

A Historical Overview Of Ecowas Intervention In Sub-Regional Conflicts: The Case Of Sierra Leone

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Abstract

In West Africa, violent intra-state conflicts to the magnitude of the Liberian, and Sierra Leonean civil wars were new and unexpected. Such a stable country as Sierra Leone fell as a result of “apartheid styled” government. When violence broke out, it was thought and taken as one of those political disturbances that in no way could result in regime instability. With the war raging, ECOWAS bound by her own policy of non-interference in purely domestic matters and the international community watching without any serious commitment to the settlement, ECOWAS was the only option left to sub-regional leaders. ECOWAS, with the Liberian experience, intervened and helped restore order to Sierra Leone. This write-up traces the political history of Sierra Leone and gives an account of the conflict and the management of the conflict by ECOWAS.

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Introduction

The Economic Community of West African States (ECOWAS) will be forty years in 2015. This paper aims at bringing to the fore, the achievements of ECOWAS in the area of maintaining sub-regional peace and security. The West African sub-region has been one of the most politically unstable regions in the world. Amidst such situations of instability, the sub-regional body has been able to resolve one of the most devastating civil wars on the continent.

The rationale for this paper is to trace the path to the resolution of the Sierra Leonean conflict. It also brings to the fore the major issue of intrastate conflict management which has replaced interstate conflicts after the demise of the Cold War. This study clearly brings out the issue of the sub-regional body's management of internal conflicts through intervention and the complexities involved.

Theoretical Framework for Third Party Intervention in Conflicts

Hampson² pointed out that various coercive and non coercive measures could be employed by third parties to affect the course of the management of conflict to culminate in the resolution of the conflict. This paper applied hard realism³, soft realism⁴ and the governance based⁵ approaches to third party intervention in conflicts as the theoretical underpinnings to ECOWAS' interventions in sub-regional conflicts.

The third party to intervene, in the opinion of the hard realists, should use force to restore order in the political system. Such a third party to intervene in the conflict should be a 'great power'⁶ because the forceful (militarized) mode of intervention would involve cost and the wielding of power. In the case of the Sierra Leonean conflicts, ECOWAS (through ECOMOG) played the role of the great power.

2 Hampson, Fen. .O, "Parents, Midwife or Accidental Execution? The Role of third parties in Ending Violent Conflicts" in Crocker Chester, A., Hampson, Fen. .O, and Aall Pamela, (Eds) *Turbulent Peace: The Challenges of Managing International Conflicts*. United States Institute of Peace Press Washington DC. 2001

3 Hard realism approach stresses the intervention strategies that use force to restore order in a conflict situation. Such force according to Hampson (Ibid) could be threatened or actual.

4 Soft realism approach to conflict intervention believes that there is a critical role that the use of 'soft power' can play in conflict management. Soft power according to soft realism, is exercised by the use of strategies like mediation, negotiation and exchange of information

5 Governance-based approach to third party intervention in internal conflicts assumes that the causes of conflict are the denial and violation of human rights and the absence of the due process of law. To this school of thought, intervention by third party to conflict with the bid to manage it should be anchored in the tenets of liberal democracy (the rule of law).

6 Great power refers to the ability of the third party intervening to use its influence in terms of finance, military or any other means to influence the course of a conflict. This should be able to influence conflicting parties to cease hostilities and take what the intervener brings to the resolution table

The hard realism approach to third party intervention is applied to ECOWAS' (ECOMOG) interventions because it had at some point in the course of the intervention, been involved in the exchange of fire with rebels in their quest to restore the state of affairs to normalcy. ECOMOG was involved in exchange of fire with rebels in Sierra Leone. Hard realism is therefore appropriate to apply to the intervention of ECOWAS as a third party intervener in intra-state conflict.

Soft realism is another approach that third parties apply in interventions in intra-state conflict. Diplomatic approaches such as negotiation and mediation are rather encouraged by soft realism. This approach is seen as more effective if the third party managing the conflict is more powerful than the conflicting parties. The intervener just as the hard realists argue, should be a 'great power' to enable it to effectively manage the conflict. A stronger and more powerful third party is therefore required to make the conflict management more effective.

The third theoretical basis for this study is the governance-based approach to third party intervention in internal conflicts. To this school of thought, intervention by a third party to conflict with the bid to manage it should be anchored in the tenets of liberal democracy (the rule of law). Governance-based approaches see third party conflict management to largely include the creation of a participatory governance structures, the development of a new set of social norms, the establishment of the rule of law and democracy. Those things that third parties are to do, among other things, include the creation of a conducive environment for elections and the installation of a democratically elected government. In the quest to restore the tenets of democracy and good governance, attention should be paid to the issue of power sharing and all-inclusive systems of government as power sharing formulas provide safety nets for minorities and ensure that politics does not become a zero-sum game to avert losers coming back with arms to start a new conflict.

These three approaches to third party intervention in conflicts were used to examine ECOWAS' interventions. These three approaches were employed by ECOWAS either individually or in a complementary fashion. Frempong⁷ noted that "ECOMOG's forceful intervention militarized ECOWAS' search for peace ..., but the diplomatic option was never abandoned. Instead, ECOMOG peacekeeping was paralleled by a vigorous diplomatic process which involved peace talks in several capitals across the sub-region and on two occasions in Europe"⁸. This assertion indicates the adoption of the three approaches to complement each other. At any particular point in time as the conflict raged, one of the three approaches was very useful. At times it was full hard realism (full scale military campaign) in practice and at other times, soft realism (peace conferences, signing of peace accords etc) was at play.

