THE LIBERIAN CONFLICT AND THE ECOMOG OPERATION: A REVIEW OF NIGERIA'S KEY CONTRIBUTIONS

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ABSTRACT: *Right from inception, Nigerian foreign policy posture has been Afro-centric. This has made her to be more committed to peaceful coexistence in Africa in general and West Africa sub-region in Particular. Nonetheless, Nigeria has been participating actively in peace operations globally. This study examines Nigeria's key contributions to the resolution of the Liberian conflict under the ECOWAS Ceasefire Monitoring Group (ECOMOG). While the theory of Manifest Destiny is adopted to explain Nigeria's leadership role in the resolution, the work derives it data from the secondary source, which consists majorly of textbooks, journals, articles, reports, internet documents, among others. There is an array of information available on the performance of ECOWAS and ECOMOG hence historical research design is used in the study. The study also discusses the challenges of the mission. The findings show that Nigeria's proactive leadership role in ECOMOG intervention in Liberia was a benchmark for future operations in Africa continent, and that while the holding of elections in 1997 and the subsequent withdrawal of ECOMOG clearly indicate that the operation was a success. The study calls on Nigeria to maintain her Afrocentric foreign policy posture but with more focus on industrialization and economic development of the region.*

KEYWORDS: conflict, Nigeria, Liberia, ECOMOG, ECOWAS

INTRODUCTION

Nigeria commands one of the most powerful and visible military in Africa. However, her posture in the continent has remained non-aggressive but predominantly geared towards preventing conflict and maintenance of peace through her peacekeeping efforts. Aside from the few years of civil war and her active involvement against the apartheid regime in South Africa in the years during which she was tagged "a frontline state" especially during the Murtala Mohammed era, Nigeria`s armed forces have been involved more than any other in preserving order across the length and breadth of Africa, and her capacity to instill peace and restore order in the continent remains glaring. Instead of using her military might to intimidate other weaker and poorer nations to doing her bidding as in most diplomatic practice, her focus has been to preserve stability and peace in the continent as exemplified in her acclaimed exploits with ECOMOG in Liberia and Sierra-Leone.

Nigeria has no history of wars with her neighbours save the brief tensions with Chad Republic and Cameroun over boundary misunderstandings which were comprehensively resolved. In fact, The Nigerian Army doctrine is anchored on the need for the Armed Forces to be strategically defensive in posture in line with Nigeria's foreign policy of good neighbourliness and non-aggression. Thus, the Nigeria military doctrine has been based on primarily "Active Defence, Flexible Offensive", which builds upon "Responsive Offensive Doctrine" (Ogah, 2009:263-264). The adoption of Maneuverist Approach to warfare by the Nigerian Army is the fallout of this doctrine. Based on the principle of good neighbourliness and peaceful co-existence, Nigeria has no sub-imperial or hegemonic ambition towards its immediate neighbours and the West African Sub-region. However, the self-sacrificing Nigeria's peacekeeping supports in the West African Sub-region and Africa bear no fruits of even national interest articulations. Such efforts have been largely altruistic. In post-peace support efforts in Congo, Chad, Liberia, Sierra Leone, Rwanda and Sudan, states which did not share the burden of peace support efforts are cultivating and reaping off their resources.(Akpuru-Aja, 2012)

The desire to understand the primary motive for Nigeria's intervention and subsequent resolution of conflicts especially in the West African region has been the concern of scholars for decades. Especially when considering the huge cost of her involvements, as the case, during the ECOMOG operation in Liberia. This explains the enormous ideas that have been put forward by scholars to explain this phenomenon over the years. The foreign policy of any nation constitutes an integral part of her overall strategy for survival in a competitive global system. The importance of this dimension of a nation's grand strategy is aptly captured by Kurt London, when he asserted that foreign policy may be called the father of all things in International Relations (Kurt, 1965:1). This perception is corroborated by William Wallace, who identified Foreign Policy as that critical "area of politics which bridges the all-important boundary between the nation state and its international environment.(Wallace,1971:1).

Accordingly, the over-riding objective of any country's foreign policy is to promote and protect that "country's national interests in its interaction with the outside world and relationship with specific countries in the international system (Olusanya and Akindele, 1986:2). Crucial to attaining this goal is the formation and maintenance of a functional military to safeguard both internal and external interests. Indeed, Section 217 (2) of the Nigerian Constitution provides that the federation shall…equip and maintain the armed forces as may be considered adequate and effective for the purpose(s)   of: a).   Defending   Nigeria   from   external   aggression. b) Maintaining its territorial integrity and securing its borders from violation on land, sea or air. c) Suppressing insurrection and acting in aid of civil authorities to restore order when called upon to do so by the president (1979 Constitution of the Federal Republic of Nigeria, Section 217). Between the attainment of independence in 1960 and the advent of the civil wars which plagued

