

Chapter Five

Nigeria, ECOWAS and the Liberian Conflict

5.0 Introduction

This chapter, deals with the transformation of ECOWAS from a purely economic integrative scheme to a security framework. Its aim is to analyse the movement towards a collective sub-regional security framework, which would be capable of responding to conflictive issues. As argued earlier in Chapter Three, the aim of West Africa's integration scheme to attain a united sub-region was an ambitious intention. This is because of the differences among its member states in terms of wealth, natural resource endowment, population and political ideology, which has occasionally resulted in conflict. However, the lack of participation in the integration process by the ordinary people of West Africa has also created problems. Since its establishment in May 1975, ECOWAS, has moved towards establishing the basis for a multi-purpose organisation. Through its multiple processes, ECOWAS member states sought to attain common economic policies and, with time, a collective security policy. It was against this background that ECOWAS's first Council of Ministers meeting in 1976 concluded that: 'by this single act more than 120 million people of West Africa, ... put a seal on their determination to ... *re-create* ... [a]

homogenous society'.¹

This chapter analysis ECOWAS's security protocols and how it situated ECOWAS to intervene in conflict situations. The chapter, also, examines the nature of the Liberian conflict and the peacekeeping strategies initiated by ECOWAS and ECOMOG when intervention eventually occurred. It shows how the established institutional processes either enabled or inhibited ECOWAS to respond to Liberia's complex political emergency. I, also, undertake a discussion of the multiple logics and dynamics that characterised this civil war. My argument here is that the nature of Liberia's war possibly undermined and exposed weaknesses that may have been present in designing ECOWAS's peacekeeping strategies, like it's Cease-fire Monitoring Group (ECOMOG). A detailed account of the diverse processes initiated by ECOWAS to resolve political schisms among member-states and to elicit compliance from faction groups is analysed.

5.1 An Overview of the Liberian Conflict

Liberia, Africa's oldest independent state, experienced a civil war from December 1989 until 1997 when democratic elections were staged and Charles Taylor, the leader of the largest warring faction, was elected President. The war was the result of decades of regressive rule, first by the Americo-Liberian settlers who engaged in a separatist rule for

¹Adebayo A, 'Collective Self-reliance in Developing Africa: Scope, Prospects and Problems', in Akinyemi AB & IA Aluko (eds.), *Readings and Documents on ECOWAS*. Lagos: Macmillan, 1983, pp.xxi-xxii.

more than a century, and then by the regime of Samuel Doe, an indigenous Liberian, who unleashed a reign of terror on Liberia from 1980 to 1989.

The Liberian war bore all the hallmarks of post-Cold War conflicts discussed in introductory Chapter One. It is estimated that more than 200 000 lives were lost. Civilians, including women and children, were deliberately targeted in what at one stage became an open massacre amongst the warring factions which numbered as many as eight in 1995. Neighbouring countries had to deal with the influx of more than half a million refugees and they also faced other spill-over effects of the Liberian war. Liberia presented great challenges to ECOWAS, which became burdened with the conflict when the United States (US), Liberia's traditional ally, refused to intervene decisively in the conflict.

There can be no doubt that the intervention of ECOWAS in the Liberian conflict was possible because of Nigeria's input and commitment. The organisation deployed a peace force, the ECOMOG in Liberia in August 1990, when local and regional mediation efforts failed and the carnage in Liberia continued unabated. The ECOWAS Standing Mediation Committee (SMC), consisting of The Gambia, Ghana, Mali, Togo and Nigeria, was responsible for the initial mediation efforts and the deployment of ECOMOG. The force, which initially consisted of about 2 500 men, gradually increased in response to the situation on the ground and at its largest, numbered about 14 000. Nigeria gradually increased its troop contribution to ECOMOG and, from 1992, its contingent comprised about 70 per cent of the force. Nigeria also provided about 80 per cent of the funding of ECOMOG. Thus, Nigeria's involvement and commitment was crucial to the operation.

ECOWAS, under Nigeria's leadership, may have unwittingly evolved a strategy

which, if properly developed, could prove effective for responding to deadly civil conflict. From Liberia and Somalia to Rwanda and Sierra Leone, civil conflicts characterised by the indiscriminate killing of civilians have created humanitarian crises and resulted in state collapse or considerable breakdown of authority. The Nigerian-led effort (from 1990 - 1997) in Liberia, and the response to the conflict in Sierra Leone (1993-2000), had features which may be effective in similar conflict situations on the continent, if effectively executed. At the core of this *peace creation* strategy, is the readiness to respond to the situation in the conflict environment with whatever approach is deemed necessary to restore order. ECOMOG responded to the conflicts by alternating between peacekeeping and peace-enforcement or the threat of the use of force (Funmi Olonisakin: 1998.15).

5.2 Background and African Philosophy on the Path leading to Intervention in the Liberian Conflict²

The purpose of this section is to expose the reader to some of the thought-patterns on the route to intervention in the Liberian Conflict before the commencement of the various processes.

In the euphoria that marked the declaration of a New World Order, Liberia's end

²It is critical to point-out from the on-set that the African philosophy discourse is not at variance with the International Charters (UN and OAU) and Treaties (ECOWAS et al.) on sovereignty and non-interference in member-states. Rather than 'sit back and do nothing', the African philosophy occupied the minds and shaped the thought-patterns of some actors in Nigeria and elsewhere in the search for juridically acceptable and appropriate ways and means of intervention in the Liberian conflict; for the express purpose of bringing relief and succour to the embattled people of Liberia.

of year festivities in December 1989 were hardly disturbed by an invasion by an insurgent group, the National Patriotic Front of Liberia (NPFL). In the following weeks, however, Liberia, its contiguous neighbours and the wider sub-region were increasingly confronted with the harsh realities of a particularly brutal and different type of civil war. Atrocities were committed by both government counter-insurgency troops and the NPFL. The sub-region's media gave extensive coverage to these outrages with the result that an increasingly vocal public concerned with the indignities occurring in Liberia demanded the evacuation of their nationals from Liberia. Nigeria was one such country. Eventually, the crisis was put on the agenda of the Economic Community of West African States (ECOWAS) in May 1990. Subsequently, on 24 August 1990, ECOWAS's cease-fire monitoring group (ECOMOG) intervened by initiating its historic peacekeeping operation code-named 'Operation Liberty', nine months after the outbreak of the conflict.

Liberia's intra-state conflict conformed to the post-Cold War pattern of internal conflicts after the removal of overlays that had previously distorted the nature, importance and public perception of these conflicts. As a result, such clashes are rapidly becoming the principal form of armed conflict. Although intra-state wars are not new, recent and significant scholarly absorption with them is unparalleled. Consequently, efforts to grasp the dynamics of, and resolve such conflicts increasingly featured on the agenda of multilateral organisations. Although the Cold War did not alleviate the insecurity dilemmas of West Africa, its termination revealed the potential of heightening the intensity of such intra-state conflicts and, also, generated the possibilities for the resolution of such conflicts by regional and sub-regional organisations. What is of interest, therefore, for this thesis and this

empirical Chapter Five, are why and how ECOWAS intervened in Liberia's conflict.

Nevertheless, it must be emphasised that the opportunities created for sub-regional organisations to resolve security conflicts, as will become clear in this empirical discussion, were not solely based on the classical tenets of intervention. To respond to these new conflict forms effectively, innovative responses, sometimes based on non-western philosophical and conceptual ideas, became necessary. This empirical case is an example of such an imaginative response to a sub-regional conflict based on the African philosophy, popular in West Africa, that advocates “the importance of helping a neighbour whose hut is in flames to extinguish the fire to avoid it engulfing yours”. It is a conceptual tool that does not always imply neutrality, but rather active and positive engagement. This African notion of being a neighbour's keeper is premised on the philosophical and conceptual framework of controlling unexpected events. It is a conceptual tool that is increasingly becoming more assertive and proactive in defining conflict resolution strategies, principles and norms in West Africa.³ These may diverge from prevalent post-Westphalian diplomatic and international practices concerning intervention that sometimes differ in perception, scope and interest from that of African reality.⁴ Therefore, issues of solidarity, openness and being

³This philosophy of being one another's keeper is continental. In other regions of Africa, such expressions relating to proactive intervention can be found in Swahili. Examples are *zima moto, usihoji aliye choma* - First put out the fire, then sit down to question who put the house on fire. The fire in this context can relate to fire in the literal sense or “problems” which are comparable to internal conflicts or civil wars.

⁴The Somali have similar philosophies. On neighbourhood, they say “*guriga ma gadine, jaarkiis baan agay*”, if you buy a house, you will also “buy” the neighbours. “*Walaal ka fog deriska ku dhaama*” meaning better a close neighbour than a far away brother, or “*guryihi usu dhow baa is guba*” - the huts close together will be destroyed by the fire. In the context of experience and cognition “*geedjoog goartiis wuu yaqaan*” - who stays near the tree knows his rights and duties. In the same Somali philosophy, *Saddex lama raco* (there are three companions one should do without): (a) *ma horreeye* -

“each others keeper” are increasingly coming to the fore. This was a theme which resurfaced during interviews and discussions.⁵

With the outbreak of the Liberian civil war, ECOWAS faced its most decisive crisis since its establishment on 28 May 1975. On that date, West African Heads of State and Government (HSG) signed the Treaty of Lagos in Nigeria.⁶ Despite the optimism that surrounded the establishment of ECOWAS, by 1990, the fifteen-year period envisaged for achieving a common market, this common market had failed to materialise (UNILAG Consult, 1991). Most of the economies in the region were in recession, and others were undergoing stringent structural adjustment programmes (SAPs) (Adibe, 1994: 187ff; Ousman, 1997:152; Bach, 1997:77).⁷ It can be argued that, by 1990, the conceived West African trading zone had not only failed to materialise, but also that the sub-region was undergoing societal upheaval. Consequently, there was an increasing sense of a widening credibility gap between the rhetoric of improved trade and the gaping bureaucratic and

the one who is afraid to take the lead, (b) *ma hambeeye* - the one who when eating does not think of others, and (c) *ma haasaawash* - the one who is not companionable and entertaining.

⁵Interviews and discussions with Ike Nwachukwu and Tom Ikimi (former Nigerian Foreign Ministers) at various times between 1995 and 2000. I was part of the Policy Planning Unit as Head of West Africa Department in the Foreign Office from 1994 to 1995.

⁶Cape Verde became the sixteenth signatory state.

⁷These writers have argued that by 1989, the level of formal sector intra-ECOWAS trade as a proportion of its total world trade was very low. ECOWAS trade collectively accounted for less than 1% of total world exports and imports. Not only that, within this period, intra regional trade rose from only 5% to 8%. Even these rather “optimistic” figures have been recently challenged. By 1995, “official intra regional trade still represen[ed] an insignificant portion of total exports, having grown from 3.9% to 4.9%. Similarly, a survey undertaken in 1991 showed that ten out of the sixteen West African states are among the most inward-looking developing countries. For instance, the four largest trading partners in the sub-region - Côte d'Ivoire, Ghana, Nigeria and Senegal - were the most, or second most inward-looking. This emanated from the fact that integration efforts in the West African sub-region had gone hand in hand with inward-looking economic strategies based on import-substituting industrialisation.

political incapacity to act effectively.