7 Frempong, Kaakyire. D. A, "Trajectories of Sub-regional Conflict Management: An Assessment of ECOWAS", Paper presented at CODESRIA's 30th Anniversary Grand Conference Dakar, Senegal. 2003

8 Frempong 2003:13

The soft realism approach was employed in the Sierra Leonean conflict and was noted by Frempong⁹ once again when he explained that, under sustained civic and military pressure at both national and international levels the AFRC and ECOWAS signed the Conakry Peace Plan which among other things, provided for: immediate cessation of armed hostilities; the reinstatement of the of the Kabbah government within six months; immunities to the junta leaders; cooperation between the junta and ECOMOG on disarmament, demobilization and reintegration; and modalities for broadening the power in Sierra Leone. Confidence building (Soft Realism) was extensively put to work in securing the disarmament of the rebels in Sierra Leone.

The governance based approach was also at play following the signing of the Lome Accord which was characterized by power sharing between the Kabbah government and the RUF. The RUF leader, Foday Sankoh was accorded the status of a vice president and some of his former rebel colleagues assumed ministerial positions.

Methodology

This paper is a desk research. The sources of data that this study used has been from both primary and secondary sources. The primary sources of data used included official documents of ECOWAS, both published and unpublished. Such ECOWAS documents include the Protocols, Accords, Agreements, Decisions and Reports. Other relevant information on the subject under study were also gathered from journals, magazines, feature articles in newspapers.

ECOWAS and Conflict

According to Ali¹⁰ the causes of conflicts in Africa could be attributed to factors including the historical legacies of slave trade and colonialism; the nature of political contest; external intervention in the internal affairs of African states driven by brute economic motives; internal interventions driven by the motive of capturing the state and its coffers; human rights violations; ethnic as well as clan and other rivalries. He further identified the causes of civil wars to include lower per capita GDP, lower degree of openness of the political institutions, a higher degree of dependence on natural resources and high ethnic diversity. This diagnosis of the precursors to conflicts in Africa, is on point in relation to the Sierra Leonean conflict and other conflicts in the West African sub-region.

9 Frempong 2003:13-14

10 Ali, A. G. A., , "The Economics of Conflicts in Africa: an Overview" in *Journal of African Economies* Vol. 9 No. 3. 2000.

Ukeje¹¹ was of the opinion that ECOWAS was not formed as a security co-operation entity but, the economic integration that motivated the formation of ECOWAS has not been achieved to the degree that was envisaged. He continued to stress that the motive of the members of the West African sub-regional that led to the formation of ECOWAS has not been achieved as envisaged. This notwithstanding, ECOWAS has achieved a lot in the politico-security sector. In fact, the revised Treaty of ECOWAS has provisions aimed at resolving conflicts within the sub-region. ECOWAS has not achieved much in the field of economic advancement largely due the fact that development cannot be possible, save in stable and peaceful environment.

Gebe¹² was also of the position that, the international system dynamics had made ECOWAS, an economic integration body to be involved in conflict management. Gebe¹³ contended that, the 1975 Treaty did not make any provision for security concerns, hence the ratification of the Protocol on Non-Aggression (PNA) in 1978. The PNA itself was also inadequate because it did not make provision for intrastate conflicts which were to confront the sub-region later. The Protocol Relating to Mutual Assistance of Defence (PMAD) was also signed in 1981 but was also not implemented. On the protocols ratified as Gebe commented, Aning¹⁴ also identified that all protocols on security were not implemented largely because of the lack of political will, lack of the resources and the wrong sense of prioritization. It was explained that, these factors have culminated in the inability of ECOWAS to put together an institutional framework to tackle sub-regional conflicts. This has been the main challenge the developing countries especially, African states have grapple with. Non-implementation of policies have cost the sub-region lives, infrastructure, loss of resources among others.

Cilliers¹⁵ also pointed out a new paradigm in security matters that had emerged globally where regions were accepting responsibility and sharing the burden to police themselves, and not be under the delusion that the UN would be able to intervene to

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- 11 Ukeje, Charles., "From Economic Cooperation to Collective security: ECOWAS and the Changing Imperatives of Regionalism in West Africa" in W. A. Fawole and C. Ukeje (Eds.) *The Crisis of the State and Regionalism in West Africa: Identity, Citizenship and Conflict*, Dakar: CODESRIA. 2005
 - 12 Gebe, Yao. B., "ECOWAS Security Protocols and Conflict Management in West Africa: Lessons and the way Forward", *Legon Journal of International Affairs*, Vol. 1 No. 1, December 2004. Pp 1-25
 - 13 Gebe 2005: 5
 - 14 Aning, Kwasi. E., "Peacekeeping under ECOMOG: A sub-Regional Approach" in J. Cilliers and G. Mills (Eds), *From Peacekeeping to Complex Emergencies Peace Support Mission in Africa*. The South African Institute of International Affairs, Johannesburg and the Institute for security Studies, Pretoria, July 1999. Pp 75-95.
 - 15 Cilliers, Jakkie. "Regional African Peacekeeping Capacity-Mythical Constructs or Essential Tool?" in J. Cilliers and G. Mills (Eds) *From Peacekeeping to Complex Emergencies Peace Support Mission in Africa*. The South African Institute of International Affairs, Johannesburg and the Institute for security Studies, Pretoria . July 1999 . p 133-152.

resolve all conflicts. This was what ECOWAS did by helping to resolve the crises in the sub-region. ECOWAS however, suffered this delusion when it watched as the war raged in the sub-region. In Liberia, this delay resulted in the escalation of the conflict and the massive destruction that came along with it. ECOWAS was however, a bit swift in intervening in Sierra Leone.

