of Nigeria's hegemonic ambitions by leading Francophone West African states. Furthermore, Nigeria's determination of incorporating the French-speaking area of West Africa rests on the platform of Nigeria's commitment to the policy of 'Good Neighbourliness' which abhors discrimination on the basis of language, cultural or political differences. Eventually, the community emerged as a sub-region wide economic community that covered a total area of 6,141,153 square kilometres and 122.7m people at inception in 1975 (Akinyemi & Aluko, 1984: 3-4).

Nigeria's efforts in forging the establishment of ECOWAS found expression in the thinking of the UN at the time, which encouraged the formation of such economic community groupings in developing countries, especially in Africa. Accordingly, ECOWAS' establishment is partly in response "to the repeated recommendations of the United Nations bodies, more particularly, the United Nations Economic Commission for Africa, to stress, *inter alia*, sub-regional cooperation as a means of fulfilling the aspirations of developing nations" (Afolabi, 1984: 46).

Baring all the hindrances as a result of the mutual suspicions among members, ECOWAS emerged as the august regional economic community in West Africa. The organisation's driving principle at inception rests on the integration of the economies of West African states through the termination of all barriers to trade, furthermore, the organisation hoped to link the peoples of the region by allowing travelling access, integrating banking and transportation services, including industrial development and harmonisation, cooperation in all spheres of socio-cultural endeavours and the freedom of residence of citizens, amongst other laudable ambitions. The whole idea is to achieve economic integration and collective self-reliance. As Akinyemi & Aluko (1984: 4) put it, ECOWAS "is the structural embodiment of the peoples' belief in a collective attack against the enduring problems of underdevelopment in tropical Africa". Chapter 1, Article 2(1) of the Treaty of ECOWAS states the aims of the community thus:

> *"It shall be the aim of the Community to promote cooperation and development in all fields of economic activity particularly in the fields of industry, transport, telecommunications, energy, agriculture, natural resources, commerce, monetary and financial questions and in social and cultural matters for the purpose of raising the standard of living of its peoples, of increasing and maintaining economic stability, of fostering closer relations among its members and of contributing to the progress and development of the African continent".*

From the foregoing, it is apparent that the founders of ECOWAS never contemplated the nature of security challenges that would confront the sub-region in the international politics of the late 1980s and 1990s. Thus, the original treaty only focused on the issues of "Settlement of Disputes" which they envisaged could arise from the interpretation or application of the Treaty, and not as a result of deadly intra-state conflicts that gained prominence afterwards. Accordingly, Chapter 13, Article 56 of the Treaty states:

> *"Any dispute that may arise among the Member States regarding the interpretation or application of this Treaty shall be amicable settled by direct agreement. In the event of failure to settle such disputes, the matter may be referred to the Tribunal of the Community by a party to such disputes and the decision of the Tribunal shall be final".*

The realisation of the impossibility of achieving economic integration in an environment laden with security challenges prompted the ECOWAS Heads of State and Government to sign the Protocol on Non-Aggression in 1978. To further state its readiness for not just collective reliance, but also collective security, the ECOWAS highest authority signed the Protocol Relating to Mutual Assistance in Defence into force in Freetown in May 1981. Though, the Freetown Protocol was more elaborate than the Protocol on Non-Aggression, yet, it was legally and logistically powerless in the face of serious internal conflicts. To buttress the point of the weakness of this Protocol to meet the challenges of internal conflicts, we outline the circumstances under which it can be authorised. It was only

possible to activate the legal instruments under the following circumstances (Akindele, 2012: 5):

- An armed conflict between two or several ECOWAS member states;
- An external armed threat or aggression directed against a member of the community; and
- An internal armed conflict within any member state engineered and supported actively from outside likely to endanger the security and peace in the entire community.

Akindele (2012: 9), further asserts:

> *"Presumably to create credibility for ECOWAS' collective profile and facilitate quick response to calls for defence assistance, the 1981 MAD Protocol provided for the establishment of the Allied Armed Forces of the Community (AAFC) consisting of units from the national armed forces of member states which the latter had specially trained, earmarked and agreed to place at the disposal of the Community for use in the event of request for military assistance and armed intervention".*

All these efforts were rendered inadequate when the Liberian crisis exploded. Under the circumstances of the Liberian crisis, the stability of the sub-region became threatened, but unfortunately, the character of the crisis did not fall within the scope under which the instruments of the 1981 Protocol on Mutual Assistance in Defence could be applied. Golwa (2009: 280) rightly points out that:

> *"As a matter of conjecture, one could say that the community at the time of formation, did not envisage the nature of the threat and conflict which engulfed the sub-region. Therefore priority was given more to issues of economic integration to the detriment of peace building or conflict management".*

ECOWAS was however forced to rise up to the occasion in the face of sub-regional disaster, instability and humanitarian challenges. This is even more compelling because of the unwillingness of the rest of the international community to assist in arresting the Liberian chaos. Less than a year into the start of the Liberian carnage, ECOWAS, through the prompting of the Nigerian president, Ibrahim Babangida, instituted its own agenda for resolving the conflict.