It is in the light of such poor economic performance that an increasing sense of 'eco-pessimism' permeated the West African integration scheme. William Zartman was pessimistic, not only about Nigeria, but also about ECOWAS's prospects and capability to tackle its problems. To him, "... Nigeria will not be ready during the 1980's ... and ECOWAS is not capable of an organised and decisive response" to West Africa's security problems (1985:60, 80). ECOWAS's ability to resolve West Africa's problems was generally doubted. Thus, before the 1989 ECOWAS summit in Burkina Faso, the influential *West Africa* magazine foresaw:

a pattern to ECOWAS summits which in some respects has become all too familiar. [A]fter 14 years of the organisation's existence and 12 summits ... ECOWAS may be facing a make-or-break phase. Unless some sign of *progress* can be registered in *sectors* that matter, the imperatives that led to the Community's creation back in 1975 may be called into question (my emphasis)⁸.

Carol Lancaster's (1991:263-4) analysis of ECOWAS and Nigeria continued this negative perception of their incapability to deal with *sectors* that mattered and to *register progress*. According to her:

the prospects for effective economic co-operation among African states in the coming decade are not bright. [T]he future of economic regionalism in sub-Saharan Africa may depend on the emergence of regional hegemonies with the *will* and resources to promote economic co-operation and integration ... A politically stable and prosperous Nigeria could play that role in West Africa ... But [this is] long-term speculation,

⁸West Africa, 10 July 1989, p.1119.

and the prospects are uncertain.⁹ (my emphasis)

Interesting as Lancaster, Zartman and *West Africa's* perspectives were, all overlooked the institutional transformations and diplomatic activities that had been taking place in the West African sub-region since 1988. These aimed at improving ECOWAS's capability to tackle the sub-region's socio-economic and security problems. Specifically, these changes sought to enhance the institutional capacity of ECOWAS not only to lead the economic integration schemes, but also resolve other societal issues of development in West Africa. But at the time Lancaster et al. were expressing these doubts, the ECOWAS secretariat, in close collaboration with the political leadership of the sub-region, were involved in intense diplomatic, peace-keeping and peace-enforcement processes to resolve an intra-state conflict that had begun in a member state, Liberia.¹⁰

Accordingly, despite ECOWAS's poor economic record and the pessimistic assessments of its ability to manage West Africa's problems, I examined how and why an actual realisation of its security imperatives is relevant for analysis. It is the contention of this thesis that the character of political- and security-related issues in the sub-region, and

⁹Lancaster obviously saw the ECOWAS project only in terms of benefitting Heads of state and their governments. In her perspective, two benefits, both political, could be discerned. First, was the exposure of these leaders in their own media. Secondly, it provided the opportunity to deal with issues that the OAU would not tackle. As this empirical chapter has shown, Lancaster's assessments were far off the mark.

¹⁰As a member of the Policy Planning Unit (earlier indicated) I have record and knowledge of some 'behind the scenes' decisions to propel the transformation in the 'desired' direction; obtained on the basis of 'need to know'. It is critical for the examiners to note that for as long as I remain in the establishment and a top management staff of the Nigerian Foreign Service, I will always be bound by the Nigerian Official Secrets Act of 1962 and the extant circulars.

ECOWAS's responses to them, have contributed to generating what is seen as a new dynamism; and 'eco-optimism' in the West African integration process. The subsequent arguments are that some of the offshoots of this dynamism, which were inherent in the ECOWAS scheme, resulted first, in the inclusion and, eventual promulgation of security related protocols.¹¹ Before the application of these protocols, however, there had been sub-regional and international concern that ECOWAS's integrative venture was increasingly becoming "another unsuccessful story"¹². This was characteristic of the high ambitions of most Third World regional integration schemes.

The former leader of The Gambia, Sir Dauda Jawara, aptly summed up the increasing political apprehensions and 'eco-pessimism' felt by the political leadership on the sub-region: "we [have] move [d] from the problematic [of establishing ECOWAS] to what is in danger of becoming unattainable" (*West Africa*, 4 July 1988:1195). Thus, by the time ECOWAS discussed Liberia at the level of a Heads of State and Government summit in May 1990, there was widespread intellectual and political pessimism concerning ECOWAS's prospects and about the potential to accomplish the expectations it generated at its inception.

¹¹It is the promulgation and subsequent implementation of the Treaty obligations under these protocols that was utilized to justify ECOWAS's intervention in the Liberian crisis. The subsequent institutional off-shoots of this intervention formed the basis of our supposition of a new dynamism or transformation of ECOWAS. The two defence treaties are the ECOWAS Protocol on Non-Aggression from 1978 and the ECOWAS Protocol Relating to Mutual Assistance on Defence, 1981. The ECOMOG Response Mechanism was in 1999.

¹²Okolo, J.E. 1985. Integrative and Co-operative Regionalism: The Economic Community of West African States, International Organisation, p.129.

In spite of the 'eco-pessimism' about Nigeria and ECOWAS's abilities to lead the sub-region at the start of the 1990's, by 1997, ECOWAS's Liberia intervention under Nigerian leadership, according to McFarlane and Weiss¹³ had become a "qualified success for ECOWAS". Howard Howe¹⁴, a consistent critic of ECOWAS's intervention and Nigeria's leadership role, had to concede that Nigeria "suffered perhaps six hundred killed in action and spent perhaps a billion dollars, above normal operating costs, on a conflict that did not directly affect its own security, at a time when its foreign debt stood at USD 35 billion. *No western nation, especially following the Somalian intervention, could match such commitment*" (my emphasis).¹⁵ How do we explain this transformation of both ECOWAS and Nigeria at a period when their critics had written them off?¹⁶

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¹³McFarlane, Neil & Thomas G. Weiss, 1992. *Regional Organisations and Regional Security*. *Security Studies*, vol. 2, no. 1 (Autumn), p.21.

¹⁴Howe, Howard. 1997. "*Lessons of Liberia - ECOMOG and Regional Peace Keeping*", *International Security*, vol. 21, no. 3 (Winter), pp.419-420.

¹⁵I must emphasise here that Howe's argument concerning Nigeria's use of about a billion dollars above normal operating costs is part of his wider argument for security restructuring. He applies a cost-benefit analysis and pleads for using former mercenaries to fulfil the roles of the normal military peacekeeping forces like ECOMOG. He argues that, "[p]rivate forces can start up and deploy faster than multinational (and perhaps) national forces and carry less political baggage, especially concerning casualties, than government militaries... They may be financially less expensive than other foreign forces", pp.308-309. For more of his arguments, see his "Private security Forces and African Stability: the Case of Executive Outcomes", *Journal of Modern African Studies*. 36.2 See, also, my empirical Chapter Six.

¹⁶For the records, the government of Nigeria has consistently put the cost of the Liberian and Sierra Leonean conflicts at eight billion dollars, five hundred dead and eight hundred wounded as at the Lome Accord of 1999.

Most of the extant literature analysing Nigeria's rationale for supporting Liberia's Second Republic, sees Nigeria's role and actions in Liberia within the context of regime and personal interests of the then Nigerian leader, Ibrahim Babangida and his supporters (Yoroms, 1994; Vogt, 1992). A litany of actions and policies undertaken by Ibrahim Babangida are cited to prove two major contentions. First, that Babangida had enough regime, personal and 'national' interests in Liberia to warrant a concerted effort to save the Doe regime. Secondly, in presenting the idea of the Standing Mediation Committee — SMC, Nigeria sought to establish an institutional framework through which it could support, protect and if necessary help his ally to escape Liberia. Among the circumstantial actions undertaken by Nigeria during this period to support the two assertions above are: (i) Nigeria's repayment of Liberia's USD 30 million debt to the African Development Bank (ADB); (ii) payment for the construction of the Liberian section of the Trans-African Highway scheme, subsequently named the Babangida Highway; (iii) the establishment of an elite foreign policy think-tank in Monrovia under the University of Liberia, the Ibrahim Babangida Institute of International Affairs under James Teah Tarpeh; (iv) a USD 4.5 million investment in the Liberian National Oil Cooperation; (v) the transfer of weapons to Doe at the height of the conflict; and finally (iv) a USD 25 million Nigerian investment in a joint Guinea-Liberia iron ore project, the Mitergui Project.¹⁷

How does the thesis analyse and interpret this disparate and hectic series of activities undertaken by the Babangida government in Liberia? Are these actions to be seen

¹⁷The editor of *The New African*, Baffour Ankomah, made available details of this investment in a letter dated 19 May 1993, p.1.

in a narrower regime interest or a broader national interest perspective? Nigerian foreign and military policy analysts have set up a three dimensional threat perception analysis for Nigeria for being linked to the national, sub-regional and continental spheres and its linkages to Nigeria (Defense and Foreign Affairs Handbook, 1990/1:728; Interview, January 1998). These include the socio-political, economic and cultural problems. In the Nigerian perspective, the three-dimensional threat analysis presupposes that:

There are threats that may affect areas that are strategically vital to Nigeria. They come in the form of escalated national crisis in contiguous states in the West African sub-region, which often reverberates in Nigeria¹⁸.

To what extent can the Liberian conflict and Nigeria's perception of threats arising from the potential collapse of the Second Republic affect its national interests? According to Odeosola:

Presently, Nigeria has over one million citizens in over three nations in the sub-region with military presence in over three, and a sizeable number of citizens spread over the sub-region. Limited intervention may be mandatory in the evacuation of her nationals and for the protection of *other vital interests abroad* (1995:46).

From the above, it is deductible whether Nigeria's extension of support to the Second Republic can be explained within the framework of the regime or state's desire to protect its vital interests in Liberia. As will be shown later, it can be argued that Nigeria's economic interests in and relations with Liberia are much more extensive than have previously been mentioned. Some analysts have a penchant for seeing Nigeria's interest in

¹⁸Ibid: p.39.

Liberia as Babangida's strategy for shoring up a military ally who publicly supported and sympathised with the Nigerian regime in the face of the post-April 1990 Gideon Orkah attempted *coup d'etat*.¹⁹

The effects of Orkah's attempted coup and its psychological effects on the self-confidence of the Babangida regime deserve analysis because this subsequently affected the capacity of the Nigerian Air Force to contribute to the intervention. Orkah's *coup d'etat* had sought fundamentally to restructure the geopolitical landscape of the Nigerian state by expunging the five northern Muslim states. This attempted overthrow, fundamentally, shook and shocked the regime. It, also, made Babangida redefine his regime's legitimacy, as some Nigerians sympathetic to the April 1990 abortive coup were found in the training camps of Taylor and fighting with the NPFL²⁰. This was in anticipation that when Liberia had been won over to Taylor, attention would be turned elsewhere in the region, including Nigeria, where support for such an action would be readily available. The level of intimacy established between the Nigerian President and Doe made it possible for the stability of Babangida's regime to be seen for being conterminous with Doe's desire to stay in power. The Nigerians were morally obliged to protect, and at worst, rescue Doe from the engulfing conflict as the regime of Babangida had been identified closely with the Doe regime.

Despite this narrow perspective, a broader argument can be presented in which

¹⁹Yoroms, Gani Josés. 'ECOMOG and West African Security: A Nigerian Perspective', *ISSUE: Journal of Opinion*, Vol. XIX, Nos. 1-3.

²⁰*Tell Magazine*, June 1992.

