

## CHAPTER SEVEN

### CONCLUSION

#### 7.0 Introduction

The main aim of this thesis has been to examine the dynamics of the processes informing the Nigerian-led decisions by ECOWAS to intervene in Liberia and Sierra Leone. The thesis, also, discussed the role of the international community and the multiple procedures that were initiated for resolving these conflicts. The essence of this concluding chapter is not to repeat the key discussions, results and conclusions of the individual chapters since they have been presented as summaries at the end of each chapter. What this chapter seeks to attain, is to discuss the multiple linkages between the theoretical discussions on security regimes and the empirical analyses concerning the Nigerian-led ECOWAS interventions in Liberia and Sierra Leone. The conclusion will, also, examine some of the constraints experienced by and prospects for improving the effectiveness of ECOWAS and the international community in collective intervention schemes.

The assessment of ECOWAS's Liberia and Sierra Leone interventions should be made within the background of some perceptions expressed by different observers. For example Odinkalu Anselm (1990:1) characterised the intervention as an 'eco-morgue', while Alan Rake (1990:19) argued that 'ECOMOG ... rapidly (sank) into an Ecobog in

Liberia'. Others saw the problems encountered by the force as resulting from Nigeria, the sub-regional hegemon's exploitation of the civil strife to reaffirm its military and political prowess on the subregion. According to Ebo Godwin (1990:22), 'ECOMOG ... is nothing but [a] convenient camouflage for an effective Nigerian war machine'. These were some of the perceptions of the conflict in the immediate aftermath of the Nigerian-led intervention. The jury on the qualitative successes of the Nigerian-led ECOMOG's interventions are split between those with negative or positive perceptions. In the next section, a discussion of the theoretical implications of the analyses in Chapters One to Six is undertaken.

## **7.1 Theoretical Implications**

A major theoretical implication of the study above relates to the realist perception of states as the major actors on the international scene. However, the nature of the conflicts discussed and the debate on societal security demonstrates that presently, states are not the only major actors on the international scene. This is an area where there is the need for some sort of differentiation between the types of issues that a security framework like ECOWAS's can be confronted with. The point here is that problems of (in)security within states assume different forms. These deal mainly with issues of (a) state security and (b) ethnic identity. But in the particular discussion of the thesis, its interest centres on the forms and patterns of authority. Here, two types of authority patterns were discernible. First, is the issue of insecurity and the patterns of established authority within societies. An example of this is the authority exerted by IGNU in Monrovia and Kabbah in Freetown. The second

set of issues of insecurity, concerns areas without certainty as to the patterns of authority like Charles Taylor's NPRAG in Gbarnga, UliMO and RUF controlled areas. In both instances, the response mechanisms of ECOWAS's security framework were different. In both Freetown and Monrovia, the important challenges that faced Nigeria, ECOWAS and the wider international community was to re-establish a functional, recognised and acknowledged government with which ECOWAS's and its partners could deal with and, to which the international community could also relate to. However, because of the specific problems dealing with the issues of legitimacy and credibility which were created by the establishment of the quasi-state of Greater Liberia, ECOWAS and its international partners had to design resolution strategies that concurrently sought to incorporate the NPRAG in the negotiation processes while simultaneously preventing the NPFL from gaining a military victory.

Institutionally, several interesting theoretical implications of ECOWAS resolution of the intervention schemes come to the fore. In terms of the security dilemmas faced by West African states, some of the considerations that ECOWAS states had to make were not whether it had to move closer to each other within the context of their common security framework, rather, it dealt with the regulation of the increasingly intricate and dense societal and security interdependencies that had emerged over the years. The question that Nigeria and ECOWAS sought to tackle was whether these deepening relations should be institutionalised or left to temporary political settlement. The choice to establish a more structured security framework came about first as a result of a convergence of policies and

common interests, and an increasing realization that the security challenges and the impacts affected all members of the institution and, therefore, there was the need for some collective action.