Political History of Sierra Leone

Sierra Leone is located on the south west coast of Africa between Guinea and Liberia. Sierra Leone has a population of 5.743, 725 million people (as of July 2014) inhabiting a land surface of 71,740 sq. km. (27,699 sq. miles). Sierra Leone, like most West African countries, has many ethnic groups. There are however, fourteen (14) main ethnic groups, such as: the Temne, Mendes, Sherbro, Vais, Kissis, Mandingos, Limba, Kono, Krio (descendants of freed Jamaican slaves who were settled in the Freetown area in the late-18th century), Loko, other 15% (includes refugees from Liberia's recent civil war, and small numbers of Europeans, Lebanese, Pakistanis, and Indians)¹⁶.

After the abolition of slavery, there were about 16,000 freed men all over England who became a problem to the country. It was then decided by the government, aided by British philanthropists, notably Granville Sharp, William Wilberforce, and Thomas Clarkson that the Blacks freed by British law and called the "Black Poor" emigrated from Britain to Sierra Leone. In April 1787 about 500 blacks in Britain were taken to Sierra Leone. In January 1792 and September 1800, about 1,190 Nova Scotian Blacks and about 550 Maroons, respectively, emigrated from Canada to Sierra Leone¹⁷. For administrative purposes, Sierra Leone was divided into a colony and protectorate. The colony was British territory acquired by purchase under treaties entered into with local chiefs and tribal authorities. The rest of the country was a protectorate.

From the end of the nineteenth century until independence, there was conflict in Sierra Leone between colony Creole elites and protectorate African elites. "The Creoles, separatist in their political attitudes and aspirations, rejected political equality with protectorate Africans and the latter resented both the assertions of superiority by Creoles and their relative dominance in Sierra Leone politics prior to decolonization".¹⁸

In 1946, the Africans were able to make their voices heard when they formed the Sierra Leone Organization Society (SOS) under the leadership of Milton Margai and

16 <https://www.cia.gov/library/publications/the-world-factbook/geos/sl.html>

17 Abasiattai, Monday. B., "The Search for Independence: New World Blacks in Sierra Leone and Liberia, 1787-1847," *Journal of Black Studies*, Vol. 23, no. 1 (1992):107-116.

18 Kandeh, Jimmy. D., "Politicization of Ethnic Identities in Sierra Leone," *African Studies Review*, Vol. 35, no. 1 (1992):81-99.

John Karafa-Smart.¹⁹ The colonial authority in 1951, adopted a new constitution which called for parliamentary elections to elect people to occupy the 30 seats in the Legislative Council. The electoral competition was between the Sierra Leone People's Party (SLPP) and the National Council of the Colony of Sierra Leone (NCSL). The SLPP won the elections and Milton Margai was appointed to sit on the Executive Council together with five other people he had chosen including Albert Margai (his half brother) and Siaka Stevens. Milton Margai was appointed the first Prime Minister. Before independence was granted to Sierra Leone, there were calls for fresh elections and Milton Margai was able to convince the opposition parties to join the SLPP to form a union government. The leaders of the opposition parties were promised places in the union government.²⁰ Siaka Stevens was however, not in agreement and formed his own party, the All People's Congress Party (APC).

In April 1961, Sir Milton Margai, led the Sierra Leonean People's Party and won independence for Sierra Leone. In 1962, there was an election in which Milton Margai won and remained the Prime Minister until he died in 1964. His half brother, Albert Margai replaced him as the leader of the SLPP and the Prime Minister. His rule was arbitrary. He suppressed the opposition parties with detentions and intimidation. This aggravated ethnic tensions because the SLPP was dominated by the Mende in the south and the APC, by Temne in the north.²¹

The All Peoples Congress (APC) led by Siaka Stevens which was in opposition was made up of the working and lower middle class. In the March 1967 general elections, the Siaka Steven led opposition All Peoples Congress (APC), won the elections with 32 seats. The SLPP won 28 seats and the remaining 6 seats went to independent candidates. The independent candidates did not join the SLPP so it meant that the APC was to form the government because they operated the Parliamentary system of government. Without waiting for the results of the chiefs, the Governor General, Henry Lightto swore Siaka Stevens into office as the Prime Minister.