West Africa in the early 1990s, there had emerged some broad and consistent consensus that Nigeria's national interest consist of the following: The defense of the country's Sovereignty, independence and territorial integrity; The restoration of human dignity to black men and women all over the world, and in Africa; The creation of the relevant political and economic conditions in Africa and the rest of the world which will not only facilitate the preservation of the territorial integrity and security of all African countries but also foster national self-reliance in African countries; The promotion and improvement of the economic well-being of Nigerian citizens and; The promotion of world peace and justice. (Adeniji: 2000)

Although there was a consensus in support of these broad objectives, successive governments at the national level since the political independence of the country in 1960, gave its own interpretation of these objectives, according to its own level of emphasis to each of them. A country's foreign policy represents the totality of objectives, orientation and actions which influences it in the quest to cope with its external environment. These foreign policy components are of course reflective of the sum total of those principles which have grown out of its history, political process and leadership, economic and military capabilities.

Driven by her foreign policy objectives which are anchored on the manifest destiny theory, Nigeria played crucial role in the liberation of Southern Africa from white oppressive minority rule, racism and apartheid so decisive that the states conferred on her the unique title of "front line state." Nigeria was definitely in the fore-front of the fight against racial discrimination and colonization between 1960 and 1979. Those years definitely constituted the golden age of Nigerian's foreign policy triumphs. As Sagay rightly observed, the years preceding the Nigerian Civil war, from the dawn of independence on October 1, 1960 were years of Innocence. Nigeria was the beautiful bride of the international community wooed by both the East and West, feted by the common wealth, toasted by the non-aligned nations and respected by the defunct Organization of African Unity. The success of Nigeria in the civil war coupled with the unprecedented reconciliatory approach of the victorious Nigeria government, with its "no victory, no vanquished" Policy, sent the country's image soaring to great heights. The early seventies were also years of increasing economic prosperity, mainly through the increasing production of petroleum resources, i.e. oil and gas. With the country's increased moral stature and greater economic power, the country was posed to play a leadership role in the continent (Garuba, 1987:23).

Angola provided the country with the first opportunity to play the role of big brother in the fight against white minority rule. It will be recalled that Nigeria successfully challenged the pretensions of non-regional big powers (UK and the USA) when General Murtala Muhammed delivered the famous and historic "Africa has come of Age" address to the extra-ordinary summit of the OAU at Addis Ababa, Ethiopia on 11th January 1976. There he declared "Africa has come of age. It is no longer in the orbit of any continental power. It should no longer take orders from any country, however powerful". The speech was followed by Nigeria's recognition of the MPLA as the Government of Angola, followed by a massive pouring of material and military support for the MPLA. It could be said that the MPLA was established in Government by Cuba and Nigeria. This was the tone of the country's foreign policy when in August, 1979; General Obasanjo's government nationalized the assets of British Petroleum, when the latter was caught exporting oil to South Africa in breach of UN and OAU sanctions.

However, in spite of the accolade which the country garnered from her progressive foreign policy which was in tune with the hopes and aspirations of Africans and Blacks in the Diaspora, the enormous funds expended in this direction can better be imagined and a huge cut of the domestic and equally pressing needs of the country. Nigeria has been consistent in the area of contribution to international peacekeeping. She had contributed forces to virtually every UNO, AU and ECOWAS peacekeeping endeavours since 1960. In fact, Nigeria had the largest number of casualties among international peacekeepers in 2012, according to the United Nations (UN), which honoured its peacekeepers in the 2013 event at its headquarters in New York. While 111 peacekeepers died in 2012, Nigeria alone had 17 fatalities, more than 10 per cent and Nigeria is the fifth largest contributor of peace-keepers to the UN with 4,736 serving worldwide. According to the UN secretariat, among the peace-keepers who died in 2012 are 17 from Nigeria, making the country the UN member-state with the most human sacrifice for world peace (Guardian, 29thMay, 2013:1).

Table 1: Nigeria's Participation in Global Peace Support Operations since Independence

