

ECOWAS' Sub-regional Peacekeeping: Learning through Experience

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Introduction

In the framework of the Capacity-Building Programme for Conflict Prevention and Good Governance for ECOWAS and Civil Society Organizations in West Africa, WANEP was commissioned to conduct an assessment of ECOWAS' Conflict Prevention Mechanism, both capacity and training needs.

Although looking at the larger context of ECOWAS as an institution, this assessment will focus on ECOWAS' Mechanism for Conflict Prevention, Management, Resolution, Peacekeeping and Security; and ECOWAS' supplementary (to the Mechanism for Conflict Prevention) protocol on Democracy and Good Governance.

Assessing the mechanism for collective security and peace otherwise called the Mechanism for Conflict Prevention, Management, Resolution and Security and the additional portocol on Democracy and Good Governance constitute the base of our ability to determine the effectiveness of ECOWAS' institutional capacity for Conflict Prevention and Good Governance. The assessment would provide a clear picture of the material, human, financial and technical resources. Assessing the strengths and weaknesses of the Mechanism¹ and having a deeper understanding of the issues at stake would serve as the benchmark for the development of effective and appropriate capacity building interventions.

The institutional assessment can also serve as a useful tool for the Mechanism through a process of self introspection, thinking, learning and evaluation of own weaknesses and strengths and generation of new policy options in a changing environment. In so doing, indicators can be developed to monitor and evaluate improvements in the Mechanism's effectiveness and the role of capacity building in this regard. It should be stressed that WANEP does not claim to 'build the capacity' of the Mechanism, but would rather build on the existing capacity by reinforcing it through training, provision of technical input, experience and knowledge sharing, building of coalitions, analyses, and collective generation of appropriate responses and policy options.

The capacity needs of the Mechanism would in addition inform the training needs. Critiques have blamed ECOWAS for failing to prevent violent conflicts in West Africa and the consequent flood of the humanitarian crises these (conflicts) have unleashed in the sub-region. It is our hope that this assessment would provide the necessary information that can enhance the effectiveness of the Mechanism through appropriate training and capacity building processes.

An effective institutional assessment of the Mechanism would not only serve as an apporriate guide for WANEP, CRS and its partners to development strategies for collaborative peacbuilding and /or partnership with ECOWAS but also an important tool

¹ Mechanism would henceforth refer to the Mechanism for Conflict Prevention, Management, Resolution, Peacekeeping and Security as well as the additional protocol on Democracy and Good Governance.

for ECOWAS' collaboration with the international community. Such collaboration would seek to increase the efficiency of the Mechanism by increasing its capacity to manage changes in the West African sub-region, manage institutional consolidation and growth, target and use resources efficiently, assess and respond to the needs of the Mechanism's target (governments, citizens of the Community² as well as the international community) and become more visible, sustainable and viable in the long-term.

West Africa represents one of Africa's most politically dynamic and challenging sub-regions. Ghana (formerly referred to as the Gold Coast) became the first British colony in Africa to achieve independence when Kwame Nkrumah led the country to self rule as early as 1957. Guinea's nationalist drive pioneered by the courageous Ahmed Sekou Toure was the first French colony to defy all the odds and pull out of the French community by voting against any form of quasi independence in 1958. These early political goals for West Africa were to be short-lived as the *coup d'état* syndrome infested the entire sub-region. From 1960 till today, only Senegal has so far avoided the *coup d'état* phenomenon as military adventurism into governance has spread from one country to the other.

Although Africa is reckoned for being a continent of conflict, some scholars maintain that apart from the Nigeria-Biafra war (1966-1970) and the civil war in Liberia (1990-1996), West Africa has been able to manage its conflicts³. This assertion may now be challenged as Sierra Leone, Guinea Bissau, Liberia, and Cote d'Ivoire have all been rocked by bitter and destructive civil strife as the fragile governance structures started collapsing. An off-shoot of *coup d'états* in West Africa is the advent of armed rebellions that have continued to undermine the state in West Africa, rendering the latter more weak and vulnerable to collapse. Increasingly, West Africa like most of the African states is suffering from a variety of debilitating effects such as blockage of the governing process, a widening gap between the state and society, sporadic outbreaks of violence as a means of expression, and state collapse.⁴ Liberia, Sierra Leone and Guinea Bissau are vivid examples of state collapse, and the justification for the creation of an ECOWAS Conflict Prevention Mechanism. ECOWAS attempts at intervention in these three countries became the testing ground and at the same time, the *raison d'être* for the establishment of a sub-regional framework for interventions in conflict situations.