Brigadier David Lansana a close ally of Albert Margai whose party had failed to acquire a majority in the National Assembly, staged a coup to prevent alternation of power stating the reason to be the violation of the constitution by the Governor General for swearing in Stevens without waiting for the results of the chiefs. Siaka Stevens fled into exile in Guinea.²²

19 Aminu, Dramani. 2003. "International Intervention in Internal Conflicts in Africa: Respective Roles of the Economic Community of West African States (ECOWAS) and the United Nations (UN) in the Sierra Leone Peace Process (1999-2001)" M. Phil Thesis, Dept. of Political Science, University of Ghana. p 51

20 Aminu 2003, 57

21 Aminu 2003, 57

22 Aminu 2003, 57

Just two days later, some junior officers led by Lieutenant Colonel Juxon-Smith removed Lansana in a counter coup and formed the National Reformation Council (NRC) junta. On April 17 1968, a group of armed group of warrant officers and some soldiers of the other ranks of the army staged yet another counter coup saying they were motivated by popular resentment and refusal of the NRC to pay the army. Nine days after the counter coup, they restored civilian rule with Siaka Stevens as Prime Minister.

When the APC formed the government in 1968, it started to entrench itself. From 1970, some coup attempts were made to topple the APC government. The first attempt to overthrow the government was made by Brigadier John Bangura. Another coup attempt involved Mohammed Sorie Forna and fourteen others, for which Foday Sankoh, the future RUF leader, was jailed. These coup attempts made the party do all it could to suppress the opposition and consolidate power. The APC's consolidation of power was sealed when Sierra Leone was declared a one-party state. By this time, the SLPP had been disabled by the arrest and detention of its leading members.²³

Although Stevens had promised to resign from the presidency after the 1981 elections, he hanged on to power until 1986. When Stevens finally stepped down, he declined handing over to the incumbent Vice President, Ibrahim Koroma as stipulated by the constitution. Instead, he brought Major General Saidu Momoh into office as the president. The Momoh regime even though continued with the one-party agenda of his predecessor, later conceded to multi-party politics and slated elections for 1991. There were allegations of the Momoh government's intentions to rig the elections.²⁴

The APC government forced some Sierra Leoneans into exile due to economic decline and massive unemployment which had immense toll on the youth of Sierra Leone. The disgruntled youth of Sierra Leone were recruited for military training in Benghazi, Libya and they were later to start an insurrection in Sierra Leone.²⁵ They sought to recruit and train cadres in the Yele area. The trained cadres left Freetown into the hinterlands.²⁶ Foday Sankoh, Abu Kanu and Rashid Mansaray formed a trio who traveled the length and breadth of Sierra Leone and Liberia. "It was during one of these trips that they allegedly came into contact with NPFL officials."²⁷

It was in this context of a declining economy, coupled with massive youth unemployment and political intimidation of the opposition by the government that the

23 Abdullah Ibrahim, "Bush Path to Destruction: The Origin and Character of the Revolutionary United Front/Sierra Leone," *The Journal of Modern African Studies*. Vol.36, No.2 (Jun., 1998): 206

24 Ibrahim, "Bush Path," 208

25 Ibrahim, "Bush Path," 209

26 Ibrahim, "Bush Path," 220

27 Ibrahim, "*Bush Path*," 220

Revolutionary United Front (RUF) led by Corporal Foday Sanko attacked Sierra Leone from Liberia with the support of the Liberian leader Charles Taylor in 1991.

The Sierra Leonean Conflict

The civil war erupted “when the RUF entered Eastern Sierra Leone at Bamaru in Kailahun District from Liberian territory controlled by Charles Taylor on 23 March 1991”.²⁸ When the rebels entered Kailahun, as happened in Liberia, they were not taken serious and the people did not have the foresight to realize that a senseless and a protracted war was in the making, which was going to affect the political and social life of Sierra Leone forever. This was also the case with both the local and the international media who were speculating that it was a border war.

The Revolutionary United Front of Sierra Leone (RUF/SL) sought to mobilize the socially excluded and disgruntled youth underclass to form a ‘people’s army’ to overthrow the All Peoples’ Congress regime of President Joseph Momoh. The leader of the RUF/SL, was an army corporal, Foday Saybana Sankoh who was trained as a guerrilla fighter in Benghazi, Libya.²⁹

Following the National Patriotic Front of Liberia (NPFL) technique, the RUF/SL chose to establish itself in the isolated border districts of Kailahun and Pujehun. Initially, the movement was assisted by hired Liberian fighters. The RUF/SL abducted and trained numbers of captured border-zone youths. Some came from the most remote and run-down schools in the country. Others were workers of alluvial diamond mining pits for Lebanese and Sierra Leonean merchant. Abductees cooperated with the movement to save their lives, but some found the movement’s analysis of the breakdown of Sierra Leonean society meaningful and accepted guerrilla training willingly.³⁰

The motives for the civil war were diverse. For the political exiles, students and the intellectuals, they wanted to overthrow the one-party rule of the All Peoples Congress which had dominated the political history of Sierra Leone from the years shortly after independence in 1961 for over twenty years and restore multi-party democracy. Charles Taylor on the other hand, wanted a “way of getting back at the Momoh’s government in Sierra Leone for supporting ECOMOG and for allowing the ULIMO factions to operate out of the bases in Sierra Leone.”³¹ Could it be that Charles Taylor

28 Osita, *West Africa’s Trouble Spots*, 32-33.

29 Krijn Peters, and Richards Paul, ““Why We Fight”: Voices of Youth Combatants in Sierra Leone,” *Africa: Journal of the International African Institute*, Vol. 68, No. 2 (1998): 183-210 (1998). www.jstor.org/stable/1161278 Accessed March 8, 2007.