NO.	COUNTRY/AREA	CODE	YEAR/PERIOD	ORGANISATION	NATURE OF FORCES	SIZE	TYPE OF PSO
1	Congo	OUNC	1960-64	UN	Army and Police	One Battalion	Peacekeeping & Enforcement
2	Indo-Pakistan	UNIPOM	1963-65	UN	Army	Few Observers	Observation
3	New- Guinea	UNSF	1962-63	UN	Army and Police	Few Observers	Observation
4	Lebanon	UNIFIL	1978-84	UN	Army	One Battalion and Staff	Peacekeeping
5	Iran-Iraq	UNIMOG	1988-91	UN	Army, Navy and Air Force	Few Observers	Observation
6	Iraq-Kuwait	UNICOM	1991-date	UN	Army, Navy and Air Force	Few Observers	Observation
7	Angola	UNAVEM I	1991	UN	Army, Navy, Air Force and Police	Few Observers	Observation
8	Angola	UNAVEM II	1991-92	UN	Army	Few Observers	Observation
9	Angola	UNAVEM II	1992-95	UN	Army	A detachment	Observation and Election monitoring
10	Namibia	UNTAG	1989-90	UN	Police	Few Observers	Observation and Election monitoring
11	West Sahara	MINURSO	1992-93	UN	Police	Few Observers	Observation, Referendum
12	Cambodia	UNITAC	1992-93	UN	Police	Few observers	Observation
13	Somalia	UNOSOM	1992-94	UN	Army, Navy and Air Force	One Battalion	Peacekeeping
14	Yugoslavia	UNPROFOR	1992-95	UN	Army, Navy, Air Force and Police	One Battalion	Peacekeeping
15	Mozambique	UNOMOZ	1992	UN	Police	Few Observers	Observation
16	Rwanda	UNAMIR	1994-date	UN	Army, Navy, Air Force and Police	One Battalion	Peacekeeping
17	Ouzou Strip	UNASOG	1994	UN	Army	Few Observers	Observation
18	Israel	UNITSO	1995	UN	Army	Few Observers	Observation
19	Tajikistan		1994-95	UN	Army	Few Observers	Observation
20	Macedona		1995	UN	Army	Few Observers	Observation
21	Slovenia		1996-98	UN	Army	Few Observers	Observation
22	Kosovo		1999	UN	Army	Few Observers	Observation
23	Ethiopia/Eritrea		2000-date	UN	Army	Few Observers	Observation
24	Dem. Rep Of Congo	MONUC	2003-date	UN	Army	Few Observers	Observation
25	Chad		1981-82	OAU	Army and Air Force	One Brigade	Peacekeeping
26	Rwanda		1994	OAU	Army	Observer	Observation
27	Sudan		1994-date	OAU	Army and Air Force	One Battalion	Peacekeeping
28	Liberia	ECOMOG	1990-date	ECOWAS	Army, Navy and Air Force	One Division	Peace-building/Election supervision
29	Sierra Leone	ECOMOG	1998-date	ECOWAS	Army, Navy and Air force	Several Battalions	Election supervision and Peace-building
30	Cote D'Ivoire	ECOMOG	2003-date	ECOWAS	Army	FEW OBSERVERS	Observation
31	Tanzania		1964	Bilateral	Army	One Battalion	Quelling Mutiny
32	Chad	HARMONY	1979	Bilateral	Army	One Battalion	Peacekeeping
33	Gambia		1993	Bilateral	Army, Police	Training Team	Training
34	Sierra Leone		1994-date	Bilateral	Army	Training Team	Training

Source: (Nwolise 2004), *The table above does not include all Nigeria's peacekeeping
Operations across the world.

The Concept of Conflict

Generally, conflict has been construed to mean different things to many people. It occurs at many levels from interpersonal disputes to clashes between countries. The term has also been used to describe a broad range of human activities including hostility between people to international war. Berconvitch cited in Wani, (2011:105) defines conflict as a "situation which generates incompatible goals or values among different parties". Pia and Diez (2007) view conflict as a "struggle or contest between people with opposing needs, ideas, beliefs, values or goals". Many conflict have occurred in Africa as a result of frustration, dissatisfaction with the status quo, inequality, rivalry, tribal hatred, ethnic domination, poverty, racial segregation, class struggle, fear, deprivation, oppression by ruling class, secession attempt, insecurity, prejudice, misconceptions and unjust distribution of wealth (Adeyemo,2000:5), thereby causing severe setbacks on the politico-economic and socio-cultural development of the society. Example of such conflict, include Ethiopia and Eritrea, Nigeria and Cameroon over boundaries and natural resources etc.

However, many modern conflicts are occurring within a state that is, intrastate conflicts either as result of the activities of the sub-national identities who always rebel against their government to establish their own independence or due to fall out in the process of changing an existing government in power. The Liberian conflict emerged because of the clash between the major actors for political power, and had destroyed the lives, property and the social harmony of the state, leading to the intervention of the ECOWAS which Nigeria played critical leadership.

Theoretical Framework

The study aligns itself with the theory of manifest destiny to explain Nigeria's leadership role in the operation of the ECOMOG. This is in view of the fact that manifest destiny as a theory holds that certain people have been designed to lead others. In other words, nature has destined some people to be rulers over others. The theory is often associated with the Americans who believe that they are made to rule world, and Nigerian leadership has come to adopt this theory in dealing with its African countries (Halidu, Nwokedi and Adie, 2018:4). Confirming this Folarin (2011:2) notes that with the enormous resources at the disposal of the nation… "it was the manifest destiny for Nigeria to take the lead and assume the credible voice of the continent". Bach (2007:303) supports thus, "ever since the sixties, the messianic reference to a Nigerian leadership in conducting the affairs of the African continent have been ingrained in the conduct of Nigeria's foreign policy and external relations". It is on the basis of this that Nigeria took the lead in the mobilization, deployment, funding, and execution of the ECOWAS Cease-fire Monitoring Group (ECOMOG) in Liberia.