Nigerian ruling military regimes have taken special interests in the “internal affairs of her neighbours and the entire West African sub-region after the Nigerian civil war (1967-1970) to ensure that hostile forces did not replace governments friendly to it”.²¹ Finally, the regime used Nigeria’s sub-regional status and power as a means to enforce national interest in the light of its regime stability. This, according to Akindele (1986:14), was not achievable because “it lacked a vigorous foreign policy [which] requires a broad domestic political support”. The regime, however, did not find domestic political support a necessary component for carrying out foreign policy. To Babangida, his regime’s security was of primary national interest because:

In government parlance, what security means is any measure, offensive or defensive, taken to protect the state from acts ... to annoy the Head of Government. You can take any measure to stop the country from being subjected to acts of sabotage or terrorism. You can take any measure to make sure that the Head of Government or State or the President does not get annoyed. It is all part of security”.²²

Previously, while in power, Babangida stated his conception of national and sub-regional security, which invariably fitted into his perception of regime security. As in the Liberian example, the President argued that all three variables mentioned above were present and “obviously interlocking and conterminous”.²³ Furthermore, in the words of the President:

²¹Aluko, op cit., Ojo, op cit.

²²Babangida, I. In ‘Imperative Features of Nigerian Foreign Policy and the Crisis in Liberia, 1990, p.20.

²³Ibid.

There is no gainsaying the fact that when certain events occur in this sub-region, depending upon their intensity and magnitude, which are bound to affect Nigeria's politico-military and socio-economic environment, we should not stand by ... We believe that if the events are such that [they] have the potential to threaten the stability, peace and security of the sub-region, Nigeria in collaboration with others, in this sub-region is duty-bound to react or respond in appropriate manner necessary to either avert the disaster or take adequate measures to ensure peace, tranquillity and harmony²⁴.

Implicit in the President's presentation of why and how Nigeria should respond to conflict with a potential to threaten Nigeria's interest is an opening to search for other rationales that could have played a critical role in the decision first to support Doe and later the sub-regional intervention.

Indeed, Nigeria has a long history of interest and concern for sub-regional security in West Africa because it has always perceived the sub-region as its backyard and shown concern for any incidents likely to threaten Nigeria's national interest and sub-regional security. Both Ike Nwachukwu and Rilwanu Lukman, Nigeria's foreign ministers at different periods of the conflict, who were critical players in the initial decision to intervene, sought to downplay the narrow interests of Babangida's regime in Liberia.²⁵ This resulted in the development of what Nwachukwu passionately argues to be the indefinite outline of the development of an African international relations praxis based on the concept of African solidarity and being each other's keeper.²⁶ To Nwachukwu, Nigeria saw Liberia as the

²⁴Ibid.

²⁵Interview, December 1997, July and August 1998 in Lagos with Ike Nwachukwu.

²⁶Ibid.

beacon of freedom for the independence struggle and therefore during its crisis, it became the responsibility of Nigeria to see to the sustenance of the country.²⁷

Nevertheless, a historical analysis of Nigeria's interests in Liberia will contribute to dispelling some of the controversies surrounding Nigeria/Babangida's manipulative actions in Liberia. Not only that, it will, also, show that Nigeria's interest both in Liberia specifically and West Africa as a whole shows a consistency that underlies its actions. Such an approach will show that what bound Babangida/Doe and Nigeria/Liberia together went beyond the immediate security and economic interests fostered by two military dictators in search of sub-regional allies. As early as 1972, Nigeria negotiated with Liberia for the supply of iron ore to Nigeria's iron and steel industrial complexes at Ajoukouta. This agreement is particularly important in the sense that since Nigeria discovered oil in exploitable commercial quantities, its political, military, intellectual and economic elites had foreseen a potential for translating oil wealth into tangible political and military might. This was one of the first concrete agreements towards fulfilling that dream. Liberia was rich in iron ore deposits, and owned the largest exploitable deposits in Africa and the third largest in the world.

During the negotiations towards the ratification of this agreement, Liberia had wanted a barter agreement under which her iron ore would be exchanged for oil, most especially Nigeria's light Bonny crude oil. Barter agreements were, however, against official Nigerian economic policy. Though these negotiations were inconclusive, the

²⁷ibid.

prospects of profits were so immense for both parties that LAMCO of Liberia and Delta Steel of Nigeria on their own negotiated and signed an agreement during Doe's regime on 22 July 1980 to enable Delta Steel purchase USD 125 million worth of iron ore. Already, 8,000 tonnes of ore had actually been delivered when the war broke out.

While these negotiations were in process, Nigeria, also, expressed an interest in investing in the large Nimba/Mitfergui iron ore mines (straddling both the Guinean and Liberia borders) as a joint venture. Apart from iron ore and oil, other Nigerian economic interests in Liberia included rubber because of Nigeria's burgeoning type and other related industrial products, and timber. As for the oil deal, Nigeria sold 20,000 barrels of crude oil to Liberia daily. Although Liberia did not have the requisite technological know-how to refine the oil for domestic consumption, it was refined in Austria and re-exported to Liberia. The 20,000 far exceeded her realistic and known daily consumption that amounted to 10,000 b/d; she sold the remainder on the open market. This deal was so profitable that in further negotiations with the Nigerian government, the total daily export quantities were increased to 30,000 barrels for further capital accumulation.

There is yet another factor, which can possibly explain Nigeria's concern in actively controlling any crisis on the West African sub-region. This is especially so in areas where it has an interest in the potential exploitation of mineral resources like in Liberia and Sierra Leone to prevent undue French influence. Nigeria prides itself on the fact that it is a potential continental power. Thus, most of her analysts see her as having the West African sub-region as a backyard. Based on the argument above, I posit that Nigeria's future capacity as a sub-regional industrial force may rely on its ability to connect her oil, gas and

hydro-power with other sub-regional countries with natural resources in exploitable quantities, notably iron-ore and bauxite from Liberia and Sierra Leone.

In the immediate Doe period, however, most analysis of Nigeria and Babangida's rationale for involvement revolved around Babangida's need to extend support to his comrade-in-arms, Doe. The points usually utilised to buttress this argument was that Doe frequented Nigeria in the immediate post-Orkah attempted *coup d'état* against the Babangida regime in April 1990 at a time when he had to deal with an increasingly successful insurrection led by the NPFL, and a worsening socio-economic and political situation in Liberia. Babangida himself needed friends in the sub-region. To shift the design and implementation of foreign policy away from such narrow personalisation, Gani Yoroms²⁸ has introduced what he terms "regime interest transformation", that is, the conscious manipulation of national and foreign interests to suit and further entrench the limited interests of the regime in power. It is such regime interest transformation, he asserts, that accounts for Babangida's extension of support to Doe, Ernest Shonekan's lukewarm attitude to the continued presence of Nigeria's ECOMOG troops in Liberia and Sani Abacha's unabashed maintenance of the intervention scheme. Captivating as this hypothesis is, it does not have the explanatory potential of fully clarifying the unwavering disbursement of financial, human, military and political resources to the intervention scheme. As the subsequent analyses of the implementation of ECOWAS's policies and Nigeria's role in them will show, putting forward a more comprehensive outline of Nigeria's interests

²⁸Interview with Gani Yoroms, a research fellow at the Centre for Peace and Conflict Resolutions in Abuja, in January, 1998.

in Liberia, might be more embedded than sheer regime interests.

What this sub-section has shown are the different processes and reasons that have underlain Nigeria's interest in seeking first a national and eventually a sub-regional response to the Liberian conflict.

5.4 The International Community and the Liberian Conflict

In this sub-section, the analysis will deal with the involvement of the international community in the Liberian conflict defined mainly as the actions taken by the UN and OAU to support ECOWAS's intervention in Liberia. In the previous chapters, the thesis discussed the manner in which ECOWAS's decision to intervene in the Liberian conflict was interwoven with emerging issues related to Africa's post-independence norms of territoriality, sovereignty and intervention. Although these norms had virtually become accepted and were the main characteristic features of Africa's international relations, perceptible shifts could be perceived in the manner in which individual African states had begun to respond to select examples of continental conflict. Most of these incipient changes were not given any serious analysis in the extant literature. If analysed at all, they were seen within the context of contravening the accepted norms governing Africa's international relations. The thesis posits that such action formed the auspicious beginnings of what was eventually to become the OAU's radical decision to extend significant initial support to ECOWAS's *intra vires* intervention. This is not, however, to underestimate the decisive role played by the convergence of a new breed of African leaders at the helm of OAU

affairs. This principally concerned the Secretary-General Salim Ahmed Salim and, the then Chair, Yoweri Museveni of Uganda²⁹. The above co-operation was the decisive factor, which made it possible for the OAU to extend critical regional support for ECOWAS's intervention.

ECOWAS's intervention broke new grounds. Some of these were the:

- Style used by ECOWAS to elicit international support from the Organisation of African Unity and the United Nations, and through that device a practical division of labour and authority between the ECOWAS and the UN on one hand and, the ECOWAS and the OAU on the other; and
- Ability to keep ECOWAS' efforts at resolving the Liberian conflict on the agenda of these two organisations.

Without explicitly analysing in detail the individual Peace Accords signed, this chapter seeks to discuss the central tenets of the continuum of treaties. This will see especially the impact of the spiralling factionalisation on the peace process as a whole, and the efforts by ECOMOG to design strategies to improve compliance with its policies. Finally, the thesis makes an in-depth analysis of the synergy created by the unique collaboration between ECOWAS and the UN. The analysis will examine the military and political aspects of this co-operative scheme between ECOMOG and UNOMIL in terms of their achievements, problems and, the prospects for such co-operative schemes between the world body and sub-regional organisations for tackling localised conflicts.

²⁹Interview with Yoweri Museveni, at the Presidential Guest House, Pretoria, 11 October 2001, during the Burundi Peace Process, as Nigeria's Negotiator in the absence of the Minister of Defence.

5.5 The Search for Sub-regional and International Consensus

5.5.1 Phase 1 - *The Cotonou Process*.

When ECOWAS intervened in August 1990, it applied a classic peacekeeping strategy until the main faction group, the National Patriotic Front of Liberia (NPFL) launched a major attack on ECOMOG in October 1992 under the name *Octopus Operation*. During this attack, ECOWAS was compelled because of the violence employed by the NPFL to review its endeavours in resolving the Liberian conflict and most especially to seek solutions to the perennial confrontations with the NPFL. This resulted in two meetings held in Cotonou and Abuja in October 1992 and March 1993 respectively. At these meetings, the role of sub-regional states extending support to the NPFL was sharply criticised.³⁰ During these meetings, ECOWAS realised the need to adopt a more flexible approach by extending the safe haven status of Monrovia beyond the immediate environs of the city. In the aftermath of the decisions taken by the Heads of State and Government summit in Dakar, Senegal, ECOWAS also decided to extend its embargo to encompass all goods and commercial traffic in NPFL-held territory. Finally, ECOWAS sought assistance from the UN to actively participate in the peace process than

³⁰Interview in London on 11 January 1998 with Abbas Bundu, former Executive Secretary of ECOWAS.

it had hitherto and, to provide support to ECOWAS's Liberia initiative³¹. By November 1992, these requests from ECOWAS created a basis upon which the UNSC approved a support package for the ECOWAS scheme that will be discussed later.