30 Krijn and Paul, “Why We Fight,” 186.

31 Osita, *West Africa’s Trouble Spots*, 33.

wanted Sierra Leone destabilized, so that he could get access to exploit the diamond reserves on the borders and enhance his illegal trade?

The Sierra Leonean conflict, just like the Liberian civil war (with the NPFL), started with just a small band of about hundred fighters (the RUF) and the number swelled rapidly. The RUF could not gain power until 1997 after six years of bloodshed and brutalities. Opposed to the RUF/SL was an ill-equipped government army, the Republic of Sierra Leone Military Force (RSLMF). Inexperienced junior officers quickly learnt to survive by copying RUF/SL guerrilla tactics, including the recruitment and training of under-age irregulars.³²

On 29 April 1992, a pay revolt by some unpaid disgruntled war-front junior officers led by Captain Valentine Strasser later escalated into a full-scale coup in May 1992 against the Momoh presidency from within the RSLMF. The young coup-makers formed the National Provisional Ruling Council (NPRC).³³ The rebels believing they had radicalized the coup-makers at the war front, expected an invitation from the coup makers to share in some kind of government of national unity.³⁴ This expectation never materialized.

Captain Valentine Strasser had to grapple with continued rebel incursions. Strasser had to seek assistance from Nigeria, a private security company-Executive Outcomes (EO) and Kamajors (a Sierra Leonean militia).³⁵ The Chief of Defence Staff of the National Provisional Ruling Council (NPRC), Brigadier General Julius Maada Bio in a palace coup, ousted Strasser in January 1996 and organized elections in February 1996 where Ahmed Tejan Kabbah of the Sierra Leonean People's Party (SLPP) won.³⁶

Kabbah, after some few months in office, started discussions with the RUF in Yamoussoukro, Cote d'Ivoire. The Yamoussoukro discussions led eventually to the signing of an Agreement in late 1996. The agreement broke down as the RUF could not agree on such crucial issues such as disarmament and the creation of a monitoring force. Just over a year later, on May 25, 1997, a coup led to the overthrow of Kabbah's presidency.³⁷ The new government formed was the Armed Forces Revolutionary Council (AFRC) and was headed by Major Paul Koroma. In an effort to halt further challenges Koroma invited the RUF to join him. The AFRC therefore became a joint junta of the junior officers of Sierra Leonean Army and the rebel RUF. This was the case because both the RUF and the regular army had a common interest.

32 Krijn and Paul, "Why We Fight," 186.

33 Krijn and Paul, "Why We Fight," 186.

34 Krijn and Paul, "Why We Fight," 186.

35 Osita, *West Africa's Trouble Spots*, 33.

36 Bangura, Yusuf, "Strategic Policy Failure and Governance in Sierra Leone" *The Journal of Modern African Studies* Vol. 38, No. 4 (Dec., 2000): 555

37 Osita, *West Africa's Trouble Spots*, 34.

“They resented the Kamajor militia albeit for different reasons: the RUF because the Kamajor were attacking their positions with success, and the army because they saw the Kamajor as usurping their role as the national fighting force.”³⁸

Earlier in March 1997, Nigeria had signed a bilateral agreement with the Sierra Leonean government to train the Sierra Leone Army and the Presidential guard.³⁹ The Nigerian government therefore was bound by this agreement to assist the Sierra Leonean government in the face of the coup against the government. Nigeria intervened but could not achieve the desired success and called for support from other member states of ECOWAS.

A Peace Accord was signed in Conakry, Guinea on 23rd October 1997. This Accord failed due to lack of faith by the AFRC and Johnny Koroma in the document. The Nigerian led ECOWAS Monitoring Group (ECOMOG), aided by the Sierra Leone Civil Defence Force (CDF), led by Sam Hinga Norman, removed the military junta in February 1998, and President Kabbah, whose government had sought refuge in neighbouring Guinea, returned to Freetown on 10 March 1998 after ten months in exile.

The RUF/AFRC attempted to overthrow the government in January 1999. This resulted in fighting which spilled over to many parts of Freetown, the capital, resulting in over thousand dead and wounded. ECOMOG forces were able to drive back the RUF attack several weeks later. With the assistance of the international community, the government of President Kabbah and the RUF leader Sankoh negotiated and signed an agreement (Lome Peace Accord) in 1999. The Lome Peace Accord committed the rebels to lay down their arms in exchange for representation in a new government. It also included a general amnesty for all crimes committed during the war. The accord made Sankoh Vice President and gave other RUF members positions in the government, and called for an international peacekeeping force which would initially be under ECOMOG.⁴⁰

On 22 October 1999, the Security Council established the United Nations Mission in Sierra Leone (UNAMSIL) with a force of 6,000 to cooperate with the Government and the other parties in implementing the Lome Peace Agreement and to assist in the implementation of the Disarmament, Demobilization and Reintegration plan (DDR). After the Lome Peace Accord, there were some brutalities by rebel groups. Some five hundred United Nations peace-keepers serving with the United Nations Mission in Sierra Leone (UNAMSIL), were captured by the rebel militia.⁴¹ The Sierra Leonean Government, ECOMOG and UNAMSIL forces made failed attempts to free their men.