Brief Background to the Liberia Conflict

A comprehensive examination of the origins of the Liberian conflict lies outside the scope of this paper. It is sufficient to identify that in December 1989, Chaos consumed Liberia for almost eight

months before its neighboring states decided on, rather were forced into, active intervention. Liberia had a turbulent history, and in a region known for turmoil it was relatively easy for its neighbors to expect that Liberia's problems eventually would work themselves out. Liberia's fragility as a state emanated from its 1847 creation by freed American slaves (Ankomah, 1993:6). The founders, commonly known as Americo-Liberians, created a strict, hierarchical social system, placing themselves at the apex and the indigenous populations at the bottom. Although they only represented an approximate five percent of the population, for almost a century and a half they wielded political and economic control of the entire country (Ero and Long, 1993: 140-156).

The reign of the Americo-Liberians reached its culminating point during the 1971-1980 presidency of William Tolbert. Tolbert ascended to power following the death of President William Tubman, Liberia's strong man from 1944-1971. Tolbert was Tubman's vice president, and their combined thirty-six year rule brought only modest improvements to the lives of ordinary Liberians (Kieh, 1998:125-143). Discontent flourished under Tolbert's reign, which was characterized by corruption and harassment. A crackdown on anti-Tolbert, Americo-Liberian elites and riots in 1979 over the price and availability of rice, a staple for all Liberians, further paved the way for political upheaval (Adibe, 1995:14). In 1980, Samuel Doe, a 28-year old Master Sergeant in the Liberian National Guard, led a coup d'état. Doe and his followers stormed the executive mansion, assassinated President Tolbert and his immediate security forces, and formed a revolutionary government (Adibe, 1995). Subsequent executions of leading political figures and government officials effectively ended Americo- Liberian dominance. The Krahns, Doe's group and another ethic minority, assumed the position once held by Americo-Liberians in Liberia's social structure. Doe ruled with a heavy hand and sanctioned Krahn violence against other ethnic groups as well as against his detractors. Ethnic tensions along with government corruption and the economic and social problems common to developing African countries set the stage for a violent reaction.

Liberian rebel forces of the National Patriotic front of Liberia (NPFL), led by Charles Taylor, crossed into Liberia from Cote d`Ivoire intent upon overthrowing the regime of President Samuel Doe. As the fighting escalated, and the international community displayed marginal interest, ECOWAS initiated a regional response to the crisis, establishing a Standing Mediation Committee (SMC) to try and encourage a diplomatic solution. On August 7th 1990, a lack of progress on the diplomatic front prompted the SMC to begin the insertion into Liberia of a military monitoring group (ECOMOG). ECOMOG was deployed in order to overawe the warring factions, and to oversee the implementation of a cease-fire, the disarmament of the warring factions, the cessation of arms imports and the release of prisoners.

Such a response came in the form of Charles Taylor, an Americo-Liberian, former official in the Doe's government and fugitive from justice in the United States (Adibe, 1995:12). On December 24, 1989, Taylor led a band of a few hundred rebels from a staging base in Côte d'Ivoire across the

border into Liberia with the aim of ousting Doe and re-establishing Americo-Liberian supremacy (Aning, 1997:12).By late January, 1990, Taylor's motley supporters had advanced from the border and seized Nimba Country in north central Liberia, killing thousands of innocent civilians and forcing even more to seek refuge in nearby Côte d'Ivoire, Sierra Leone, and Guinea (Kodjoe, 1994:290). Taylor and his supporters, calling themselves the National Patriotic Front of Liberia (NPFL), reached the capital city of Monrovia in June of the same year. The NPFL failed to force Doe out of the presidency and a standoff between Taylor, an NPFL splinter group, and the remains of the Liberian army ensued. A full-scale war involving numerous rebel groups and factions developed, tearing apart the country and its people for seven years (Alao, 1994:430).

ECOWAS to the Rescue

Initially, international response to the crisis in Liberia was muted. In 1990, the Iraqi invasion of Kuwait and the subsequent Gulf War captured headlines. Both the United States and the United Nations declined to intervene in restoring security to Liberia, advocating "African solutions to African problems" (Howe, 1996:163). West Africa was on its own. Individual states and various African leaders, in the early days of the conflict, invoked regional agreements, appealing for but never achieving a cease-fire or negotiated settlement. There was an on-going war in Liberia and law and order had completely broken down in the country. On 30th May 1990, the United Nations Secretary-General ordered the evacuation of all UN personnel from Liberia. In August 1990, the United States of America intervened in Liberia but only to the extent of evacuating her nationals, and other nationals of Europe and Asia. By that time, "all semblance of civil authority had ceased to be." The ECOWAS leaders had the option of intervening just for the sake of their nationals trapped in the Liberia WA, but they chose to take a more selfless approach more so that it had become the International Community that all semblance of authority had ceased to exist.