Background: Genesis of the Mechanism

Founded in 1975 as an economic umbrella organization for economic development and integration, ECOWAS had to grapple with the plethora of conflicts which have sapped the regional grouping's energy and resources meant for economic development and efforts at integration. Over the past twelve years, the sub-regional entity has witnessed extreme violence and conflict in certain parts of West Africa resulting in loss of lives, wanton destruction of property and economic infrastructure, the displacement of thousands of West Africans most of whom have been rendered homeless. Prolonged civil war in Liberia (1989-2003) and Sierra Leone (1990-2001), military disturbances in

² Community refers to the Economic Community of West African States

³ I. William Zartman (editor), *Governance as Conflict Management: Politics and Violence in West Africa* (Washington, D.C.: Brookings Institute Press, 1997), p.1.

⁴ Ibid.

Guinea Bissau (1997-1998) [and of late the armed rebellion in Cote d'Ivoire (2002-2003)] have wrought unmitigated suffering on the citizens of these countries, constituting a major set-back to economic development. There is no gainsaying to the fact that economic prosperity, cooperation and integration prosper in an environment that is peaceful, stable and secure. Peace and security are therefore pre-requisites for a balanced economic development and advancement as they largely determine the direction and pace of economic and political reforms in a country⁵.

Prior to the development of the Mechanism, two legal instruments, the Protocol on Non-aggression (1978) and the Protocol on Mutual Assistance in Defence (1981) have been signed to promote peace within the sub-region. But these instruments mainly addressed matters of inter-state conflicts at a moment intra-state conflicts were mushrooming all over the sub-region. Issues of conflict prevention, conflict resolution, and humanitarian action and peacebuilding issues were equally ignored. Successive outbreaks of conflicts induced ECOWAS to undertake several conflict management initiatives. In Liberia for instance, the autocratic regime of Master Sergeant Samuel Kanyon Doe was a major factor in the emergence of the Liberian civil war. However, the tap-root of the crisis lay in the power struggle between the Americo-Liberians who had monopolized the political power machinery and the Africo-Liberians who aspired for political control and tilt the balance to their favour.⁶ Liberia therefore presented a challenge that ECOWAS leaders resolved to face. In May 1990, Charles Taylor, the rebel leader of the National Patriotic Front of Liberia (NPLF) had rejected the idea of the holding of free and fair elections in which President Doe was to be exempted. Despite attempts by the Inter-Faith Mediation Committee (IFMC), Taylor was intransigent and demanded the resignation of Samuel Doe outright. ECOWAS stepped in and started a mediation process, but little did they know that it was going to be a tough, arduous and costly experience, experiment or perhaps adventure in sub-regional conflict resolution, management and peacekeeping⁷.

The conviction was that ECOWAS was well-placed to find an African solution to an African problem, a concept that was very much promoted since the 1960s as the multiplicity of African nation states started ascending the mantle of independence. The ECOWAS initiative involved the mobilization of the required political will, and diplomatic, economic and military resources within and without the region to handle a sub-regional problem that had the potential of a destabilizing spill over effect, more so, one that did not seem to bother the international community⁸.

Birth of ECOMOG, precursor of the Mechanism

On May 9, 1990 ECOWAS went ahead to set up a Five-Member Consultative Group on Liberia, appointed a Standing Mediation Committee (SMC). The Anglophone-Francophone divide in ECOWAS was already a cause for concern as a quorum was hardly achieved especially on the issue of intervention in Liberia. To avoid further embarrassment, the SMC on Liberia that was chaired by The Gambia was

⁵ Cheick Oumar Diarra, "ECOWAS Protocol relating to the Mechanism on Conflict Prevention", being Paper delivered at a Consultative Meeting organized on Human Security Mechanism for EAC and GIL", Nairobi, 24-28 February, 2002.

⁶ For more on the dynamics of the Liberian civil war, see Festus B. Aboagye, *ECOMOG: A Sub-regional Experience in Conflict Resolution, Management and Peacekeeping in Liberia* (Accra: Sedco Publishing Limited, 1999), pp.19-39.

⁷ Ibid., p.57.