38 Ibrahim , “Bush Path,” 230

39 Osita, *West Africa's Trouble Spots*, 33.

40 “World Report.” Human Rights Watch, Last Modified: June 2001
<http://www.hrw.org/legacy/wr2k1/africa/index.html>

41 “World Report.”

In September 2000, an operation was carried out by British paratroopers to free British and Sierra Leonean soldiers taken hostage by the AFRC/ex-SLA.⁴²

On 7 February 2000, the Security Council, by resolution 1289, decided to revise the mandate of UNAMSIL to include a number of additional tasks. It decided to expand the military troops to a maximum of 11,100 military personnel, including the 260 military observers already deployed. The Security Council again increased the personnel strength of UNAMSIL, to 13,000 military personnel. On 30 March 2001, a further increase was authorized to 17,500 military personnel, including the 260 military observers. The Council took this decision by its resolution 1346, and, by the same resolution, approved a revised concept of operations.⁴³

A new cease-fire agreement was signed in November 2000 in Abuja. However, the Disarmament, Demobilization and Reintegration plan (DDR) as stipulated by the agreement was not implemented and the fighting continued. A second Abuja Agreement, in May 2001, set the stage for a resumption of the DDR and a significant reduction in hostilities. About 72,000 ex-combatants were disarmed and demobilized, although many still awaited re-integration assistance.⁴⁴

In 2002, January 18, President Ahmad Tejan Kabbah declared the end of the decade-long civil war. On March 1, 2002, he lifted the four-year state of emergency and political activity begun in earnest towards multi-party elections. On May 14 the people of Sierra Leone went to the polls and re-elected President Kabbah and his Sierra Leone People's Party for a further five-year term. The elections were largely peaceful, though there were a few reports of violence and intimidation. The seventeen thousand-strong peacekeeping force of the United Nations Mission in Sierra Leone (UNAMSIL) completed disarmament of over forty-seven thousand combatants by the end of 2002.⁴⁵

Conflict Management

Abidjan Peace Accord

The Abidjan Peace Accord was signed between the Sierra Leone People's Party (SLPP) government of Ahmad Tejan Kabbah, and the Revolutionary United Front (RUF) led by Foday Sankoh with the intention of ending the Sierra Leone Civil war on 20 November, 1996. The Abidjan Peace Accord was signed in Abidjan, Cote d'Ivoire. It is very important to note the fact that a neutral country in Cote d'Ivoire,

42 "World Report."

43 "Security Council Resolution 1346." United Nation, Last Modified: June 2001
<http://www.un.org/press/en/2001/sc7041.doc.htm>

44 "World Report." Human Rights Watch, Last Modified: June 2001
<http://www.hrw.org/legacy/wr2k2/africa/index.html>

45 "World Report." Human Rights Watch.
<http://www.hrw.org/legacy/wr2k3/africa/index.html>

was picked for negotiations between the warring parties. Such a neutral ground serve as a major step in building bridges towards peaceful conflict resolution.

The accords sought out a broad range of goals:

1. A National Commission for the Consolidation of Peace was to be established.
2. A Neutral Monitoring Group was proposed, which would consist of 700 troops.
3. All RUF combatants would disarm, amnesty granted them and reintegrated back into society.
4. Foreign mercenary groups such as the government hired Executive Outcomes (EO) would leave the country after the establishment of the monitoring group.

ECOWAS established the National Commission for the Consolidation of Peace to see to the negotiation process to bring peace to trouble Sierra Leone. What seemed to have also helped was the inter-positioning of the ECOMOG force was meant to create a buffer zone to prevent escalation of the conflict. These processes were meant to help a disarmament process. ECOWAS recognized the fact that there were foreign mercenary groups that helps the warring parties to prosecute the war. This contravened ECOWAS provisions and ECOWAS should have brought stiffer punishment to bear on the parties that invited the mercenary groups.

Conakry Peace Plan

A meeting in Conakry of the Foreign Ministers on 27 June 1997 came out with a three-pronged strategy to overturn the coup d'état in Sierra Leone. The first option was the use of dialogue and negotiations. The second would be the use of sanctions in the form of embargo on the Sierra Leonean government when the first option fails. The final action that was left to the ECOWAS if the first two options do not work effectively would be the ultimate use of military force.⁴⁶ The moves made by ECOWAS to resolve the conflict started with the soft realism approach. There was the use of dialogue and negotiations to resolve the conflict. ECOWAS was able to bring together, the parties to the conflict as the 'big power' to the negotiation table. Koroma was however, not willing to give power back to the civilians after the negotiations led by ECOWAS had failed to yield any results.

ECOWAS continued using the soft realism approach when ECOMOG made efforts to broker a peace settlement in Conakry in October 1997, but the failure of the

46 Yusuf, "Strategic Policy" 555.

AFRC/RUF regime to honor the Conakry commitment led ECOMOG to start a military campaign (hard realism) to remove the junta from power. The terms of the negotiations were not respected by the conflicting parties. Having had enough of Johnny Paul Koroma's obduracy to return stolen power, ECOMOG in February 1998 intensified military campaign against him. With the failure to resolve the conflict through the first round of negotiations, the Guinea (Conakry) meeting was followed by a second one in the Abuja, Nigeria. ECOWAS showed so much commitment to soft realism. All efforts were made to resolve the conflict through dialogue as the tenets of soft realism prescribes.