While the International Community chose to initially ignore the Liberian conflict, her neighbours in the sub-region particularly Nigeria could not maintain a posture of indifference to the situation in Liberia. Thus the Authority of Heads of State and Government of ECOWAS were used to act in a novel but very bold manner to save lives and properties. ECOWAS leaders however embraced the logic that regional organizations had to share this responsibility with the Security Council. That is, their responsibility was to ensure that peace and stability is maintained within the region and in the African Continent as a whole. The inhuman treatment resulting from the tragic situation in Liberia was not only a threat to the well-being of the Community but also posed a threat to international peace and security. The intervention of ECOWAS in Liberia was indeed response to a dire humanitarian problem.

The Deployment of ECOMOG

The ECOMOG operation began on 24 August 1990 with deployment of 3,000 West African troops into the Liberian capital Monrovia. It was tasked with "assisting the ECOWAS Standing Mediation

Committee in supervising the implementation and in ensuring the strict compliance by the parties with the provisions of the cease-fire throughout the territory of Liberia." Whilst the commander initially envisaged a six month operation, the force continued to be deployed until late 1999, and, indeed, expanded its operations into neighboring Sierra Leone. The contributing nations and troop strengths varied, but included at one time or another Nigeria, which provided the bulk of the forces, Ghana, Guinea, Senegal, Gambia, Mali, Benin, Cote d'Ivoire, Uganda, Tanzania, Niger, Burkino Faso and Sierra Leone. In February 1995, for example, the force consisted of 8, 430 troops organized into ten battalions; of these troops 4,908 were Nigerian, 1,028 were from Ghana, 609 from Guinea, 747 from Tanzania, 760 from Uganda, 359 from Sierra Leone, and ten each were provided by Gambia and Mali. The force peaked at a strength of around 16, 000 in 1993 and by early 1997 consisted of around 11,000 troops (Adeyemi, 1999).

During the period of its deployment, ECOMOG engaged in a variety of missions including protection of humanitarian aid, disarming of factions, cantonment, mediation, and peace enforcement. ECOMOG's formal peacekeeping role ended in February 1998, but a contingent of 5,000 remained deployed after this in a "capacity-building" role, helping to train the new Liberian security forces and to maintain order. Further withdrawals commenced in January 1999 after disputes between ECOMOG and Taylor over the treatment of ECOMOG soldiers by Liberian forces (Adeyemi,. 1999:19)

The United Nations Security Council (UNSC) took cognizance of the ECOWAS peace plan on 22nd January 1991 and on 7th May, 1992, the Council commended ECOWAS and the Yamoussoukro Accord of 30th October 1991. On 7th November 1992 the expanded Standing Mediation Committee of ECOWAS invited the United Nations Secretary General to appoint a Special Representative to cooperate with ECOWAS in the implementation of the Peace Plan.(Adeyemi, 1999)

The United Nations Security Council established United Nations Observer Mission in Liberia (UNOMIL) ON September 22 1993. Its tasks were to monitor the cease -fire, verify that ECOMOG is fulfilling its mandate to secure the country and carry out disarmament. It also had the mandate to help co-operate humanitarian relief, report on violations of human rights and to report any major violations of international humanitarian law to the United Nations Secretary General. The 1993 Cotonou accord made provision for the UN observer Mission in Liberia to help supervise and monitor the agreement in conjunction with ECOMOG. The United Nations Observer Mission in Liberia (UNOMIL) represents a particular interesting new development in the United Nations' "traditional" military observer role.

A major component of the UNOMIL mandate was to oversee the activities of the regional Peacekeepers rather than the Liberian parties themselves. The Cotonou agreement stipulated that

the United Nations should deploy military observers to monitor the cease-fire verification and demobilization activities of the new ECOMOG. In the Agreement defining relationship between the two, it was stipulated that UNOMIL and ECOMOG will have separate command structures and neither shall direct the other in its actions. While some degree of peace enforcement powers were conferred on the regional organization, the United Nations force will be including search, seizure and storage for weapons, demobilization of forces and the guarding of encampments.

Difficulties Encountered by ECOMOG

The ECOMOG operation was never likely to be easy given the complexity of the situation in Liberia. ECOWAS was divided by conflicting ideas over how the ECOMOG force should operate a situation attributable to the diverging geo-strategic interests of its member states and to emerging problems over contributions to the operation. The clearest problem resulted from the clash between the interests of Nigeria and those of other West African states, notably Cote d`Ivoire (Adibie, 1995:14). Nigeria, which provided the bulk of the ECOMOG troops and financial contributions opposed Charles Taylor`s NPFL. It provided Samuel Doe with assistance; despite denials by the then President Ibrahim Babangida, the Nigerians supplied weapons and ammunition to Monrovia during the AFL campaign in Nimba county. (Adibe, 1995). Once Doe had been killed, Nigeria continued to provide support for factions opposed to the NPFL, including the AFL, ULIMO, and the Liberian Peace Council (LPC). Nigeria`s opposition to Taylor was founded on a number of pillars. Whilst Doe was a good friend of Nigeria`s President, Taylor`s actions, including the killings of up to 1,000 Nigerian nationals in Monrovia in 1990, and his close links with Nigeria`s regional rival Cote d`Ivoire, seemed to threaten Nigerian interests in the region.(Adibe, 1999:17).