⁸ Ibid., p.58.

predominantly Anglophone and comprised Ghana, Nigeria, Sierra Leone, and Guinea (the only Francophone country). The Consultative Group was further charged with the task of maintenance of peace and security in the sub-region, a mandate that transcended the Liberian conflict.⁹ The SMC held their first meeting with the Liberian warring factions in Freetown in July 1990 in the midst of a tense political and security climate in Liberia. But before the SMC could settle down to work, an NPFL spokesman, Tom Woewiyu reiterated their stance to accept neither a cease-fire nor any form of ECOWAS peacekeeping force which the rebel group qualified as an 'invasion force'. The Freetown peace talks thus collapsed. The Summit of Heads of State of the SMC scheduled another meeting in Banjul, The Gambia at the behest of Sir Dauda K. Jawara from August 6-7, 1990 to revisit the Liberian dossier. The final communiqué¹⁰ which was approved by the Authority of the ECOWAS heads of State and Government on August 25, 1990 and copied the UN Security Council recommended the following key points:

- Immediate cessation of hostilities, importation of arms, and called for surrender of all arms and ammunitions to the custody of the ECOWAS Cease-Fire Monitoring Group (ECOMOG);
- The ECOWAS Monitoring Group (ECOMOG) created and placed under the authority of the Chairman of ECOWAS; it shall be composed of military contingents from member states of the SMC including Sierra Leone and Guinea to ensure lasting peace to the Liberian imbroglio.
- ECOMOG shall be under the command of a Force Commander and appointed by the Committee; He shall be entrusted with powers to conduct military operations for the purpose of monitoring the cease-fire, restoring law and order to create the necessary ground for free and fair elections to be held in Liberia.
- ECOMOG shall remain in Liberia, if necessary, until the successful holding of general elections and the installation of an elected government.
- The Executive Secretary shall establish rules and regulations for ECOMOG after consultation with the Chairman of the Authority.
- All expenses relating to the operations of ECOMOG shall be drawn from the Special Emergency Fund created by Decision A/DEC.3/R/90 of the ECOWAS Standing Mediation Committee.
- The Committee appeals to all members of the International Community not to assist any of the warring parties in any manner prejudicial to the maintenance of the cease-fire and the holding of general and Presidential elections.
- Decision A/DEC.2/8/90 set up an Interim Government in Liberia; the SMC was to facilitate the convening of a forum of all political parties to and key actors and stakeholders to determine the composition of such a government. None of the leaders of the warring factions was to lead the interim government.

Apparently, there was no consensus in the document as Charles Taylor's NPFL did agree with some points such as the immediate cessation of hostilities and formation of the interim government and the 'interference of outsiders'. Amos Sawyerr headed the interim administration and the NPFL that unleashed the armed conflict was allotted six

⁹ For details see Decision A/DEC.9/5/90 Relating to the Establishment of the Standing Mediation Committee, May 9, 1990 (Official Journal of the Economic Community of West African States).

¹⁰ See Decision A/DEC.1/8/90 on the Cease-fire and Establishment of an ECOWAS Monitoring Group (ECOMOG) in Liberia (Official Journal of ECOWAS).

seats in the Interim Assembly including Speaker but Taylor and his men rejected the whole arrangement. ECOWAS soon found it self in a tight corner as it contemplated what to do next. Would it impose its decision on the warring factions especially as regards the deployment of the peacekeeping force by fighting its way into Liberia as part of the peace enforcement strategy that was not backed by a comprehensive ceasefire? More disheartening to the sub-regional body was the decision by the UN Security Council and the United States not to sanction the ECOWAS move, on grounds that the conflict was purely an internal Liberian problem.¹¹

The UN and US decision indirectly gave credence to Charles Taylor's NPFL and infuriated West African leaders who perceived the act as a blow to the sub-regional body's 'African initiative to an African problem'. Appeals for the Liberian Representative to the UN, William Bull for the review and possibly amendment of the non-interference in internal affairs of member states clause was in vain. Here was a diplomatic stalemate in the face of a human and material tragedy. As the mayhem pursued on the ground, the grandeur and military spirit of leaders like Gen. Ibrahim B, Babangida of Nigeria propelled ECOWAS to defy all the odds and act. In a Mini Summit in August 1990, an initial 4000 strong ECOMOG force was ordered to be deployed. Its mandate included: Maintenance of law and order; protection of life and property; maintenance of essential services; provision of security to the interim government; observation of forth coming elections; and the conduct of normal police duties.¹²

ECOMOG's legitimacy was lingered on the invitation of the incumbent President Doe even if the power of the President was greatly weakened by the same ECOWAS Plan that transferred such power and authority to the Interim President. Due to the hostile attitude of the NPFL towards the ECOWAS Peace Plan, the cease-fire modalities had to change accordingly. Nevertheless, the position and functions of the Force Commander (FC) were clouded with confusion as many issues were not clear.