ECOMOG- ECOWAS' Response to the Liberian Crisis

The processes of ECOWAS' involvement in the Liberian crisis were perfected through the following four major summits (Okeke, 2012: 40);

1. The 13th session of the Authority of Heads of State and Government of ECOWAS convened in Banjul, the Gambia from May 28-30, 1990;
2. Standing Mediation Committee Meeting in Freetown, Sierra-Leone, from July 5-20, 1990;
3. The National Conference in Banjul, The Gambia on August 30, 1990; and
4. The First Session of the Standing Mediation Committee, held at the Kairaba Conference Centre in Banjul, The Gambia from August 6-7, 1990.

In readiness for active involvement in the Liberian crisis, the ECOWAS Standing Mediation Committee's Peace Plan was anchored on the necessity for direct intervention by member-states through troops-deployment under the aegis of ECOWAS Monitoring Group (ECOMOG). According to Golwa (2009: 282);

> *"The mandate of ECOMOG was to serve as a cease-fire monitoring group that would create an atmosphere conducive to the establishment of a broad-based interim government and eventual democratic election under international supervision and the disarmament, demobilisation and encampment of the warring factions".*

Incidentally, a cease-fire had not been agreed before the deployment of the ECOMOG contingent, it was therefore preposterous to mandate ECOMOG to monitor a non-existent cease-fire. Draman & Carment (2001: 9) note that: "The 'peacekeepers' went into Liberia without any cease-fire on the ground and in fact, without any peace to keep, yet they were assigned peacekeeping duties". In effect, ECOWAS ought to have ensured its peace-making efforts through diplomatic means bore fruits, through cessation of hostilities before troops-deployment. It is therefore not unexpected that some of the belligerents, specifically the Charles Taylor-led NPFL was hostile towards ECOMOG. While the AFL loyal to incumbent President Doe and the breakaway INPFL led by Prince Yormie Johnson expressed their willingness to allow ECOWAS' intervention through ECOMOG, the NPFL, led by Charles Taylor had warned of dire consequences for any foreign troop that interfered in the Liberian crisis. According to Nass (2000: 67),

> *"Charles Taylor, leader of the main and original rebel faction NPFL countered that the Liberian crisis was strictly an internal problem that should be allowed to sort itself out without external interference. Any force coming in would be regarded as an occupation army and would be resisted on Liberia's soil".*

Taylor's position deserved to be given all seriousness, for at that stage of the crisis he was already controlling an approximate 98% of the country. He was on the verge of running over Monrovia and the prospects of taking over the Executive Mansion where President Doe was holed up looked real, before ECOMOG came calling. The disgust of the rebel leader with ECOMOG was expressed on August 24 1990 when ECOMOG troops landed in Monrovia. While the INPFL which controlled the sea port through which the contingent arrived Liberia welcomed the troops, the NPFL showed its discontent for their mission by attacking "the in-coming ECOMOG naval ships with multi-barrelled rocket launcher missiles and mortar fired from a safe distance" (Nass, 2000: 68). In effect, the damage done to the ECOMOG mission with an unclear mandate was deepened by the antagonism of one of the belligerents against the contingent.

Despite Taylor's obvious reservations, the ECOMOG contingent managed to settle in, but the task of the group became more compounded by the fact that Liberia had become a highly fragmented country, faced with the reality of imminent collapse- disorder had become the order of the day. In quick succession, various rebel factions began to emerge by taking advantage of the progress made by the NPFL, and using the opportunity to become relevant actors and thus negotiate for stakes in post civil-war Liberia. With the emergence of quite a handful of other rebel groups, such as, the Liberian Peace Council (LPC) led by George Bolley and the United Liberation Movement for Liberian Democracy which subsequently devolved into two wings, with each wing headed by Roosevelt Johnson and G. Kromah (ULIMO-J and ULIMO-K) and the NPFL's principled hostility towards ECOMOG, the contingent's peacekeeping role became quite daunting. Against the tide of a peacekeeping mandate, ECOMOG launched "a strategy of 'limited offensive'" (Draman & Carment, 2001: 5) ostensibly to overpower the NPFL and ensure that some level of social order is restored. This show of force only portrayed ECOMOG as an unwanted intrusion in Liberia's debacle. The action of the 'peacekeepers' only prolonged the crisis and had damning consequences on the image of the group as neutral and impartial. The undisguised anti-NPFL stance of