The Abuja ECOWAS Summit, 1998

At the ECOWAS summit held at Abuja, Nigeria, from 28 to 29 August, a decision was taken to extend ECOMOG actions to Sierra Leone.⁴⁷ The AFRC had a serious legitimacy problem as the regime was very unpopular at home and did not enjoy support from the people of Sierra Leone. The regime's problems compounded when the international community also lashed it as illegitimate. ECOWAS dispatched troops to Sierra Leone and urged Freetown to restore the constitutionally elected government of President Ahmed Tejan Kabbah."⁴⁸ Koroma along with some of his men fled Freetown while others looked to their allies for assistance.

Responding to the unfolding regional crisis brought on by cross-border raids, the ECOWAS Defense and Security Commission in December 2000 proposed to deploy a force of some 1,700 troops to secure the borders between Guinea, Sierra Leone, and Liberia.⁴⁹ ECOWAS intervention at this point had moved from the use of soft realism to hard realism where there was the deployment of armed forces to enforce peace.

Lome Peace Accord, 1999

ECOWAS' diplomatic efforts at resolving the conflict were intensified after the counter-attack in January 1999 by the RUF. With the assistance of the international community, President Kabbah and the RUF leader Foday Sankoh negotiated yet another Accord, the Lome Peace Accord, which was signed on 7 July 1999. The accord made Sankoh Vice President and gave other RUF members positions in the government, and called for an international peacekeeping force which would be under both ECOMOG and the United Nations. The Lome Peace Accord among other things, had these as steps to ensure the resolution of the conflict.

The two sides to the conflict were to ensure that a total and permanent cessation of hostilities.

47 Yusuf, "Strategic Policy" 555.

48 Ibrahim, "Bush Path," 233

49 "World Report." 2002

- a. The Cease-Fire Monitoring Committee (CMC) was to monitor the ceasefire
 - i. The Article 3 (1) of the peace accord also called for the transformation of the RUF/SL into a Political Party.
 - ii. The Lome Peace Accord called on the Government of Sierra Leone to make room for members of the RUF/SL to hold Public office (positions in parastatals, diplomacy and any other public sector). The Chairmanship of the Board of the Commission for the Management of Strategic Resources, National Reconstruction and Development (CMRRD) was offered to the leader of the RUF/SL, Foday Sankoh. He was therefore to enjoy the status of Vice President and was therefore answerable only to the President of Sierra Leone. One of the senior cabinet appointments, three other cabinet positions and four posts of Deputy Minister was also to be occupied by the RUF/SL.
 - iii. The Government of Sierra Leone shall grant Corporal Foday Sankoh, all combatants and collaborators in respect of anything done by them in pursuit of their objectives absolute and free pardon, up to the time of the signing of the present Agreement.
 - iv. The Accord set up a neutral peace keeping force comprising UNOMSIL and ECOMOG that was to supervise the disarmament of all combatants of the RUF/SL, CDF, SLA and paramilitary groups.
 - v. The restructuring, composition and training of the new Sierra Leone armed forces will be carried out by the Government with a view to creating truly national armed forces, bearing loyalty solely to the State of Sierra Leone, and able and willing to perform their constitutional role.

Each party was mandated to ensure that the terms of the Agreement, and written orders requiring compliance, are immediately communicated to all of its forces.

There was provision by the sub-regional body to get the rebels to share power. This has the tendency to end the conflict but an issue that needs to be considered when making such concessions is to consider the possibility of creating a situation whereby there would be the budding of rebel groups. Such groups would all fight for a share of power when care is not taken to condemn rebel activities. A rebellion should not be made to 'feel' legitimate.

Other Military Groups

One characteristic feature of the Sierra Leonean conflict was the role of other military groups. Both local and foreign military support was sought in the Sierra Leonean conflict. "President Kabbah and the Nigerian-led ECOMOG force, with the knowledge of the British High Commissioner of Sierra Leone, Peter Penfold, employed the services of Sandline International to prosecute the war against the AFRC and the RUF."⁵⁰ Sandline International formed part of the fighting force,

50 Ero, Comfort., (2000), "ECOMOG: A model for Africa?" *Monograph* No. 46, (2000): 58-70. <http://www.issafrica.org/uploads/Mono46.pdf>

along with Nigeria and the 'Kamajors'.⁵¹ A combination of these three forces fought against the rebels and reinstalled Kabbah's government in March 1998.⁵²

Conflict has the tendency to evolve and degenerate when it is not resolved early. The case of the other military forces emphasizes this point. In the course of the conflict, several hitherto 'uninterested' parties developed interest in the conflict and they came in to fight for a cause they had come to believe in. The degeneration of the conflict even saw the 'Kamajors' militia fighting alongside regular armed force from Nigeria. It is quite interesting to note how an ethnic based militia group, the 'Kamajor', could be accepted to collaborate to fight against rebels. The 'Kamajor' in itself, was an unlawfully constituted group that should not have been admitted to prosecute the war alongside the regular armies of Sierra Leone and Nigeria.