The command, control and communications structure was not clearly defined. The ECOWAS Secretariat was not structured to accommodate this new military dimension and there were therefore no specific lines of communication with the forces in the field. Striving to preserve a semblance of neutrality as much as possible, a new peacekeeping plan which the FC was committed to included the following guidelines¹³:

- *De factorising* Doe by persuading by persuading him to leave Liberia.
- Setting up an Interim Government of National Unity supported by ECOMOG (and not the Armed Forces of Liberia-AFL or any of the factions).
- Expunging the military factor of the AFL and Independent National Patriotic Front of Liberia (INPFL) the splinter faction of NPFL led by Prince Yormie Johnson by persuading their remnants to surrender to ECOMOG.
- Failing a peaceful and supervised disarming of the factions, ECOMOG was to enforce the peace by all means at its disposal.

The appointment of Lt. Gen. Arnold Quainoo of Ghana as FC was a compromise to maintain the neutrality and allay fears in the Taylor camp that ECOMOG's mission was a Nigerian ploy to safeguard the presidency of Doe and maintain the status quo in Liberia. The first contingent of the deployment code named *Buffalo Soldiers* was on ground from

¹¹ Aboagye, *ECOMOG*, p. 61.

¹² *Ibid.*, p.62.

¹³ *Ibid.*, p.63.

August to September 1990. Although the FC's mandate imposed a peacekeeping role, it was engendered by the realities on the ground characterized by the absence of a cease-fire and the hostility of the factions and thus became a conflicting mission of peace enforcement. This was compounded by the lack of tactical, operational and logistical capacities. The initial landing of troops at Freeport and Clara Town was greeted by artillery fire from the NPFL forces that inflicted casualties on the peacekeepers. From there, the bridgehead extended to other localities such as Somalia Drive Bridge, Executive Mansion, John F. Kennedy Hospital, Spriggs Payne Airfield, Central Monrovia and Congo Town¹⁴.

The capture and assassination of the *de facto* President Samuel K Doe on September 9, 1990 at the ECOMOG headquarters sealed the doom of ECOMOG by drastically undermining confidence in the capacity and perception of ECOMOG as a neutral force to enforce peace in Liberia. Doe's horrible massacre including most of the 70 man strong presidential guard infuriated Doe's supporters and caused serious Nigerian disaffection even if the FC was Ghanaian. The incident also buttressed Taylor's position as the INPFL close ties with ECOMOG were ruined. Many questions and puzzles have been raised. What was the agenda of the secret meeting attended among others by Presidential spokesperson, Selley Thompson, Brig. Gen. Prince Johnson and the second in command to the FC from Guinea? Why did the President hastily leave the security of the Executive Mansion despite the attack on his way to Freeport? Who made the arrangement for the arrangement for President Doe to leave in a stand-by ship to Guinea without the consent of the FC?¹⁵ The key actors such as Selley Thomson, Prince Johnson, deputy FC and those who survived the incident are well placed to answer these questions. Another surprise is that the ECOWAS Chairman, President Dawda K. Jawara of The Gambia, and the ECOWAS Executive Secretary Dr. Abbas Bundu were both reported as having welcomed the development although the Gambian Foreign Ministry later retracted the statement claiming it was quoted out of context¹⁶.

Confusion, anarchy and a catalogue of failed strategies characterized the Liberian political scene as ECOWAS battled to maintain its credibility and that of the countries involved. Major Gen. Joshua N. Dogonyaro was appointed as the Field Commander while Quainoo remained as FC. Neither the Bamako Accord of November 1990, nor the Banjul Conference of December succeeded in moving Taylor from his initial position as he disassociated himself from all the moves aimed at restoring peace. Alliances changed colour as even the INPFL targeted both AFL and ECOMOG forces. From Lome (February 1991) to Yamoussoukro I-IV (June –October 1991) did not make any major difference. The only difference was that the Francophone countries led by Cote d'Ivoire (that had been very supportive of Charles Taylor) became more active even if it opposed most of the Nigerian led initiatives. Between 1994 (January) and early 1995, ECOMOG was boasted by an East African contingent that later withdrew. More on the anatomy of the Liberian Civil War and ECOMOG's intervention is well articulated by Aboagye¹⁷.