ECOMOG further compounded the challenges faced as a result of the unclear and ambiguous mandate to be pursued by the mission. The Report of the International Commission on Intervention and State Sovereignty counsels thus (2001: 60):

> *"A clear and unambiguous mandate is one of the first and most important requirements of an operation to protect. However well or ill-defined the end state of intervention, political vision should encompass what it will take to get there- conceptually, as well as in terms of resources. Without such calculations from the outset, a problem of mustering sufficient "political will" to see intervention through to a successful conclusion exists".*

The Report (2001: 60) further explains:

> *"Mandates are often adjusted incrementally in reaction to new demands during the course of an intervention, and they may well be inevitable given the special nature of interventions for human protection purposes where much depends upon the attitude and level of cooperation received from the targeted state. While the initial mandate may reflect a preoccupation with human protection, political and security concerns sooner or later predominate. The more limited the initial vision in relation to the real problem at hand, the more likely the mission creep will take place".*

In the final analysis, the Report urges, and rightly so, that:

> *"... the mandate should define in clear language what the aims of the intervention in the various phases of it should be and it should spell out that the desired end state is the restoration of good governance and the rule of law".*

In contrast to the dictates of the above-mentioned Report, ECOWAS failed to adequately articulate the mandate of the ECOMOG mission in Liberia. Draman & Carment (2001: 11) note that, "although ECOMOG was referred to as a 'peacekeeping force', the NPFL's resistance to it was an indication of the absence of consent, a key ingredient in conventional peacekeeping". As earlier mentioned, the inability of ECOWAS to initiate a resounding peace-making effort as the initial attempt at intervention, made the setting up of a clear and enforceable mandate agenda an impossibility. Nass' (2000: 340) comments is very instructive as to the challenges of deciphering the role of ECOMOG in Liberia. The author submits:

> *"When viewed in retrospect, several years after the end of ECOMOG mission in Liberia, debate continues as to whether ECOMOG in Liberia can be viewed as a peacekeeping military intervention from its conception, or as a classical multilateral military intervention designed to stave off the imminent collapse of incumbent dictator, President Samuel Doe".*

The consequence of the indiscretion is that the peacekeeping mission, which never engaged in peace-making became embroiled in peace-enforcement challenges. According to Francis (2000: 179, cited in Golwa, 2009: 283):

> *"It is important to state that given the circumstances of ECOMOG's intervention and the complexity of the civil conflict, it was forced to move from peace-keeping to peace-enforcement. This inevitably compromised its neutrality to the point that, in order to limit NPFL military superiority,*

> *it had to occasionally cooperate with, and even give logistical support to, other warring factions against NPFL, such as the United Liberation Movement of Liberia for Democracy (ULIMO); the Liberian Peace Council (LPC); and the Armed Forces of Liberia (AFL)".*

Meanwhile Adisa & Aminu (1996: 86), argue that, "indeed the tenets of peace-keeping and peace-enforcement measures were seen as essentially incompatible". The consequences of ECOWAS' naivety in muddling up the role of ECOMOG was disastrous for Liberia and the sub-region as a whole. The situation led to the prolongation of the war, and the concomitant losses of lives, civil and social dislocation, among other unfortunate conditions.

From the benefits of hindsight, there are arguments to the effect that had ECOWAS committed more resources to peace-making through diplomatic efforts, the sub-regional body's involvement would have paved the way for the end of the war much earlier than it happened. Under such circumstances, the ECOMOG contingent would have been deployed to monitor and secure a truce, and prepare the enabling environment for diplomacy and negotiation to consolidate on the truce. As noted by Draman & Carment (2001: 6) "peacekeeping offers temporary relief; in fact, it is more a palliative, rather than a cure". ECOMOG was therefore deprived of the platform which an impartial, neutral and trusted third-party intervention mechanism should enjoy.