Throughout the analysis it has been demonstrated that while the ECOWAS Secretariat's reports, decisions and recommendations on technical issues constitute important inputs into decision-making, this two-tier intergovernmental structure at the top (i.e. the Authority and the Council of Ministers) does not give the secretariat the leeway it deserves to enable it to perform in a more technocratic dispassionate manner. The evaluation of these challenges is that because the ECOWAS integration scheme is an overtly political process, the critical technical and bureaucratic processes and procedures that should be given support are not always forthcoming from the political leadership. In spite of this, however, there are obvious indications that the secretariat and the increasingly closer transnational network of experts spanning the sub-region have some pivotal leverage on the policy process in situations where there is a high degree of skepticism among policy makers. For example, during the Liberian conflict, a Technical committee of ECOMOG experts was established that monitored the activities of the political and military components of ECOWAS and ECOMOG's activities in Liberia, while for the Sierra Leone case, different contact groups were established to see to the implementation of the multiple resolution processes.

## 7.2 Eliciting Compliance

The major question that this sub-section seeks to answer is how does ECOWAS's security framework elicit compliance with its regulations from sub-state actor groups like factions who are beyond and below the purview of the state and sub-regional actors? While ECOWAS's security framework is specific in its functional scope, geographical domain, membership, and organisational structure, it also provides a framework of co-operation among member states to achieve a specific set of policy goals. Although a cursory glance at the protocols shows that the organization was not conceived to respond to the challenges posed to states by sub-states actors, more often than not, the rules of the regime have actually come to deal more with the challenges of sub-state faction groups. Also, the principles upon which ECOWAS's regime is based are becoming more comprehensive<sup>1</sup>. These focus on the elimination of politico-military occurrences that have the potential to undermine the security of individual ECOWAS states and the sub-region as a whole. The rules of ECOWAS's regime are also increasingly becoming more extensive and sophisticated in the light of the embeddedness of the principles.<sup>2</sup> Once devised, norms

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<sup>1</sup>Although this is outside the purview of the thesis, the promulgation of two Protocols point to the fact being argued above. These are: (a) ECOWAS: Status of Implementation of the Protocol relating to the Mechanism for Conflict Prevention, Resolution and Management, Peace-keeping and Security. Executive Secretariat, Abuja, June 2001. P.5; and (b) ECOWAS: Protocol A/SP1/12/01 on Democracy and Good Governance Supplementary to the Protocol relating to the Mechanism for Conflict Prevention, Management, Resolution, Peacekeeping and Security, Executive Secretariat, Dakar, December 2001. This document relates very closely to the values and norms expressed in the NEPAD initiative document.

<sup>2</sup>Though norms and rules get embedded as a regime develops, in the ECOWAS case and with specific respect to the Ivorian crisis, the norms and values inherent in these protocols do not seem to have been applied.

and principles under ECOWAS's security regime have provided an important legitimizing function for the activities of this network of experts. Through their actions, they have offered standards of conduct against which ECOWAS's actions in Liberia and Sierra Leone should be measured. Decision-making procedures take the form of the yearly and until recently half-yearly and extraordinary intergovernmental and expert meetings to resolve outstanding issues and differences on topics that can affect sub-regional security.<sup>3</sup> The end result of the ECOWAS security regime is that it seeks to encourage member states to facilitate and implement agreements by sacrificing instant gain.

In ECOWAS's endeavours at establishing a security framework, the core issue is the preparedness of ECOWAS member states to comply with their own rules and regulations, which are not only inconvenient but can, also, be incompatible with state interests. This point is critical in measuring the importance which ECOWAS states put on their regime and its survivability. The argument is that the regime is important to member states if during instances of such inconvenient commitments, its rules are not broken. But in as far as rules are complied with, then deducing that ECOWAS and ECOMOG have had an impact is possible. ECOWAS's intervention in the Liberian and Sierra Leone conflicts, and efforts at implementing regime decisions abound with instances of controversy.