In consonance with the decisions taken by ECOWAS and the UN, the special representative of the Secretary-General, Trevor Gordon-Somers, spearheaded attempts to achieve a new arrangement which should hopefully be implementable. After consulting with all the major actors on the sub-region, the OAU and, critically the faction groups, Gordon-Somers presented what was supposed to be a new framework towards the implementation of the ECOWAS Peace Plan. Based on ideas resulting from consultations among the different actors, a multi-track level strategy was introduced in the hope that it would provide a better, neutral and more conducive atmosphere to elicit compliance from the faction groups. It is on the basis of the extensive negotiations which went on to introduce a multi-track level strategy towards solving the Liberian conflict that it becomes incomprehensible to understand Vogt's assertions.

According M. Vogt, the Cotonou Peace process was "perceived as an opportunity by the Francophone countries to take control of the peace process from the Anglophones in general and from Nigeria in particular".³² This is a rather surprising standpoint taking into consideration the fact that Francophone states had for a little over a year been given ample

³¹Interview in Monrovia, Liberia, on 15 December 1997 with Amos Sawyer.

³²Vogt, M. A. 1996. "The Involvement of ECOWAS in Liberia's Peacekeeping", p. 175. In. Keller and Rothchild, Eds. *Africa In the New International Order*.

opportunity through the Yamoussoukoro Process and the Committee of Five³³ during which these countries had led the sub-regional initiatives to secure peace in Liberia. However, the Cotonou process introduced several new aspects into the peace process. One of the more critical decisions taken at Cotonou which implicitly undermined the peace process was the replacement of IGNU with the Liberian National Transitional Government (LNTG). This in reality began the sub-regional process of appeasement towards faction groups and especially their leaders. The importance of the appeasement process was to legitimise and give credibility to the faction leaders. This was to eventually contribute to the peace process as they eventually transformed their fighting organisations in political parties.

Contents of this supposed new framework were initially negotiated at two meetings in Geneva and Cotonou. The final agreement was, however, signed in Cotonou under the chairmanship of Nicephore Soglo, thus the designation: Cotonou Agreement. Under the Cotonou framework, a two-level negotiation process was initiated. These were to deal with military and political issues. Militarily, leaders of the warring factions, that is the AFL, ULiMO and the NPFL were to meet under the auspices of ECOMOG to negotiate a new cease-fire and simultaneously plan for the encampment, disarmament and demobilisation of their combatants. Though disarmament was made the ultimate objective of the

³³The controversies between the Anglo/Francophone states were solved by shifting emphasis from the SMC to the Committee of Five, at a critical stage during the peace process (Burkina Faso, Côte d'Ivoire, Guinea, Senegal and Togo). Subsequently, the Committee of Five and the SMC were merged to form the Committee of Nine (Benin, Burkina Faso, Côte d'Ivoire, Gambia, Ghana, Guinea, Nigeria, Senegal and Togo) to create a monitoring group with the aim of maintaining strict implementation of the cease-fire agreements. Final Communiqué of the 1st Joint Summit of the ECOWAS SMC and the Committee of Five, see also ECOWAS, First Meeting of the Committee of Nine on the Liberian Crisis, Final Communiqué, Abuja, Nigeria, 7 November 1992. See Weller, *op cit.*, pp.230-232

agreement, ECOMOG's role was not to *undertake* but to *supervise* the disarmament exercise, while UNOMIL (United Nations Observer Mission in Liberia) undertook the monitoring and verification aspects³⁴. This was a *quid pro quo* arising out of the political perception that faction involvement on the LNTG would result in compliance with disarmament in the sense that faction leaders could then be held politically responsible for their actions. For the first time, it was indicated that UN observers would be introduced to Liberia for the purpose of monitoring the encampment and disarmament and assisting the peace process generally.

At the political level, what I see as a retrogressive element of appeasement was introduced into the whole process. Abruptly, warring factions instead of being seen for what they were; elite groups desperately vying for political power, were now elevated and recognised as legitimate actors on the Liberian political and military scene and equated to the IGNU. The problem with such an elevation was the perception that violence could be rewarding, and that whatever acts of violence had been committed was now legalised. Their new role was to negotiate a political settlement in conjunction with IGNU.³⁵

What the new framework meant was that the democratically elected IGNU, which through its democratic credentials enjoyed national and international recognition had in fact fulfilled one of the central tenets of the ECOWAS peace process arising out of the strategies collectively decided at Banjul, was undermined. A new government of the LNTG

³⁴Cotonou Accord, Section E, Article 6, under Disarmament.

³⁵Interview, Monrovia, Liberia 17 December 1997, with Victor Malu.

headed by a 5-member Executive Council of State was to be organised³⁶. IGNU as a democratically elected government was effectively sidelined, and in its position the LNTG, a transitional council, made up of five members. Three of the members were to be nominated by the three faction groups, while the final two positions would be nominated from a list of nine representatives from civil society.³⁷ The significance of the LNTG was that faction leaders and their groups who had been consistently sidelined in the peace process were now elevated to the centre of the process and given political authority. It also reflected ECOWAS's recognition that military option could not resolve the conflict and thus a political solution should also be sought. Surprisingly, the agreement contained modalities for holding general elections in February and March 1994. This was to occur after the election of a national assembly after which the LNTG would be disbanded.

Several issues and questions are raised by ECOWAS's role in the ratification of the Cotonou Agreement. How does one reconcile the contradictory development in which ECOWAS seemingly undermined the democratically elected interim government and replaced it with a transitional council of unelected faction groups while simultaneously expecting the holding of elections? The implementation of both political and military aspects of the Cotonou agreement went through the same problems with non-compliance which was characteristic of the dilemmas previously faced by other agreements when it was time

³⁶Alao, Charles. 1994 and Mackinlay, J and Alao, C. 1994

³⁷For further details, see the Cotonou agreement. The agreement also provided for a new legislative assembly comprising the representatives of the three parties was to be constituted. ULiMO was to provide the last seat on the 5-person Supreme Court. The Elections Commission was to be expanded and elections held in six months.

for implementation. Several reasons explain the non-implementation of the Cotonou Protocol. For this reason, I argue that the new political recognition given to the faction groups through their representation on the LNTG resulted in several setbacks. One, the major signal sent to the Liberian populace was that it was now politically acceptable to use force as a means to attain political recognition from the sub-region's major actors. This very fact undergirded certain dangerous undercurrents. There was intensified fighting among the faction groups to win more territory and control more national resources as a means of improving their bargaining power. Added to this, was the fact that faction groups represented on the LNTG saw it as an opportunity to position their groups in a favourable way to exploit any future elections. Furthermore, it became an added opportunity to exploit the resources of state for the specific interests of faction groups.

As a result of the political implications of the policy of appeasement that legitimised the role of faction leaders in the peace process, there was a spill-over of the political conflict in resolving the war into the military aspects of the peace process in terms of the disarmament and demobilisation scheme. The NPFL for one refused to demobilise on the basis that fighting had intensified. It continued with its traditional line of criticising and blaming Nigeria, and per extension ECOMOG for its misfortunes by claiming that Nigeria was supporting one of the factions. Other propositions presented by the NPFL before complying with the terms of the Cotonou agreement included demands for Taylor to be elevated to the position of head of the LNTG when the position became vacant.

Part of the problems arising in the peace process also resulted from the inclusion in the agreement that the new LNTG government should be seated simultaneously with the

beginning of the disarmament programme. This prerequisite endangered the only inclusion that an increasingly frustrated and desperate Liberian civil society had managed to demand and had added to the agreement: effective implementation of disarmament as a priority in the peace process. This sense of loss and confusion is understandable. Basically, ECOWAS leaders by transferring legitimate political authority to faction leaders who are desperate for power and concurrently expecting them to willingly undermine their political and military authority by disarming and demobilising is an inverted logic difficult to fathom. Yet another weakness of the agreement was its inability to clearly stipulate what the agreement meant by “the beginning of the disarmament process”, a superficially harmless sentence but one which eventually led to acerbic debate and misgivings among faction groups.

Several attempts were made both by the undermined IGNU and civil society to confront some of the more blatant oversights dealing with blanket amnesty in Article 19 in the Cotonou agreement. These endeavours were, however, brushed aside by the UN Special Representative who because of his close ties to several faction leaders, especially Charles Taylor, was more concerned with striking deals and agreements with faction leaders irrespective of how dangerous and precarious. The basic justification seemed to be that the end justified the means. Trevor Gordon-Somers’ attitude and disposition for striking deals with warring factions indisputably changed the direction of the whole peace process. Suddenly, it was winning the confidence of the faction leaders who in his words were his “clients” and “wards” which was more important. According to one person who was closely involved in the phase introduced by the Special Representatives new

framework, “the process of conflict resolution was reduced to mechanical acts laced with intrigues and designed to divide jobs among contending parties”.³⁸ The behaviour by Trevor Gordon-Somers certainly resulted in heightened tension among the key actors, and contributed to a loss of credibility for the UN.

An implicit question which comes to the fore at this stage is to what extent did the “clients” and “wards” of the Special Representative function on the LNTG One? Under the Cotonou Agreement, the tenure of the LNTG was for six months but due to its inability to satisfactorily divide the perks of office among the faction groups, the whole phase of disarmament as envisaged under Cotonou was suspended. For example within ULiMO, the Mandingo and Krahn factions could not agree on how positions should be shared. This eventually resulted in the factionalisation of ULiMO into its component ethnic parts with the Mandingo dominated ULiMO-K arguing that it was “unwilling to spill blood to liberate Grand Gedeh” (the county where most Krahns reside) from the NPFL³⁹ and ULiMO-J, dominated by Krahn elements.

Another hazardous outcome of the new framework's prominence placed on political power sharing preceding disarmament was the enticement and signal sent out to others to become warring factions. Subsequently, the Liberian Peace Council (LPC) an association of individuals who were either part of ULiMO-J or the AFL now constituted themselves into a warring faction, captured parts of southeastern Liberia and demanded

³⁸Sawyer, “Managing the Dynamics of Conflict Management in Liberia”, p.35.

³⁹Human Rights Watch/Africa, “Liberia”, 1994.

a place at the negotiating table to represent the interest and territorial integrity of its people. The AFL, which until the introduction of the new framework had prided itself on being the official army of the Liberian state saw its interests being sidelined and hastily insisted on being seen as a faction group to enhance its claims for government positions. Almost a year after the signing of the Cotonou Agreement, it had become clear that the presupposition that identifying and delegating political power to influential faction groups would necessarily enhance the disarmament process and increased compliance of these groups with the peace agreement failed to materialise. Despite this setback, the facilitators of the agreement were still convinced that appeasement should be given yet another chance. This hypothesis guided the subsequent negotiation processes at Akosombo and Accra. With all the hopes reposed in the Cotonou agreement, as a result of the multi-track nature of negotiations among ECOWAS, the OAU and the UN leading to its ratification, why was there such a failure? I argue that the impunity with which faction leaders flouted the stipulations of the agreement while simultaneously continuing with the gross abuse of human rights should be sought in Article 19 of the Cotonou Agreement. It stipulated that:

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.⁴⁰

I have argued, elsewhere, that the only real chance to appreciate the sort of

⁴⁰Cotonou Accord, 23 September 1993.

treaties, agreements and accords signed by ECOWAS and the leeway afforded faction leaders is to put it down to the naivety of ECOWAS's political leaders. This is primarily because by September 1993 when the Cotonou Agreement came into existence, ECOWAS had had three years of experience of negotiating with the faction groups and ought to have taken ample cognisance of the fact that the war, and especially, the NPFL's tactics, contravened international humanitarian law and military engagements.⁴¹ The organisation's fighters resorted to summary executions and hostage-taking of nationals of ECOWAS countries resident in Liberia as reprisals against those countries which constituted the ECOMOG contingent. Added to this point is the fact that this was a conflict, which did not conform to the standards of military engagements. Even though there may have been certain caveats concerning some atrocities, neither ECOWAS nor its collaborative partners, the OAU and UN ever managed to chastise the abuses of these faction groups.⁴²

5.5.2 Ghana and ECOWAS — Bringing Faction Leaders In From the Cold

After the term of Benin's Nicephore Soglo as Chairman of the Authority expired,

⁴¹See Common Article 3 to the Geneva Convention of 1949 and protocol II of 1977.