There was however a dramatic turn of events in the quest for peace in Liberia when the relationship between the Nigerian authorities and Charles Taylor's NPFL changed positively. The Nigerian government under General Sani Abacha reached out to Taylor, who graciously accepted an invitation to Abuja. Thereafter, Taylor acquiesced to participate in the peace process. The Abuja Accord of August 1995 may not have ended the Liberian crisis at once, but it paved the way for the subsequent revised Abuja Accord that signalled the end of the war in 1997. One of the most important factors necessary to end the crisis was to ensure that all belligerents were made to participate in the peace process. Invariably, peace may have been achieved earlier if ECOWAS had taken cognizance of Taylor's clout, and ensured his participation in the peace process. This line of action would have endeared ECOWAS to the belligerents as an impartial intervener, rather than the suspicions generated about ECOWAS' role and intentions for most period during the crisis

Eventually, a return to normalcy through the peace process initiated by ECOWAS with the participation of the warring factions got underway signalling the commencement of the peace-building process. The crisis officially ended with the swearing in of Charles Taylor as the President of Liberia on August 2, 1997. This predictable outcome could have happened much earlier on two grounds; firstly, if the plan of Taylor's NPFL to run over Monrovia and take over government by force had not been truncated by ECOMOG's intervention. Secondly, if ECOWAS had properly managed its relationship with Taylor's NPFL, a democratic election would have been organised much earlier and without the bloodshed that heralded the process.

Conclusions

Indeed, ECOWAS' regional security initiative was central to the dynamics of the Liberian crisis. After Liberia, ECOWAS' regional conflict management mechanism was also activated to resolve the Sierra-Leone crisis. But, according to Golwa (2009: 286): "The question often asked is why should an economic integration grouping assume the role of conflict management?". Simply, it is because the aims and objectives of ECOWAS, which includes, collective self-reliance, economic growth and development cannot be realised in the absence of peace and security within the sub-region. Though, the Liberian adventure may not

have been clinically executed, yet, "... the creation of ECOMOG placed ECOWAS in a new dimension as a sub-regional body which has taken its regional security responsibilities seriously" (Golwa, 2009: 287).

Though the ECOWAS' attempt at resolving the Liberian quagmire was a noble effort, which however went sour because of its less than inspiring prosecution and execution as a fall out of the non-existence of a clear, unambiguous and enforceable mandate. This is coupled with the lack of confidence in ECOMOG's mission, by perhaps, the most powerful group among the belligerents. The reasons for the below par performance of the group is however not far-fetched, if one draws from the advice of the Report of International Commission on Intervention and State Sovereignty (2001: 11). The Report argues that the conditions for intervention should meet four basic objectives, as follows:

- to establish clearer rules, procedures and criteria for determining whether, when and how to intervene;
- to establish the legitimacy of military intervention when necessary and after all other approaches have failed;
- to ensure that military intervention, when it occurs, is carried out only for the purposes proposed, is effective, and is undertaken with proper concern to minimize the human costs and institutional damage that will result; and
- to help eliminate, where possible, the causes of conflict while enhancing the prospects for durable and sustainable peace".

The Liberian experience taught ECOWAS some eternal lessons, which led to the signing of the 1999 Protocol Relating to the Mechanism for Conflict Prevention, Management, Resolution, Peacekeeping and Security. The ECOWAS leaders amended the letters of the 1999 Protocol to reflect some of the salient features that were excluded from both the 1978 and 1981 Protocols that deal with the issue of security and conflict management and prevention. According to Golwa (2010: 118): "This new framework does not limit its purview to inter-State conflicts rather it has the mandate to intervene in internal conflicts that pose a threat to human rights and general security of the sub-region". Specifically, Chapter V, Article 25 of Protocol 10 states that interventions would be necessary when the following occur:

- Cases of aggression or conflict in any member State or thereof;
- Cases of conflicts between two or several member States;
- Cases of internal conflict (i) that threatens to trigger a humanitarian disaster, (ii) that poses a serious threat to peace and security in the sub-region;
- In the event of serious and massive violation of human rights and the rule of law.

The 1999 Protocol effectively tackles the major aspect of the challenges that ECOWAS had to deal with in the sub-regional organisation's response to the Liberian crisis. With relative success in other areas of focus, it is therefore safe to surmise like Ogwu & Alli (2009: 13) that in the over three decades of ECOWAS' existence, the sub-regional community has matured steadily by responding adequately to the challenges facing the complex West Africa sub-region. The authors submit that:

> *"In its three decades of existence, ECOWAS has shown that it is a key instrument for the enhancement of socio-economic and political development in the sub-region. By its numerous achievements in conflict resolution, peace and security and economic integration, West Africa has been put in the forefront of economic integration in Africa".*

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