Yet, another point that needs to be examined is that when ECOWAS and Nigeria started the intervention process, neither ECOWAS nor Nigeria realized the extent to which

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<sup>3</sup>The half-yearly intergovernmental meetings have been introduced since September 1977 to enable for more detailed discussions of both the economic and political integration issues.

getting member states to comply could create problems. This is because of my argument that there are several instances of state mistrust in West Africa and therefore establishing such regimes in especially the area of security is much more liable to difficulties because of the inherently competitive cost of security concerns, the unforgiving nature of problems, and the difficulty in determining how much security the state has or needs.

The next section analyses the extent to which ECOWAS has designed processes and procedures for verifying compliance with its politics and the problems attendant to such procedures.

### **7.3 Institutional Weaknesses**

Although on the rhetorical level ECOWAS and its member states have shown a remarkable interest in establishing a security regime, the key weakness and problem has been its inability to establish the institutions that it had agreed to set-up. Thus when Nigeria led the Liberia intervention process through ECOWAS, there were no legal justifications under the most recent security protocol from 1986. As a result, it had to seek approval under the 1976 protocol on non-aggression. The concluding result was that neither Nigeria nor ECOWAS could function seriously and effectively. I argue that for an effective security framework to exist, co-operation must take place according to the rules and principles that have been formally accepted by the parties concerned.<sup>4</sup>

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<sup>4</sup>This point is very critical for the survivability of the ECOWAS integration project as a whole and its capacity to empower its ECOMOG to function. This is because if one examines the manner in which

There are several intriguing questions about the 'relative success' of the ECOMOG scheme. To explain this phenomenon, I argue that the most compelling argument for security framework capability to foster international order is that compliance is achieved even where regime norms and principles run counter to the short-term interests of the participating states and especially the hegemon and in this case Nigeria. This is because I argue that the value for ECOWAS member states is that they are compelled to balance their narrow national interests against the expected outcome of the collective public good by collaborating to resolve conflicts collectively. Therefore, the critical centrality of ECOWAS's endeavour at establishing a permanent security framework must be evaluated in the light of its addition by changing the context within which states make decisions based on self-interest. Most of the factions in Liberia and Sierra Leone were unwilling to comply not only because it did not serve their interests, but also because of skepticism concerning compliance levels from other signatories.; to reduce the spectre of the difficulties posed to ECOWAS, the UN and the OAU came in to implement and impose monitoring and review procedures to collect and validate data relating to factional group implementation of signed peace accords.

#### **7.4 Monitoring and Verification**

The effectiveness of ECOWAS's security framework hinges on the magnitude to

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the Ivorian crisis since September 2002 has been tackled, then one cannot argue that these principles, norms and values are being applied.



which a combination of these institutional attributes and mechanisms were developed in such a manner as to motivate and associate with actors in a way that encouraged expected modification in conduct.

An effective regime is one whose institutions, and not least rules and procedures adjust to influence external determinants and processes in order that the conduct of pertinent actors is altered in line with its objectives. The point here is that such factors are specific both to the situation in question and the issue area implicated; since such institutions are set-up through a mechanism of negotiation among state and sub-regional policy-makers or non-policy makers, who at best have only a fragmentary appreciation of the dynamics of sub-regional politics and the most constructive response mechanism. In the example of ECOWAS, the argument is that a key characteristic of an effective regime is flexibility and the capacity to adapt its institutions, rules and procedures in a timely way in the light of its experience with implementation and as patterns of power, interest, influence, knowledge, capacity and concern develop.<sup>5</sup> Several points can be pinpointed to by both ECOWAS as an institution and Nigeria as the sub-regional hegemon which demonstrate such tactical surrender of community leadership and adaptation of institutional rules to reflect the practical situation on the ground.