Nigerian policy towards ECOMOG; its methods and objectives were therefore coloured by its fundamental antipathy toward Taylor`s NPFL. Taylor, on the other hand, received support from Cote d`Ivoire and Burkina Faso as well as from further abroad, e.g., France and Libya. The manoeuvrings of the rival Anglophone group, dominated by Nigeria, and the Francophone`s, dominated by Cote d`Ivoire, had profound implications for the ECOMOG operation. There existed considerable resentment of Nigeria`s rather heavy-handed use of its influence: for example the dispute with Ghana and Benin regarding Nigeria`s unilateral replacement of the ECOMOG Force Commander Arnold Quainoo (a Ghanaian) with the Nigerian Joshua Dogonyaro. One member of the SMC stated that "ECOMOG ... is nothing but a convenient camouflage for an effective Nigerian war machine" (Kodjoe, 1994:291). Moreover, as Nigerian influence within the operation grew, it became increasingly difficult to isolate ECOMOG from Nigerian domestic politics. Thus Dogonyaro's eventual removal as commander has been attributed to Babangida's fears about the former's successes and the possible emergence of a future rival.

The economic and political costs to those involved also contributed to divisions. As the operation became progressively more dangerous, costly and protracted, the willingness of ECOWAS states to support potentially dangerous options often reduced correspondingly. The Senegalese contingent, for example, was withdrawn after initial casualties caused the Government to forbid its contingent to engage in combat operations without significant Nigerian support (Alao, 1994: 432). Divisions at the strategic political level eroded the decision-making capability of ECOWAS and led to an inability to decide which objectives to pursue at any given time. The effect on ECOMOG was to commit it to a composite "operation of the lowest common denominator", in which political priorities often triumphed over military practicalities. Moreover, in time honoured fashion, the national governments intervened directly in ECOMOG operations by giving instructions to their own contingent, undermining the cohesion of the force and sometimes creating potentially disastrous situations (Howe, 1996:162).

Another related challenge was the lack of clarity in the mandates given to ECOMOG. Initially, the ECOMOG Force Commander was tasked with the "conduct of military operations for the purpose of monitoring the cease-fire" and "restoring law and order to create the necessary conditions for free and fair elections to be held in Liberia" (Weller, 1990:67). However, as the situation evolved, the operation found itself tasked with various functions in which the mandates were often very vague, particularly over the situations in which force would be used (Alao , 1994: 430), For example, within a month of deployment the Force Commander, Arnold Quainoo, found himself subject to a major NPFL offensive. Far from "monitoring" a cease-fire "The military situation [is such that] my forces now have no choice but to mount a limited offensive in order to protect their positions ... and enforce a cease-fire".(Weller, 1990:100) Yet the Nigerian president stated soon after that "ECOMOG is a peace force .... Our mission there is clear, precise and attainable.... ECOMOG forces are soldiers without enemies or favoured faction in the conflict; they can open fire only in self defence."(Weller,(1990,105)

Even without the preceding difficulties, ECOMOG's task would have been a challenge, simply because of lack of resources. Financial and material constraints left ECOMOG consistently short of the means necessary either to inflict a "defeat" decisive enough to deliver lasting political gains or to implement the ambitious peace-making programmes. This in part explains the initial force of only 3000 which was inadequate for anything except a holding operation. Indeed, without heavy investment from Nigeria, the operation could never have been mounted, a fact which made it easier for it to adopt a leadership role (Kodjoe, 1994:291). Estimates made at the time indicated that the complete occupation of Liberia would have required Nigeria to increase its ECOMOG forces to 15,000 at a cost of $135m. Although, as one ECOMOG commander pointed out, the sum was "what NATO spends in a few days in Bosnia", it represented a prohibitive expense for ECOWAS (Friedman, 1999). The lack of troops was one explanation for the inability of the force to seal off the border and cut the NPFL's access to finance and material and also the failure to prevent the

war from spreading into Sierra Leone in March 1991. Even when numbers were sufficient, there were critical equipment shortfalls, not least with regard to communications equipment and transport, particularly helicopters (Howe, 1996:168).

Also lack of resources had important implications for the effectiveness and morale of the troops; according to Jean-Daniel Tauxe of the ICRC, ECOMOG forces were variously unpaid or underpaid, and in such conditions are peacekeepers in name only (Tuck, 2000:8). This created friction with the UNOMIL personnel whose operation was much better funded but who depended upon ECOMG to function. It also led to numerous alleged incidents of corruption, (Tuck, 2000) including the sale of fuel purchased by the US and intended for ECOMOG vehicles; hence the local joke that ECOMOG was an acronym for "Every Car or Moving Object Gone"(Tuck,2000) The issue of low and irregular pay was worsened by the lack of an organized system of deployment to relieve troops deployed in Liberia. As one UN officer commented "They're not motivated, not rotated, often not paid". (Tuck, 2000).