⁴²Amnesty International, 1997. *Liberia: Time to Take Human Rights Seriously – Placing Human Rights on the National Agenda*, London, October, AI, AFR 34/05/97, p. 12. see *Final Report of the ECOWAS 8th Meeting of Ministers of Foreign Affairs of the Committee of Nine on Liberia*, Abuja 15-17 July 1997. For an analysis of this sanctions regime, see *New Nigerian*, (Kaduna), 19 August 1997, p. 12. Aning, E.K. 1998. "Women and Civil Conflict: The Cases of Liberia and Sierra Leone", *African Journal of International Affairs*, (forthcoming 1998).

Ghana's Jerry Rawlings took over. All the hopes generated by the signing of the Cotonou Agreement were not realised as a result of the continued fighting between the different factions of ULIMO in the western part of Liberia. Similarly, outbreaks of violence occurred between two faction groups, the Liberia Peace Council and the NPFL in the south-east which subsequently derailed whatever insignificant demobilisation and disarmament processes were underway. Concomitant to these developments were splits within the NPFL hierarchy which eventually resulted in the departure of four leading members to form the NPFL-Central Revolutionary Council (NPFL-CRC). Faction groups were experiencing serious command and control problems resulting in the inability of faction leaders to fully convey to their combatants the spirit of the agreements they had signed. By mid-1994, therefore, the situation on the ground looked thus: ECOMOG was not fully deployed to the areas designated and UNOMIL, ECOMOG's partner in the demobilisation scheme, had effectively withdrawn from the western region of Liberia because of security problems.

Due to the Cotonou agreement's inability to solve this conflict, emphasis on peace now shifted to Ghana. By the summer of 1994, under the Chairmanship of Benin, ECOWAS was more predisposed to be a reactive organisation. A new and proactive personal initiative was launched by Jerry Rawlings, the Ghanaian leader.⁴³ During this period, a new political/administrative procedure was introduced, the Special Representative of the Chairman of ECOWAS. The person chosen by Rawlings was the

⁴³See UN Security Council document S/1994/1174, 16 October 1994; and S/1995/7, 5 January 1995.

seasoned UN diplomat, Victor Gbeho. The first meeting under Ghanaian leadership to resolve this conflict took place at Akosombo, Ghana in September 1994. The meeting was attended by the NPFL, ULIMO-K and the Chief of Staff of the AFL. Civilian elements of the Council of State were only invited as observers. Three new groups formed after the Cotonou agreement was signed: the Liberia Peace Council (LPC), the Lofa Defence Force (LDF), and UliMO-J were not invited to attend since the facilitators were under the wrong impression that since all of them were Krahn affiliated, the head of the AFL as a Krahn wielded enough influence to represent the collective interests of Krahns. What came out of this meeting was the Akosombo Accord which was a supplementary agreement to the Cotonou Agreement.

Basically, Akosombo sought to strengthen the LNTG by giving it a more central role in the supervision and monitoring of the implementation of the Cotonou Agreement. As I have argued before, the beginning of the appeasement policy towards faction groups resulted in undermining the whole peace process. A resultant effect was that the peace process almost lost direction in terms of its ability to properly assess how to deal with faction leaders. Appeasement also meant that faction leaders and their groups were now to be treated as legitimate participants in the political process. With such a basis, it is not surprising that the supplementary Akosombo Agreement, first chose to select which faction groups could participate in the conference. Secondly, the Akosombo Agreement, in delegating to the LNTG a central role in the supervision and monitoring of the implementation of the Cotonou agreement overlooked the fact that by permitting faction groups *three* of the five seats on the LNTG, it was now making it difficult for the faction

groups to undertake disarmament and at the same time supervise itself. Such a provision under the Akosombo Agreement demonstrated either the political naivety of its framers or a desperation on the part of ECOWAS member states and the facilitators to bring the conflict to a speedy resolution, the end justifying the means. The above points are further sustained by the military aspects of the Akosombo agreement. Militarily, it called for a new cease-fire with implementation details, disengagement of forces and the responsibility of the factions with regard to assembly and disarmament of combatants. Naively, the agreement strategised that if disarmament and demobilisation schemes followed the set time span elections could be held by the end of October 1995. Practically, Akosombo proposed the formation of a new Council of State with the leader of the AFL as the head. Whatever limited prospects were envisaged for the implementation of the Akosombo Accords were thrown overboard when it was convulsed in controversy immediately after signing, as it was criticised as a military junta in disguise. With the elevation of the AFL to the leadership of the Council of State, the profile of warring factions had been raised. Added to this fact was the dangerous oversight by the facilitators that the AFL leader, Hezekiah Bowen, did not enjoy any credibility either among Krahns or the AFL. This was brought to the fore when three days after the signing of Akosombo, on 15 September 1994, elements within the AFL attempted to stage a military take over.⁴⁴

Due to the problems faced by the Akosombo Agreement, yet another meeting was held at Accra, Ghana, in November-December 1994 leading to the signing of The

⁴⁴*West Africa*, 12-19 September 1994.

Acceptance and Accession Agreement in Accra.⁴⁵ The exclusion of some of the factions, the attempted military take-over and the subsequent criticism of the process leading to the agreement began a domino sequence of events. One, Ghana increasingly lost patience with the intransigence of the faction groups, warning faction groups about the swelling costs and political unpopularity of the ECOMOG scheme. At the same time, Ghana gave notification of the possibility of withdrawing its troops if she did not perceive a more serious attitudinal change among faction leaders to the peace process. Two, the dissension between Ghana and Nigeria as to how to tackle the whole peace process which had been kept under wraps for a long time began to surface. Whatever potential prospects for success were contained in the Ghanaian initiatives were scuttled because Nigeria was suspicious of the new developments, perceiving Ghana's diplomacy as sidelining them in the peace process.⁴⁶ The diplomatic initiative subsequently reverted to Nigeria. Thirdly, Ghana seemed to have made a deal with Burkina Faso, Côte d'Ivoire, and resolved its earlier discrepancies with Charles Taylor, and decided to increasingly involve the NPFL in the whole process, and virtually sold her political influence to the highest bidder⁴⁷. The most significant contribution of the Accra and Akosombo processes in the search for peace in Liberia, which is nevertheless debatable, was its attempt to co-opt the Liberian National

⁴⁵Failure to reconcile differences led to the signing of two agreements known collectively as the Accra Agreement, which included An Agreement Clarifying the Akosombo Agreement, and An Acceptance and Accession Agreement.

⁴⁶Sesay, M 1997, "Bringing Peace to Liberia". p. Aning, E. K. 1996. "Ghana, ECOWAS and the Liberian Crisis: An Analysis of Ghana's Role in Liberia", *Liberian Studies Journal*, vol. XXI, no. 2.

⁴⁷Interview in Lagos, Nigeria 17 June 1997 with Arnold Quainoo.

Congress into the process without regarding its criticisms of the militarisation of the peace process.⁴⁸

5.5.3 The Abuja Process – A Restoration Challenge?

We have elsewhere noted the perception in the NPFL camp to see the organisation as the specific target of ECOMOG. This perception, rightly or wrongly resulted in the unwillingness of the NPFL to co-operate with the Nigeria-led ECOMOG and, to comply with the modalities of the peace agreements that the organisation had signed. A critical attitudinal change of both perception and understanding occurred in both Nigeria and the NPFL on one hand, and Côte d'Ivoire and Burkina Faso on the other after 1993. For the sake of clarification, it must be emphasised that the death of the former Ivorian leader, Houphouët-Boigny, also contributed to seriously undermining the political and military support which Taylor had obtained from Burkina Faso and Côte d'Ivoire since 1989. The new Ivorian leaders were less predisposed to extend the same patronage facilities to Taylor. A series of domestic political decisions, not only changed Côte d'Ivoire's support, but seriously undermined Burkina Faso's ability to extend similar support to the NPFL. In looking for avenues to legitimize his support, the new Ivorian leader, Konan Bédié, sought to reinterpret Ivorian political space and society. Here, the new regime reinterpreted

⁴⁸Interview, Monrovia, Liberia, 17 December 1997 with Tom Ikimi.

citizenship in an entirely restricted manner in terms of what it meant to be “Ivorien”. In a country where almost a quarter of the population were Burkinabes, the Bédié administration moved to disenfranchise first generation immigrants and to reduce to second-class citizenship all those with single Ivorien parentage.⁴⁹ With Burkina Faso facing an erosion of its most consistent foreign exchange earner through the repatriation of incomes, it had to align itself to Ghanaian proposals to bridge the schism between Nigeria and Taylor.

Instead of fully implementing the programme to democratic transition in Nigeria which Ibrahim Babangida's government had initiated, the process was curtailed and a civilian caretaker government put into place, which sought “to bring the boys back home”. This was subsequently overthrown by the Sani Abacha administration. International criticism of this take-over led to military and political sanctions against the military administration which resulted in international isolation of the government. As a means of winning some respite, Nigerian authorities followed up earlier Ghanaian initiatives of appeasing faction groups. In a remarkable *volte face*, both the isolated Nigerian administration of Sani Abacha and, the increasingly desperate NPFL agreed to meet in Abuja⁵⁰. It therefore served the interest of both parties to close ranks. During a press conference after his first Nigerian visit, Taylor had this to say:

⁴⁹For further discussion of these issues, see ‘Settlement and Migration in West Africa’, Consultative meeting on ‘Regional Dynamics and Crises in West Africa’, Cotonou, 16-17 December 2002; Addo N, Immigration and the Evolution of Social Demographics’ Population Council. Accra, 1979; Anarfi, J.K. International Migration of Ghanaian Women to Abidjan’, Ph.D, University of Ghana, 1990.

⁵⁰*West Africa*, 25-31 December 1995, and 1-7 January 1996.

Coming here is an indication of our recognition...and importance of breaking this particular impasse...[T]here is no longer an intransigent party [in the peace process]...[A]ll the lies and deceptions to keep this atmosphere of hostility...[between Nigeria and the NPFL] is over.⁵¹

After the impasse which both the Akosombo and Accra agreements had reached and, in the light of the new understanding between Nigeria and the NPFL, Nigeria decided to launch a new round of peace talks in the hope of pushing the peace process forward. The first Abuja agreement or what subsequently came to be known as Abuja One sought to answer some of the questions which had hampered the effective performance of LNTG One. Some of these questions concerned the size of the Council of State, who should be represented on the Council? What should be the role of the AFL? Who represented Krahn interest? To what extent should ethnic calculations be a factor in reconstituting the Council of State?⁵² By August 1995 when the Abuja peace conference was held, some of the new groups active on the Liberian political and military scene were the LPC, LDF, and the NPFL-CRC. All these groups had organised themselves into faction groups and demanded to participate in the conference. This accord was the first signed during the period of rapprochement between the two long time adversaries, Nigeria and the NPFL and, thus represented an effort towards reconciliation. It similarly represented an increasingly more embedded consensus among West African states on Liberia and, as a direct aspect of the appeasement policy, a deeper involvement of factional leaders in fashioning the

⁵¹*Nigerian Tribune*, (Nigeria) 6 June 1995

⁵²Sawyer, "Dynamics of Conflict Management in Liberia", p. 38.

implementation stages of the accord. Because of the enthusiasm which heralded this accord, there was hope that the Abuja Accord would guarantee the peace that had been so elusive for the past six years.