The developmental process which ECOWAS has undergone since the initial discussions concerning the inclusion of security related protocols to the eventual ratification of the PMAD has in a manner demonstrated not only ECOWAS's flexibility, but a realistic

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<sup>5</sup>This is increasingly being brought to the fore in terms of the way that the Ivorian crisis is being dealt with.

awareness of the real sources of sub-regional insecurity. In Liberia's specific case, implementation and verification problems and delays led to a series of significant occurrences: among them a Liberian National conference and attempted overthrow of the LNTG Two. Despite the intentions underlying these various agreements, the diverse Liberian factions, regional and extra-regional actors advancing patronage to these disparate groups persisted in extending such backing thus making implementation and verification processes burdensome.

The implementation and verification phase of ECOWAS's policies with respect to encampment, disarmament and demobilisation ought to have begun with the Lomé and Cotonou Agreements. But despite the intended purposes behind the establishment of the JCMC and ten proportionally distributed encampment sites, problems continued to plague this phase of ECOWAS's efforts at bringing peace to Liberia until the signing of Abuja Two with its stringent sanctions regime and conflict fatigue or maturity. ECOMOG began the pre-implementation phase by monitoring, investigating and reporting all cease-fire violations, while they undertook reconnaissance missions in preparation for their deployment and demobilisation duties.

## **7.5 Lessons from Two Tales of Tragedy — Constraints and Prospects of Multilateral Intervention**

On the surface, it is difficult to see similarities between the civil conflict in Liberia and Sierra Leone and elsewhere and the subsequent international responses to these conflicts. While the Liberian and Sierra Leonean civil wars erupted within the shadow of the tumultuous end to the Cold war, the failure of the multilateral effort in Somalia showed the hollowness of the declaration of a 'New World Order'. In Liberia and Sierra Leone, faction groups fought for control over state structures and resources, while sub-regional and international actors overestimated their capacity to resolve the conflicts and dispatched peacekeepers to safeguard a non-existent peace. To avert future Liberias and Sierra Leones, the key lessons concerning ECOWAS's experience, and indeed, Nigeria's roles concerns the:

- early warning: these deal with the setting-up of systems of early warning of and reactions to political crises. In the West African case, this will need to be strengthened under the auspices of ECOWAS to use economic, “culturally sensitive” and other relevant indicators to design a conflict threat evaluation. One approach is to survey and react to all socio-political and economic incidents that can lead to conflict;
- understanding of the local dynamics fuelling the conflict: this is yet another

monitoring approach which should consist of conferring with different segments of the population affected by obvious economic and political patterns of inclusion and exclusion;

- mapping of risky areas that should be introduced whereby there is a constant and updated range of verifiable information that can point to the potential for a conflict breaking out at a specific place. This will help in identifying countries or groups that are either being persecuted or have the potential to cause conflicts. This should rely on the use of key local informants with credibility. This method is another way to identify conflict factors that can result in conflicts by using a recommended checklist of evidences for regimes and other multilateral organisations to monitor emergency feasibilities in politically unstable areas;
- clear definition for any such intervention; and
- need for a clear differentiation of the type of intervention being undertaken, whether humanitarian, military or a combination of both.

In spite of the general praise and some criticism that have been heaped unto ECOWAS and Nigeria, I argue that there is a possibility that whatever lessons can be gleaned from the Liberian and Sierra Leonean examples above, would probably limit it to civil conflicts. One major lesson from Liberia and Sierra Leone is an issue which is closely

interrelated and intertwined to most incidents of intervention and peacekeeping: the fact of nation-building, which until recently was virtually unrecognised as an incipient aspect of intervention in collapsed states. In instances where state disintegration has occurred, it is highly possible that peacekeeping will involve instances of nation-building and endeavours at reconstruction. One of the critical weaknesses of Nigeria and ECOWAS in Liberia and later, Sierra Leone, was the inability to reconstruct and rebuild Liberian and Sierra Leonean political institutions (at the local and grass-roots levels) as a first decisive step towards providing some form of legitimacy. Lacking such structures, ECOWAS was compelled to deal with faction leaders as if they represented legitimate political power and authority, instead of perceiving them for what they were: major actors in elite struggles over resource exploitation, distribution and allocation which contributed to the collapse of the states in the first place.