The reasons for ECOWAS's apparent failure as an economic body are numerous. In 1975 and still today, there continue to be great disparities in the wealth and development of member states. Oil-rich Nigeria, despite a long history of political uncertainty, is the economic powerhouse of the region: both Nigeria's population and Gross National Product more than double those of all the other ECOWAS states combined (Rich, 1999:78-79). Poverty plagues the region and of the sixteen states in West Africa, the United Nations Development Programme ranks fourteen as low inhuman development (Weller, 1993:343-352). Of the 174 countries assessed in 1998, the bottom four are all West African: Mali, Burkina Faso, Niger, and Sierra Leone (Tuck, 2000:4). West African countries are typically rich in natural resources; however, their conversion of these resources to economic prosperity remains elusive. Member countries either have failed to tap this potential source of wealth or have squandered it, and thus generally remain poor and in need of development and humanitarian assistance.(Tuck, 2000). The poorest have little to bring to a regional bargaining table.

In addition to the rift created by differing levels of development, language continues to divide West Africa. Almost more than fifty years after independence from the colonial powers, tensions persist between the nine Francophone and the five Anglophone nations. In an attempt to rectify the colonial legacies, ECOWAS adopted French, English, and Portuguese as the Community's official languages. For further balance, chairmanship of the body traditionally alternates between the Francophone and Anglophone countries. Language barriers, varying levels of economic and social development, the lack of a common currency and differing styles of governance--military dictatorships; experiments with Marxism and socialism; quasi-success and several failures in instituting democratic practices-- served as obstacles to the formation of a common market and economic integration. These conditions and pervasive intrastate political and social problems

persuaded member states to look inward. As a result, West African states concentrated more on their individual situations than they did on developments in the region. That, they did until the collapse of Liberia and its ramifications proved too significant to ignore.

Nigeria's Key Contributions

Nigeria, as the most powerful state in the region, with a track record in peace operations across the globe, promoted itself as the region's policeman and advocated a regional effort to restore stability. This was an instance for Nigeria to demonstrate to the world that charity begins at home. Côte d'Ivoire, another Liberian border state and safe haven for refugees, asserted that ECOWAS had gone beyond its mandate and argued that intervention would contravene the OAU charter. Senegal did not have a refugee problem but shared Côte d'Ivoire's views on adhering to the ECOWAS Treaty and the OAU Charter. SMC members Togo and Mali were not directly affected by the crisis, but remained wary of entering the fray and declined to participate in the proposed peacekeeping mission. Burkina Faso, which provided assistance to NPFL rebels and whose president had a close relationship with Taylor, vehemently decried the decision to intervene as well. While most of West Africa debated the relevance of a regional peacekeeping force in Liberia, Nigeria was ready and eager to deploy. Nigeria provided the bulk of the funding, forces, military and political leadership, and materiel without which ECOMOG would not have been possible. As the self-appointed policeman of the region, Nigeria subscribed to ending the war and restoring stability. Nevertheless, there were other factors dictating Nigerian involvement.

Nigeria's prime motivation was the protection of its citizens. More than 70,000 Nigerians lived and worked in Liberia at the onset of the war (May, 1998:108). They became rebel targets after factions learned of an April 1990 Nigerian government shipment of light assault weapons and ammunition to Doe supporters (Lindsey, 1997:467). Attacks against Nigerians peaked on August 8 when NPFL guerrillas murdered as many as one thousand civilians who had sought protection at the Nigerian embassy (May, 1998:108). The Nigerian government had previously threatened to retaliate against rebel forces if its nationals were harmed. Following the slaughter on the sovereign grounds of the embassy, Nigeria was even more determined to take action.

Nigeria was also concerned about the possible spread of instability and what that meant to Nigerian interests in the region. In other words, the fear of a "ripple of instability" that might be generated by the Liberian war and concerns that once Taylor was in power, Liberia might become a refuge and source of aid for opponents of Nigeria`s military regime, were also of paramount concern. Emphasizing this, the former Nigerian Military head of State, General Ibrahim Babangida once noted:

> [In] a sub-region of 16 countries where one out of three West Africans is a
> Nigerian, it is imperative that any regime in this country should relentlessly strive

towards the prevention or avoidance of the deterioration of any crisis which threatens to jeopardise or compromise the stability, prosperity and security of the sub-region....We believe that if [a crisis is] of such level that has [sic] the potentials 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 ... ensure peace, tranquility and harmony.(Adibe, 1990:12)

Some of Nigeria's closest allies at the time, the Gambia, Sierra Leone, and Guinea, were all dangerously close to Liberia and directly threatened by the chaos. The growing refugee population was only one menace to regional stability. Dissidents from the Gambia, Guinea, and Sierra Leone had joined Taylor's forces and there was a general fear they would take his struggle to their homelands. (Adibe, 1990:114). In preventing the destabilization of the Gambia, Guinea and Sierra Leone, Nigeria assured itself of partners during a period when it was faced growing criticism for domestic human rights abuses and political repression (Adibe, 1990:69)