Abuja One sought as much as possible to redress some of the more serious failures of the Cotonou, Akosombo and Accra Agreements. These included some of the gapping instances which had contributed to the non-compliance with ECOWAS' regulations. Among some of the more critical issues was the expansion of the Council of State to a Six-member Council. Three faction leaders representing the LPC, NPFL and ULiMO-K were promoted to sit on the Council. Of critical symbolic significance was the fact that a civilian was nominated to head the Council of State which subsequently came to be known as LNTG Two. AFL reverted to its traditional role as the armed forces of the Liberian state, but to pacify its degraded head, General Bowen, he was made the nominal Defence Minister of an almost non-existent army. Having sorted out these issues, the Council of State began the business of trying to rule Liberia from 01 September 1995 with a one year tenure. The speed with which outstanding issues were resolved created the impression that LNTG Two would be in a better position to supervise the demobilisation and disarmament scheme and strictly follow the laid down time table of implementation.

Abuja One was supposed to have been completed with the seating of a new collective presidency, through disarmament, repatriation of refugees and an eventual presidential and general elections. An analysis of the major components of the Abuja Accord shows either that the framers, that is the members of the Committee of Nine were particularly naïve of the intrigues of the Liberian faction leaders, or they had not learnt

anything at all from the six-years of constant heckling among these groups and their inability to comply with agreements signed. Characteristic of Liberian politics, the establishment of the Council of State became the thorniest issue with most faction leaders unprepared to take the post of president as this will prevent them from participating for that position in any eventual election. Most of them canvassed for their representatives to occupy positions which did not necessarily reflect their capabilities but more the ability to siphon state resources to enable their leaders to contest the elections later. After weeks of arguments which completely paralysed government apparatus 'over appointments to positions in government'⁵³, the appeasement policy initiated at the inception of the Cotonou process was fully brought to bear not only on the composition of the Council, but was to have a central significance in the shifting political context of the peace efforts . Charles Taylor, Alhaji G.V. Kromah and George Boley, all faction leaders, occupied three of the six seats on the council.⁵⁴ George Boley represented the coalition of LPC, NPFL-CRC, and LDF. Kromah on his part represented ULiMO-K, and Charles Taylor the NPFL. Three civilians not necessarily representing civil society served on the council.

Despite the intentions behind these various agreements, the diverse Liberian factions, regional and extra-regional actors, extending patronage to these disparate groups persisted, thus, making implementation and verification processes burdensome. Much like Cotonou, Akosombo and Accra, the Abuja Agreement had reserved predominant

⁵³*West Africa*, 18-24 March 1996, pp.422-423.

⁵⁴*West Africa*, 25 – 31 December 1995, and 1-7 January 1996.

responsibilities concerning the enforcement of the disarmament schemes under Abuja One to the transitional government. LNTG Two similarly had important roles in the Violations committee and the Cease-fire Monitoring Committee. Whatever ability LNTG Two had to creditably perform its duties depended on the “good faith and goodwill of the members of the Council of State, especially those who were leaders of warring factions”.⁵⁵ To expect faction leaders who had for six years held their country ransom and recklessly exploited the resources of state for their personal interests to suddenly put the interest of the state before their organisation as a result of goodwill and good faith was expecting the impossible.

Emblematic of the problems, which all the peace agreements had run into, immediately the Council of State, was established, issues of disarmament were suspended. Instead of the officially agreed designation for the Council of State agreed at Abuja One, the name was changed to The Collective Presidency as a means of demonstrating “a strong, effective government”.⁵⁶

What factors contributed to the failure of the much-heralded Abuja One Accord to elicit compliance with ECOWAS's Peace plans? Following earlier agreements, I argue that the very conception underlying the signing of the accord was imperfect. First, faction leaders who took their positions on LNTG Two were permitted to come into Monrovia with their weapons and combatants. Secondly, there was widespread reservation

⁵⁵Sawyer, “Dynamics of Conflict Management in Liberia”, p. 40.

⁵⁶Ibid, p. 41.

concerning the political ability and acumen of the two civilian members of the council, Sankawulo and Tamba Taylor.

Taking into consideration the fact that Abuja's major strategy was a policy of co-option, based on an all-inclusive scheme of incorporating, especially, the interests of the major faction groups, it is incomprehensible that the leader of ULiMO-J, Roosevelt Johnson, was left out of this Council. This omission was to cost Nigeria and ECOWAS dearly.

Finally, under intense pressure from sub-regional leaders, the ECOWAS Committee of Nine met at Abuja to review the peace process which subsequently resulted in the Abuja Extension Agreement or in popular parlance Abuja Two with its radical regime of sanctions. After Abuja Two, the Council of State was reconstituted and guidelines were even included as to how Council members were to behave. Elections and disarmament were given a special role under the Abuja Two agreement. Unlike Cotonou and the ensuing agreements which in the spirit of reconciliation did not introduce a regime of punishment, under Abuja Two, a stringent regime of sanctions were put into place for all faction leaders and members of their organisations who did not comply. Some of these sanctions regime dealt with:

- travel and residence restrictions;
- freezing of business activities and assets of factional leaders in member states;
- exclusion from participation in the electoral process;
- restrictions on the use of the airspace and territorial waters of member states;
- expulsion of members of the families of the Liberian leaders and their associates

from the territories of member states;

- request for the United Nations Security Council to impose visa restrictions;
- restrictions on imports from Liberia;
- invoke the OAU summit resolution, which calls for the establishment of a war crimes tribunal to try all human rights offences against Liberians.⁵⁷

5.6 The OAU and the Liberian Conflict

In relation to ECOWAS' action in Liberia, Article Three of the OAU Charter echoes the dominance conceded to the principle of territorial integrity of states. According to this Article, The Member States, in pursuit of the purposes stated in Article Two, solemnly affirmed and declared their adherence to the following principles:

- the sovereign equality of all member states;
- non-interference in the internal affairs of states;
- respect for the sovereignty and territorial integrity of each State and for its inalienable right to independent existence;
- peaceful settlement of disputes by negotiation, mediation, conciliation or arbitration.⁵⁸

⁵⁷See *Final Report of ECOWAS 8th Meeting of Ministers of Foreign Affairs of the Committee of Nine on Liberia*, Abuja 15-17 July 1997. For an analysis of this sanctions regime, see *New Nigerian*, (Kaduna), 19 August 1997, p. 12.

⁵⁸see Brownlie, op cit, *Basic Documents*, p.3.

It is clear that the OAU from the beginning had decided to choose a statist line to govern international relations among member states. Deductively, it can be argued that the post-independence African norm that emanated was founded on the legitimisation of statehood attached to the amalgamation of territorial boundaries. The major norm, which promoted the consolidation of African states, was that of territorial integrity. This was in sharp contradistinction to the rhetorical statements given by African leaders to Pan African ideals of continental unity, as there was a basic contradiction between this Pan African ideal and the power relations facing newly independent African states. The closely guarded sovereignty of African states seriously undermined the ability of either the OAU or other African bodies towards the establishment of a central body with enough powers and legality to deal with African conflicts (see discussions in Chapters 1 and 3). Rather, the lack of a co-ordinated body to deal with these conflicts opened up the African conflict theatre and its prevention, management and resolution to interested parties and groups.

The initial involvement of the OAU in ECOWAS' endeavours at resolving the conflict came in July 1990, three months after the ECOWAS summit had initiated the SMC Process. The OAU's foremost action involved the sending of two delegations. One visited Liberia proper to consult with faction leaders and other important opinion leaders in the country as to how best to resolve the conflict. The second delegation visited the sub-region as a whole, especially the SMC partners. Upon the reports of the delegations, Salim came with the first statement concerning a probable necessity for the OAU to establish some formal mechanism for tackling internal conflicts in Africa. The OAU, according to Salim,

had passed the era of indifference to the continents conflicts.⁵⁹ Subsequently in August 1990, Salim reiterated his concern over the level of atrocities occurring in Liberia and the need for Africa and Africans to act in a concerted manner to resolve the conflict. To him, “we have reached a point where we can no longer say [that] what is happening in Liberia does not concern us”. Furthermore, Salim called for military co-operation to resolve the Liberian conflict and, most decisively pledged the OAU's support for ECOWAS's ECOMOG initiative.⁶⁰ ECOWAS leaders got another boost for their Liberian endeavours from the OAU leader later in Zimbabwe when he used the opportunity offered by a visit to the outgoing OAU Chairman to canvass support for ECOWAS. Detailing the dangers of the Liberian conflict to regional stability, peace and security, he asserted that, “Liberia is clearly in a state of anarchy and it is our hope that all the parties should co-operate with the efforts being made by ECOWAS so that they can have the opportunity of normalcy”.⁶¹

It was thus against this background of the OAU resolving how best to extend critical support to ECOWAS that Salim was confronted with issues concerning the applicability of the OAU's Article Three in this conflict. Responding to a question about the ECOWAS intervention as contravening the OAU and UN Charters, Secretary-General Salim responded thus:

Before ECOWAS undertook its initiative, many, including the African media, were condemning the indifference demonstrated by Africa. The

⁵⁹*Daily Times* (Nigeria) “Salim Briefs OAU Foreign Ministers”, 6 July 1990.

⁶⁰*The Guardian*, (Nigeria) “Salim cautions on Human Rights Violation”, 20 August 1990.

⁶¹*Daily Times*, (Nigeria) “OAU May set up Defense Force”, 23 August 1990.

most desirable thing would have been to have an agreement of all parties to the conflict and the convergence of views of all members of ECOWAS. But to argue that there is no legal basis for intervention is surprising. Should the countries in West Africa just leave Liberians to fight each other? Will that be more legitimate? Will that be more understandable?⁶²

Obviously the Secretary-General did not seem to think that the legal strictures under the OAU which had consistently been used by earlier secretaries-general could be adequately applied here. In fact, without any consultation with the Heads of State and Government who are the political authority of the organisation, Salim emphatically stated: 'I will rather make a mistake trying to solve the problem than to remain completely indifferent in such a situation.'⁶³

Even though these positive statements of support were encouraging to ECOWAS leaders, the OAU had still not offered ECOWAS any concrete assistance in its endeavours to bring peace to Liberia. In fact, Salim had to constantly grapple with questions and issues concerning *his* interpretation of Article Three and recent statements concerning ECOWAS's role in Liberia. His answers to questions in Lagos, Nigeria in May 1991 provides the clearest conception as to the new interpretations of Article Three.

With these encouraging statements, it was only a matter of time before there would be a more concerted effort at collectivising international attempts at resolving this conflict. There is no doubt that during the critical months after the intervention, the OAU's support was consequential in getting approval and assistance for ECOWAS' action in the UN

⁶²*West Africa*, 13 –19 August 1990.