ECOMOG's forceful military intervention in search for peace in Sierra Leone was also complemented by diplomatic approaches as well. At any particular point in time as the conflict rages, one of the three approaches was very useful. At times it was full hard realism (full-scale military action) in practice and at other times, soft realism (peace conferences, signing of peace accords and agreements, round table discussions etc) was at play. The soft realism approach was employed in the Sierra Leonean conflict when under sustained civic and military pressure at both national and international levels the AFRC and ECOWAS signed the Conakry Peace Plan. This was complemented by the use of the governance-based approach which provided for the reinstatement of the Kabbah government within six months; immunities to the junta leaders; cooperation between the junta and ECOMOG on disarmament, demobilization and reintegration; and modalities for broadening the power in Sierra Leone. Confidence building (Soft Realism) was extensively put to work in securing disarmament of the rebels in Sierra Leone.

The governance based approach was also at play following the signing of the Lome Accord which was characterized by power sharing between the Kabbah government and the RUF. The RUF leader, Foday Sankoh was accorded the status of a vice president and some of his colleagues assumed ministerial positions.

The hard realism approach has the tendency to prolong the conflict. It has the tendency to prolong violent conflicts when the parties to the conflict do not see the third party intervener as a great power. In the case of ECOMOG, the rebel forces were engaged in direct combat with them. When any of the parties perceive victory is within its reach, it will all that it could win, hence the perpetuation of the conflict. In a complementary manner, ECOWAS employed the soft realist approach to get the rebels to the negotiation table for negotiations based on the governance approach where there were agreements to power sharing and democratization through elections. ECOWAS intervention strategies have varied with the different conflicts. In Liberia and Sierra Leone, soft realism was employed but when it did not yield the expected

51 An ethnically based civil defence force

52 Comfort, "ECOMOG: A Model for Africa?" 60

results, hard realism was used and it ended with the governance based approach which sought to establish democracy and good governance. In Guinea-Bissau, the hard realism was not used by ECOWAS (Senegal and Guinea went unilaterally), but was swift in using the governance based and the soft realism approach to resolve the impasse.

Intra-Community Dynamics In Sierra Leone

“Clashes on the Sierra Leone-Liberia border and Charles Taylor’s decision to exploit instability in Sierra Leone forced ECOMOG, in particular, Nigeria, to deploy troops on the border of both countries in 1991.”⁵³ The Liberian government under Charles Taylor was accused of having a hand in fueling the Sierra Leonean crisis by supporting the RUF, a charge it persistently denied. President Taylor, in turn, accused Sierra Leone and Guinea of providing a safe haven to Liberian rebels with the intention of destabilizing his government. In September 2000, tensions rose between Liberia, Guinea, and Sierra Leone, each accusing the other of supporting rebel activity. A crisis in the region was prompted when Guinean President Lansana Conte publicly accused refugees of rebel activity against his government, resulting in round-ups, detentions, and violence against Sierra Leoneans and Liberians in Guinea.⁵⁴

Liberia has had a long fraternal relationship with Sierra Leone. As close neighbours, both countries share many cultural, economic and social similarities. This bond was sealed in 1973 when the two countries along with Guinea formed the Declaration of the Mano River Union. This document contains amongst other provisions, the Non-aggression Pact and Good Neighbourliness Treaty. Moreover, since 1990, Sierra Leone has opened her doors to Liberia by hosting thousands of Liberians who fled their home from fighting in Liberia.

Nigeria also took a unilateral decision to intervene to reinstate the deposed president Kabbah. This unilateral decision by Nigeria, a sub-regional power, questions her intentions. Was Nigeria pursuing her own interest in Sierra Leone or Nigeria was only guarding democracy within the sub-region. Why did Nigeria interfere in the internal affairs of a sovereign state under the pretext of an agreement to train the army and the presidential guard?

Conclusion

The conflict in Sierra Leone showed that dictatorship and lack of institutional arrangement have been a major factor in stimulating conflicts in West Africa. Similarities could be drawn across war ravaged countries in the sub-region. Samuel Doe in pre-war (1992) Liberia and Charles Taylor in post-war (1997) Liberia ruled arbitrarily and this contributed to the civil wars in Liberia. Siaka Stevens and Joseph Momoh were also very dictatorial and ruled without regards to institutional

53 Comfort, “ECOMOG: A Model for Africa?” 60

54 “*World Report.*” 2001

arrangements and respect for human rights in Sierra Leone.

It has also been realized that there is a disturbing trend of some governments within the community continuously supporting armed factions and rebels in other member countries causing instability. Examples include Burkina Faso and Cote d'Ivoire supporting the NPFL of Charles Taylor in Liberia against Doe; Liberia and Burkina Faso assisted the RUF in Sierra Leone. Nigeria, Sierra Leone and Guinea also backed anti-NPFL factions in Liberia fighting against their governments. This support has been in terms of supplying arms, bases, training and even combatants etc.

A sub-regional hegemon like Nigeria is needed to initiate action aimed at solving sub-regional conflicts.

ECOMOG peace-keepers were always deployed before logistical and financial arrangements were made. This always results in the call for international assistance in managing sub-regional conflicts. ECOWAS member states already have huge financial commitments, so in order to ensure the prompt response to calls for troops, ECOWAS should make available funds for deployment and logistics;

Lastly, from the accounts of conflicts in the sub-region, it could be deduced that ECOWAS as a sub-regional actor, has not learnt or has failed to apply lessons learnt from prior peacemaking efforts in undertaking new operation.

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