ECOWAS did not, also, prioritise the diplomatic and political components of peacekeeping: that is the inter-positioning of political officers whose major assignment was the interpretation of the political mandates and consolidation of the gains of the military aspects of the military components of peacekeeping. While decisive gains were attained on the military field, these were unfortunately not translated into political gains with the establishment of political structures and the re-creation of previous forms of authority structures. There was an inclination to believe that recaptured areas would per automatic revert to pre-civil conflict political authorities who would re-establish control especially on the local levels. Rather, recaptured areas where no viable political authorities or institutions were established created vacuums of authority that in most cases were re-conquered by

established factions or were taken over by new groups.

Owing to the lack of logistic resources, ECOMOG was unable to deploy beyond their areas of operation until critical assistance arrived whereupon it deployed to assembly sites for the commencement of disarmament and demobilisation. Crucial to ECOMOG's initial success was its inability to secure initial consent for its action from the major actor in the conflict and to define who and which group constituted the antagonists. In desperation to procure support, it targeted the NPFL as the main adversary thus aligning itself with the INPFL, UliMO and AFL and other faction groups at various times during the peace process. Closely related to this strategic failure in its political and military design were the escalating misgivings concerning the forces impartiality and credibility.

This thesis has demonstrated that even though regional leaders were aware of the necessity to reinforce regional peace and stability, it required the outbreak of the Liberian imbroglio to mobilise a regional force like ECOMOG to attempt re-establishing some semblance of state structures and authority while concomitantly maintaining sub-regional peace and security. Even with its institution, it can be argued that the ECOMOG set-up, until now is meant only to address a specific issue and conflict, and is thus not structured and still not fully equipped for the maintenance of sub-regional security. The Liberian and Sierra Leonean conflicts and subsequent ECOMOG interventions have illustrated that despite the adoption of security-related protocols, inescapable institutional deficiencies endure.

The developmental and regime building phase of ECOWAS's norms and

procedures have to a large extent impacted on the nature of the organisation's operational role in terms of its responses to the Liberian and Sierra Leonean conflicts. These can be seen in the alterations enforced in Liberia, which intriguingly enough, did not result in the alteration of regime norms and procedures as a consequence of ECOWAS's major actions in Liberia and Sierra Leone.

The nexus between regime effectiveness and eliciting compliance should be seen in the context of several mutually reinforcing dynamics. First, was the fact that Liberia (and later Sierra Leone) was the regime's initial involvement in a conflict for which it was not originally designed. As a result, what initially seems like regime inability to elicit compliance is partly due to its inexperience and lack of adequate preparation. Secondly, another reason is the very nature of the problem that the regime was confronted with. While the regime had been formed to perceive state actors as its primary 'partners' in conflicts, it was confronted with a new actor whose outlines were difficult to define.

ECOWAS and Nigeria's difficulties in designing strategies to respond to the conflict that it was confronted with reflects the novel nature of the opponent it faced. All this notwithstanding, the ability of the regime to: (a) overcome its own internal schism, (b) consistently redesign and present new strategies, and (c) eventually get faction leaders and their combatants to comply with the stipulations of the Abuja Two Accord (in the case of Liberia) by demobilising their combatants and arriving at the outcome that has been in force since July 1997, and the Lome Accord of July 1999 (in the case of Sierra Leone)

underpins the deduction that ECOWAS and Nigeria's ability to elicit compliance from factions in spite of all its difficulties represents effectiveness and therefore a 'relative success'.

ECOMOG and ECOWAS's Liberia and Sierra Leone experiences, however, raise several issues which are both pertinent and critical to both Nigeria and ECOWAS's ability to deal with future regional conflicts. These are: (i) Nigeria's own stability and survivability as a unitary state; (ii) the economic predicament of the region; (iii) Francophone West African states relations with France; and finally (iv) the character of sub-regional democratic politics. These issues will need to be discussed in some detail to comprehend the extent to which they are capable of either individually or in complex combinations undermine ECOWAS's potential to undertake similar ventures in the sub-region.