⁶³*Ibid.*

Security Council. In May 1991, almost a year after the initial decision to establish the SMC, Nigeria hosted the annual OAU summit at Abuja. Visiting to supervise the level of preparations for the summit, Salim characterised the intervention as “the first real attempt by African countries to [re]solve an African conflict”, and emphasised his hope that the Liberian experience will make Africans realise the urgency for a Joint High Command and military co-operation.⁶⁴ To him, ECOWAS' actions in Liberia had earned international respect for Africa and pledged the OAU's continued moral and political support for the organisation. The outgoing Chair of the OAU, Museveni, expatiating on the issue of non-interference, confirmed this position. To Museveni, “when we talk of non-interference in the internal affairs of one another, we mean one state which is functioning not interfering in another functioning state. Other parts of the continent should establish regional military groups” to undertake similar ventures like ECOWAS's in Liberia.⁶⁵

Closely related to what I wish to term the Salim factor in the rejuvenation of the OAU is the support extended to Salim to undertake his radical political detour. Such critical support came from two former guerrilla fighters: Robert Mugabe and Yoweri Museveni. The latter's role in getting the OAU to back not only Salim's radical views but the ECOWAS scheme was decisive for the effort in Liberia. The discussion above contradicts Akabogu's position that efforts initiated by the OAU during the Liberian conflict only amounted to dusting off its articles on the non-interference in the internal affairs of

⁶⁴*The Guardian*, (Nigeria) 8 May 1991. *African Concord*, 22 April 1991.

⁶⁵See *ECOWAS Mediation in the Liberian Crisis*. Lagos: ECOWAS Secretariat, p. 8.

sovereign states.⁶⁶ The same applies to Ajobewa's assertion that “the OAU watched helplessly while internal conflict devastated...Liberia”.⁶⁷ In fact the OAU did more than that. It appointed Cannan Banana as the Special Representative of the OAU Secretary General to liaise with the UN and ECOWAS in resolving the Liberian conflict. Against the background of its involvement in the ECOWAS scheme, on 30 June 1993, the OAU established a *Mechanism for Conflict Prevention, Management and Resolution*, which committed the organisation to co-operate closely not only with the UN but sub-regional organisations with respect to peacemaking and peacekeeping activities.⁶⁸

5.7 UN and the Liberian Imbrolio

Even though the UN Charter permits regional organisations to be involved in resolving conflicts in their respective zones of influence, such action should under normal circumstances be undertaken in conjunction with the world body. ECOWAS's intervention in the Liberian conflict did not under any circumstance meet this criteria. This did not, however, mean that the world body was not interested nor kept uninformed about the measures being undertaken by ECOWAS. Despite the omission, ECOWAS, however, undertook to inform the UN of its activities. In conjunction with the OAU and Ghana,

⁶⁶Akabogu, “ECOWAS Takes the Initiative”, in Vogt, *The Liberian Crisis and ECOMOG*.

⁶⁷Ajobewa, op cit, p. 257.

⁶⁸Organisation of African Unity, 1993. *Resolving Conflict in Africa*. Addis Ababa: OAU Information Services Publication Series (II), 1993.

Nigeria presented two documents to the UNSC in which "the conclusion[s] of the first session of the ECOWAS Standing Mediation Committee on the Liberian conflict" were circulated to members of the Council. These documents justified ECOWAS's actions and reminded the UNSC that "the maintenance of international peace and security" emerging from the Liberian conflict should be a matter of "shared responsibility".⁶⁹ The UN Charter similarly encourages cooperation between the world body and regional organisations. In Chapter Eight of the charter, support is given to "systematic cooperation between the United Nations and a regional organisation".⁷⁰ Even though the process through which ECOWAS decided to intervene in the Liberian conflict did not conform to the laid down procedural guidance, there was no doubt that the world body would become involved at a point in time. Subsequently, several initiatives were undertaken as a means of extending critical support to the West African initiative.

The Security Council first discussed the Liberian question in January 1991 and formally commended the actions of the ECOWAS in May, 1992, characterizing the Yamoussoukro Four Accord as presenting an appropriate framework for the peaceful resolution of the conflict. In consonance with ECOWAS's 1992 Heads of State and Government resolution at Dakar, Senegal, imposing economic sanctions on the NPFL, the UNSC in November 1992 adopted resolution 788, which imposed a general and complete embargo on all deliveries of weapons and military equipment to Liberia. Arms meant for

⁶⁹See UN Security Council documents S/21485 of 9.8.90 and S/21485 of 10.8.90.

⁷⁰See The Charter of the United Nations Organisation, Chapter VIII.

the exclusive use of ECOWAS and ECOMOG were exempted by the resolution. Two other critical provisions were added. Member states of the UN were implored to abstain from dealing with parties to the conflict and taking any action which would be inimical to the peace process. The UN Secretary-General was, also, instructed to send a special representative to Liberia, (a) to evaluate the situation, and (b) recommend measures to be taken by the world body.⁷¹ Subsequently, Trevor Gordon-Somers, was appointed as the Special Representative of the Secretary-General to Liberia (SRSG).

One can begin to question why it took the United Nations such a long time to actively get engaged in the Liberian conflict. One popular reason has been the United Nations fear of getting entangled in one more ethnic conflict with its long drawn out problems. This may have informed Javier de Cuellar's initial statements concerning the crisis being a local one. There are other weightier arguments however (see Chapter One). African members on the Security Council at this time, Côte d'Ivoire, Ethiopia and Zaire had consistently frustrated every effort by the UNSC to discuss the issue. In fact, a careful analysis of the three African countries involved in the diplomatic manoeuvre may probable explain their tactics. Côte d'Ivoire as I have discussed earlier was one of the strongest backers of the NPFL incursion. Ethiopia and Zaire were both under brutal dictatorships, which had consistently frustrated efforts by civil society to introduce a more open and proactive government. The later two countries were also sceptical about introducing a model of intervention in what they saw as 'internal disturbances', as this could very well be

⁷¹UN Security Council Resolution 788 of 19 November 1992.

extended to them in the near future. This unholy alliance, it is speculated feared the possible specter of censure from their peers in case the Liberian case had been debated by the Council. According to the UN Special Observer:

“In March 1993, after extensive travels in the sub-region and discussions with major actors in Liberia, the UNSGSR presented a report to the UNSC. It showed that there was general consensus on the sub-region that the world body should assume a larger and more direct role in the search for peace than hitherto. The UN on its part identified three areas where it could contribute to ECOWAS's efforts: (a) political reconciliation, (b) humanitarian assistance, and (c) electoral assistance. Upon the basis of this report, the UNSC requested the Secretary-General to discuss the prospects of a summit of the parties to the conflict to reaffirm their commitment to the implementation of the Yamoussoukro Four Accord. Other aspects of the UNSC's consideration included discussions with ECOWAS as to the extent to which the world body could contribute to Yamoussoukro Four and, importantly the possibilities for deploying United Nations observers”.⁷²

Within weeks of ECOWAS implementation of its historic peace-keeping effort, strategy was changed to reflect enforcement measures as response to the severe resistance from the major faction, the NPFL. The United Nations Observer Mission in Liberia (UNOMIL), the first United Nations peace-keeping mission undertaken in co-operation with a peace-keeping operation already set up by another organisation got involved. Established in September 1993 UNOMIL's mandate under Security Council resolution 866 (1993)⁷³ includes, besides military aspects, assistance in the co-ordination of humanitarian activities, observation and verification of elections, and to monitor the implementation procedures to verify their impartial application. What is important to

⁷²see United Nations Security Council Resolution 813 of 26 March 1993.

⁷³see United Nations Security Council Resolution 866 of 22 September 1993.

understand before any analysis of the unique ECOMOG-UNOMIL co-operative scheme is that the success of the scheme was closely tied-in with success of the Cotonou agreement in terms of the political and military aspects. It has been argued that the United Nations was requested to participate in ECOWAS's peace endeavours in Liberia "because of the politico-military stalemate encountered by ECOWAS".⁷⁴ This point is true to a certain extent but does not in reality fully address all the efforts ECOWAS had been making to sensitise the world to the conflict in Liberia and, its appeals for international support. The peace process until Cotonou had been bogged down by implementation and verification difficulties, especially, with respect to eliciting co-operation from the major faction, the NPFL. Granted that ECOWAS was facing serious problems, but if this co-operation became a reality, it was also partly due to the fact that the UN could not allow ECOWAS to single-handedly deal with the Liberian conflict. Since the intervention in September 1990, ECOWAS and the OAU had worked in close tandem with the UN Security Council to find means of resolving the conflict. This is supported by all the resolutions and fact-finding missions sent to Liberia. The establishment of UNOMIL, therefore, was continuation of the search and contribution to the collectivisation of international effort to resolve the conflict.

The critical report upon which UNOMIL was established resulted from an analysis of the Liberian situation and, the role which the UN hoped to play in Liberia, likewise the nature of the relationship between ECOWAS and the UN. According to the said report:

Since the role foreseen for UNOMIL is to monitor and verify the implementation of the [Cotonou] Agreement, its concept of *operation*

⁷⁴Adibe, "The Liberian Conflict and the ECOWAS-UN Partnership", p.477.

necessarily must be parallel to that of ECOMOG...UNOMIL would thus...deploy observer teams in Concert with ECOMOG deployment, including border crossings, airports and seaports...[it is expected that] UNOMIL and ECOMOG would collaborate closely in their operations.⁷⁵

This document clearly spelt out the modalities, which were to guide this unique experiment in organisational co-operation, an experiment which to Adibe did not arise “out of any mutual enthusiasm for the potential complementarities between the two organisations”. Without any substantial proof, Adibe concludes that the UN, “worked hard to lay the foundation for possible organisational interdependence”.⁷⁶ It is difficult to ascertain how such interdependence could have arisen since the report upon which the Security Council established UNOMIL under Resolution 866 emphasised the critical necessity of “parallel” structures, or what Adibe himself at a latter point describes as having led to “dysfunctional parallelism”.⁷⁷ How was this relationship to work in practice?

Considering the recommendations of the UN Secretary-General's report, the Security Council on the basis of the nature of the Liberian conflict decided to extend the mandate of UNOMIL to include a critical aspect: social reconstruction of the collapsed state⁷⁸. It is difficult to fathom why the reconstruction of the state was included in the

⁷⁵*Report of the Secretary-General on Liberia*, Security Council Document S/26422, 9 September 1993, and p. 4.

⁷⁶Adibe, “The Liberian Conflict and the ECOWAS-UN Partnership”, p. 477.

⁷⁷Ibid.

⁷⁸See United Nations Security Council Resolution 1014 (1995) of 15 September 1995 which extended UNOMIL's stay until 31 January 1996, and United Nations Security Council Resolution 1020 of 10 November 1995 adjusted the mandate of UNOMIL. For other reports on Liberia, see (S/1995/1042).

mandate of UNOMIL especially taking into consideration the fact that this was the first time that the UN body was co-operating with an already established peacekeeping mechanism. Probable explanations for such inclusion may, however, have arisen as a result of the UN's Somalia experiences. Among some of the things that UNOMIL was to concern itself with, according to Resolution 866, "UNOMIL shall comprise military observers as well as medical, engineering, communications, transportation and electrical components...". Included in the mandate were other decisive aspects in the areas where ECOWAS/ECOMOG was particularly weak. These included verification of compliance with the peace agreement, judicial administration of violations, delivery of humanitarian assistance, support in engineering local elections, rebuilding socio-economic infrastructure, disarming and demobilising combatants among others. Consequently, 303 observers, 20 military medical personnel, 45 military engineers, 58 United Nations volunteers, 89 international civilian and 136 local civilian staff were to be sent to Liberia and, for the duration of their seven-month mission, a budget of \$42.6 million was approved⁷⁹. In practical terms, knowing the problems and weaknesses of the ECOMOG scheme in Liberia for the past three years, what concrete measures did the UN initiate to contribute to the success of this scheme? How did UNOMIL function in Liberia? How did its expected cooperation with ECOMOG turn out? What factors, if any, explains the inability of UNOMIL to perform satisfactorily in Liberia and, what lessons, if any, can be gleaned from this unique experiment?