Nigeria had another ally it wished to protect. Although there were occasional tense periods, Liberia had been a close, supportive English-speaking associate in an area dominated by Francophones. Doe and Nigerian President Ibrahim Babangida had a personal relationship, and Doe even ordered that one of the University of Liberia's schools and a highway be named after Banbagida (May, 1998:113). To reciprocate, Babangida assisted in rescheduling some of Liberia's external debts and made a donation to the university (May, 1998). The loss of Liberian support would have been a severe blow to Nigerian influence in the region. The real cost of ECOMOG operations is a military secret. According to a report, Nigerian troops at one time accounted for almost two third of ECOMOG force in Liberia. Apart from picking the bills of the operation before the intervention of the UN and the OAU, Nigeria had to offer assistance to other West African countries to enable them deploy their troops (Olukoshi, 1996 :573).

All in all, Nigeria is said to have spent in excess of 12bn USD on peace operation since the first ECOMOG operation in Liberia in 1990 (Olonisakin, 1996:24). In 2001, Olusegun Obasanjo said Nigeria had spent $13bn on peacekeeping operations over 12 years. Hundreds of Nigerian soldiers were thought to have been killed in operations in Liberia and more than 800 soldiers have been killed and at least 1000 wounded in Sierra Leone, which exposed the country to her "biggest financial burden" (Olonisakin, 1996). Indeed, when the UN offered to expand the ECOMOG troops to include soldiers from other African countries, Nigeria had to appeal for a refund of some of its costs in Liberia by the UN (Olonisakin, 1996).

Mali's interests in regional security were more than a desire to control the impact of Liberian instability on West Africa. Mali's involvement in ECOMOG was an attempt to curb Nigerian

hegemony. Nigeria already dominated ECOMOG, and President Sani Abacha, Babangida's successor, sought to exert greater influence over ECOWAS. He used extreme measures and coerced West African states into electing him as ECOWAS chairman. Mali had been in line for the ECOWAS leadership position, but Konaré earned Abacha's wrath when his government co-sponsored a United Nations Resolution condemning Nigeria for human rights abuses. Although Mali's meager troop contribution was no match for the thousands of soldiers sent by Nigeria, Malian participation sent a clear message to Nigeria and other ECOWAS members: regardless of ECOMOG composition, the peacekeeping mission would reflect a regional endeavor. Tensions between Mali and Nigeria were typical of the Francophone/Anglophone divide and the French-speakers determination to limit Nigeria's reach.

CONCLUSION

The paper discussed the role of Nigeria in the resolution of the conflict in Liberia under the auspices of the ECOMOG, an ECOWAS Cease-fire Monitoring Group. ECOMOG's mandate in Liberia ended on February 2, 1998 (Tapitapia, 1998). Despite some obstacles, the West African force completed its mission. After numerous attempts, it imposed a lasting cease-fire; disarmed warring parties; protected and evacuated civilians; and created an environment conducive to free and fair elections. Filled with confidence over the outcome in Liberia, ECOWAS ordered the deployment of forces to Sierra Leone where a 1997 coup attempt threatened the legitimate government and created yet another humanitarian and refugee crisis. While most of West Africa debated the relevance of a regional peacekeeping force in Liberia, Nigeria was ready and eager to deploy. Nigeria provided the bulk of the funding, forces, military and political leadership, and materials without which ECOMOG would not have been possible. As the self-appointed policeman of the region, Nigeria subscribed to ending the war and restoring stability and these she pushed through against all odds.

Recommendation

Nigeria's claim to leadership position in Africa will not be substantiated until West Africa is economically viable. Instability thrives where there is underdevelopment. Poverty and underdevelopment fuel political instability while economic growth will foster a more secured environment. A developed West Africa will better respond to crises. The region currently lacks the necessary resources for political stability. While Nigeria still maintain her age long and hard earned Afro-centric foreign policy posture there is an urgent need to review her policy to reflect economic reality. Premium should be paid to economic benefit of foreign policy, the end of which should be the economic development of the region. Having said this, it is imperative to recommend specifically that:

1. Conflict drains resources as the Liberian conflict typified. Therefore African states should try to prevent its occurrence by always following the path of peace.
2. Nigeria should collaborate with other West African countries to ensure that all conflicts are resolved amicably before they degenerate.
3. The peace and conflict resolution mechanism put in place by ECOWAS should be strengthened for maximum results.
4. The ECOWAS protocol that forbids unconstitutional change of government must be implemented to forestall conflict emanating from the succession to power.
5. Considering economic growth of Asian countries, for instance, Nigeria should borrow a leaf and industrialize her economy and by extension, West Africa's.
6. Nigeria should come up with economic policies and aid that would make nationals participate effectively in the economy of the region.
7. Through the instrument of ECOWAS, Nigeria should position her nationals in key economic stakes all over the region.

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