⁷⁹United Nations Security Council resolution 866 of 22 September 1993 on the establishment of UNOMIL.

5.8 ECOMOG and UNOMIL: A New Framework for International Collaboration?⁸⁰

As stated earlier, the possible success of this unique relationship was closely tied in to the ability of ECOMOG and UNOMIL to successfully execute their respective parts of the Cotonou agreement of 1993, be it the political or military aspects of the agreement.

In praxis, UNOMIL and ECOMOG were to have separate chains of command, but the missions were, however, expected to consult formally through the established committees, and informally on matters affecting them both. UNOMIL's initial strength was 303 military observers. This figure comprised 41 separate teams composed of six observers per team, 25 military observers based at UNOMIL's headquarters, and eight observers at each of the four regional headquarters specifically set up for the demobilisation exercise. 20 military medical personnel and 45 military engineers were thrown in for good measure. These figures were to be drastically reduced as the difficulties in having a parallel structure eventually began to take its toll on the effectiveness with which decisions could be taken and implemented. Added to this, is the fact that both organisations came to this co-operation with an organisational *modus operandi* which under any circumstance ought

⁸⁰For an informative discussion, see Olonisakin, 'Funmi, 1996. "UN Co-operation with Regional Organisations in Peacekeeping: The Experience of ECOMOG and UNOMIL in Liberia", *International Peacekeeping*, vol. 3, no. 3, pp.38-46.

to have been reconciled before attempting to put them in the field. With all the expectations of this cooperative scheme, it is difficult to fathom why UNOMIL was initiated with an independent structure from ECOMOG. In spite of these parallel chains of command, ECOMOG and UNOMIL consulted frequently and formally through established committees on issues affecting both parties. As in the cases of all UN peacekeeping operations, UNOMIL was put under the command of the UNSG and made up of military and civilian components. While the military component had its own Chief Military Observer reporting to the UNSG through the special representative, the civilian component consisted of political and administrative staff. Practically, UNOMIL's plans called for its deployment in Monrovia and four other regional headquarters, together with ECOMOG's four sector headquarters in the eastern, northern, western regions and Greater Monrovia.

In terms of the military aspect of this cooperation, UNOMIL and ECOMOG were expected to work jointly in contributing to the implementation of the Cotonou Peace Agreement. Under the scheme, ECOMOG was to have the primary responsibility for guaranteeing the implementation of the Agreement's provisions. UNOMIL on the other hand was to monitor the implementation procedures in order to verify compliance with their non-partisan application, the embargo on delivery of arms and military equipment, as well as cantonment, disarmament and demobilisation of combatants.

With UNOMIL partially in place by December 1993, and in consonance with the Peace Agreement, a Joint Cease-fire Monitoring Committee (JCMC), comprising

representatives of the faction groups and ECOMOG chaired by the UN was established. The JCMC, according to its mandate, was to “monitor, investigate and report all cease-fire violations between the period of its coming into force on 1st August 1993 and the arrival of the additional ECOMOG troops and the full contingent of UNOMIL”.⁸¹ The Cotonou agreement laid a continuum of action from cease-fire through disarmament and demobilisation to the holding of elections. The critical factor which was overlooked in the Cotonou agreement especially with respect to UNOMIL's role was that Liberia was still immersed in civil conflict, and the absence of central government authority, especially outside Monrovia, the capital, presented distinctive dilemmas that were not appropriately envisioned by the framers of resolution 866. The JCMC comprised representatives from the three major Liberian factions, ECOMOG and the UN. However, based on the agreements under Cotonou, and in consultation with ECOMOG, ten encampment sites were identified and proportionally distributed among the factions, two for the AFL, four for the NPFL/NPRAG and four for the United Liberation Movement for Democracy in Liberia [ULiMO]. The parties' agreement to the simultaneous disarmament of their forces, added to a design for the demobilisation and reintegration of ex-combatants into civilian life. To reduce the spectre of suspicion and non-compliance by one or more faction groups, factions decided to simultaneously commence the disarmament and demobilisation of their troops on an agreed date. A target of two to three months was resolved within which to complete the whole exercise. UNOMIL, according to the UNSGSR, designed a scheme

⁸¹*Report of the Secretary-General on the United Nations Observer Mission to Liberia (UNOMIL)*. 30 November 1994.

which covered the continuum from the demobilisation, military disarmament and reintegration of ex-combatants into civilian society.⁸²

In terms of UNOMIL and ECOMOG's deployment schemes, two important measures were undertaken. In March 1994, three demobilisation centers one each for the major warring factions in existence at the time of the signing of the Cotonou Agreement (NPFL, AFL and UNLIMO) were established. Within four weeks of commencing work, 2,000 combatants had been demobilised from all parties despite political problems with the seating of the LNTG, which created distrust among the factions. The initial momentum could not be sustained and in the following weeks, only 1,192 combatants were demobilised. By April 1994, military observers were in position in 27 team sites out of a total of 39 projected sites.

Despite the high hopes that both parties and the international community had for this co-operative venture, by mid-1995, the original figure of 303 observers drawn from 14 states had shrunk to the low figure of 76 observers. By 1996, with the exception of Uganda, all African troop contributing states had withdrawn their forces from UNOMIL. Characteristic of the problems that ECOMOG had faced since the inception of this intervention, eliciting compliance with the signed agreement from faction groups was

⁸²For some of the discussions concerning these issues, see Ball, Nicole 1997. "Demobilizing and Reintegration of Soldiers: Lessons from Africa", in Krishna Kumar, Ed, *Rebuilding Societies After Civil War: Critical Roles for International Assistance*. London: Lynne Rienner, pp. 85-104.

difficult. In terms of the security component to the agreement, the disarmament programme which emphasised the importance of the disarmament scheme which called for the surrender of weapons by all faction groups to UNOMIL and ECOMOG failed woefully. Several factors account for the surprising inability of this unique experiment to succeed.

Among them were:

- lack of provisions for the rehabilitation and welfare of demobilised militias many of whom were child soldiers;
- inadequate material, personnel, and financial support for the scheme;
- over-reliance on ECOMOG for basic support.

Inability to quickly resolve these structural bottlenecks resulted in faction groups losing interest and respect for the credibility of the UNOMIL scheme. Countries which could have contributed to the scheme backed out as the nature and scale of the problems faced by UNOMIL seemed to overwhelm them.

It is easy with hindsight to be critical of ECOMOG and to blame ECOWAS for the inability of the organisation to adequately guard against the fears and conditionalities stipulated by the UN Secretary-General. A careful analysis of the situation of the ground, factored into the demands and expectations of the UN will hopefully demonstrate that the UN itself was being unrealistic taking into consideration the facts surrounding ECOMOG on the ground. First, even by the time the Cotonou agreement was signed, incidences of 'mission creep' were visible. Ghana, for example, had intimated several times its desire to

downsize the number of its troops involved in ECOMOG. Added to this was the fact that after the Quainoo debacle and Nigeria's unilateral decision to replace him, the political control of Ghanain troops had effectively been removed from the Nigerian Field Commander.

Critical to the success of the UNOMIL/ECOMOG scheme was a UN enterprise to provide financial and logistical support to ECOMOG contributing states. The UN failed to redeem its own promise thus seriously undermining any realistic chances of ECOMOG fulfilling the conditions placed on it by the Cotonou Agreement. One would have expected that with the close relationship between UNOMIL and the Cotonou Agreement, the failure to fully implement Cotonou would have resulted in the withdrawal of UNOMIL. Despite the lack of success, the UN still maintained a symbolic presence in Liberia. Irrespective of whatever criticism can be levelled against UNOMIL, it is our contention that its continued presence in Liberia sent a significant psychological message to all groups and the civil populace of the international communities awareness of their problems. Added to this symbolic gesture was the support extended to ECOWAS in its endeavours to fashion out a peace agreement that would eventually bring the elusive peace to Liberia?

5.9 Conclusion

In this chapter I have analysed the radical shift in ECOWAS's emphasis on the peace process by recognising the demands of the faction groups as legitimate by increasingly giving them sensitive political roles to play. The Authority intensified endeavours at pursuing peace for Liberia, and to that end, the Cotonou Agreement of July 1993 was signed which laid a continuum of action from cease-fire through disarmament and demobilisation to the holding of elections. This agreement had two major components; one political, and the other military. Militarily, the agreement provided for a cease-fire and outlined steps for the encampment, disarmament and demobilisation of military units.

Implementation and verification problems begun which led to a series of significant occurrences: among them a Liberian National conference and an attempted overthrow of the Transitional government. In consequence of these incidents, the Akosombo Agreement of September 1994 was signed. It re-affirmed the Cotonou agreement as the only framework for peace in Liberia and sought to give the LNTG a more central role in the supervision and monitoring of the implementation of the Cotonou agreement.

Closely related to these efforts have been the new role of both the OAU and the UN. First, the OAU through the extension of support to ECOWAS smashed one of its central tenets; the non intervention in the internal affairs of states. The symbolic gestures by the OAU has given sub-regional organisations the right to intervene in conflicts in their region which threatens the security and stability of the region and, not least when it threatens the peoples of the state. The UN's decision to establish UNOMIL to co-operate with ECOWAS despite its problems have pointed to a new era in multi-track

peacekeeping; a system of the division of labour among different organisations. What were the major problems of this alliance? What can be learnt from it? According to a recent study of the interplay between ECOWAS and UNOMIL, the fact that “the UN-ECOWAS partnership took place at all, given the circumstances of widespread fears of domination and mistrust, is indicative of progress in African diplomacy, in particular, and inter-institutional co-operation, in general”. Despite the positive hopes engendered by this co-operation, there were problems, which arose as a result of the uncertainties and misunderstandings, created by the dysfunctional nature of parallel command structures. Illustrative of the structural parallelism that influenced the performance of both organisations in terms of the command and control mechanism of ECOWAS and UNOMIL was the latter's inability to command the requisite financial, personnel and independent identity away from the Nigeria dominated ECOMOG. This has strengthened the susceptibility of the UN's tendency to defer to regional powers (Nigeria?) when it is in alliance with regional organisations, especially in the security issue-area. Despite the peculiar characteristics and problems that faced ECOMOG-UN cooperation, Liberia was seen as “represent[ing] a good example of systematic co-operation between the United Nations and regional organisations, as envisaged in Chapter Eight of the Charter”.⁸³

⁸³Boutros Boutros-Ghali, UNSG, speech to the Heads of State and Government summit of the OAU, Cairo, Egypt, June 28 1993. UN Press release SG/SM/5029. An earlier positive assessment of the ECOWAS-UN alliance had been given in the Report of the Secretary-General on the question of Liberia, UN Doc. S/25402, 12 March 1993.