The tragedy in Liberia became a serious lesson learning experiment in sub-regional peacekeeping. The flaws were legion, so too were piece meal achievements. Despite the record myriad of agreements and accords¹⁸, the Liberian crisis became a thorn in the

¹⁴ Ibid., p. 82.

¹⁵ Chat with Gen. Quainoo, first ECOMOG Force Commander.

¹⁶ Aboagye, ECOMOG, pp. 87-88.

¹⁷ See Aboagye, pp. 81-167.

¹⁸ See *ECOWAS Decisions on the Liberian Crisis-Special Supplement of the Official Journal Vol. 1* (1992) and *Main Documents on the Liberian Crisis, Special Supplement of the Official Journal, Vol. 2* (1997).

flesh ECOWAS. Charles Taylor particularly will go into history as the one individual that took the whole sub-region hostage through his pinky-panky style, hard line attitude, and non-respect of agreements he signed. He was eventually voted after the 1997 'Special Presidential Elections' which pundits interpreted as a sanction vote. Yet others believe Taylor would still have unleashed terror in Liberia were he not pushed into the Executive Mansion. He therefore intimidated Liberians to vote him or face the wrath of his forces that refused to disarm and occupied vast areas of the national territory making them inaccessible to contending political opponents. Disunity among the political opposition played against them.

While the Liberian war raged, Taylor promised Sierra Leone hell for allowing ECOMOG launch its operations from bases in Sierra Leone and Foday Sankoh, an erstwhile unknown ex-army corporal led the Revolutionary United Front (RUF) assault on Sierra Leone from NPLF territory, unleashing another brutal and senseless war that knew no differences between combatants and civilians.

By 1992, the RUF had become a force to reckon with. The RUF won the appeal of the disaffected young Sierra Leoneans, many of whom had widely read Colonel Gaddafi's *Green Book* which was described as a watermelon; green on the outside and red inside. The book was an additional galvanizer of the revolutionary drive against a regime considered as corrupt and unjust¹⁹. The All People's Congress (APC) government of Joseph S. Momoh was overthrown and a national Provisional ruling Council (NPRC) led by Captain Valentine Strasser on April 29, 1992.

Peace initiatives led to the holding of elections on March 29, 1996 in which Ahmed Tejan Kabbah of the Sierra Leone People's Party (SLPP) was voted to power. The SLPP government of Kabbah entered into dialogue with the RUF in May 1996 in Yamoussoukro, Cote d'Ivoire, followed by another session in Abidjan in November. In the midst of the stalemate over the implementation of the Abidjan accord, Ahmed Tejan Kabbah was overthrown on May 25, 1997 by a cross section of young officers led by Major Johnny Paul Koroma who formed an Armed Forces Revolutionary Council (AFRC). This coincided with the OAU Foreign Minister's Summit in Harare, Zimbabwe. The OAU Chairman, Robert Mugabe of Zimbabwe went on to support what he described as "a noble mission of ECOWAS" to restore the legitimate leadership in Sierra Leone²⁰.

ECOMOG's mandate therefore in the Mano River basin expanded and after initial peace moves failed due to lack of political will, ECOMOG felt compelled to intervene militarily and the largely Nigerian led force energetically restored the democratically elected government of Kabbah, not without heavy casualties. The military junta retreated into the bush. On January 6, 1999, rebels of the RUF and the AFRC invaded Freetown in one of the bloodiest episodes in the Sierra Leonean nine year war²¹. The mayhem was too awful that the call for peace was no longer an option. It became an imperative.

Efforts culminated in the Lome Peace Agreement, which was a comprehensive document dealing with the socio-economic, security and political issues. While it was hailed as a breakthrough, others criticized its controversial clauses such as the 'Pardon and Amnesty' clause that accorded impunity to the RUF and other political adventurers.

¹⁹ Joe A.D. Alie, "Background to the Conflict (1961-1991): What went Wrong and Why?" in Anatole Ayissi and Robin-Edward Poulton, *Bound to Cooperate: Conflict, Peace and People in Sierra Leone* (Geneva: UNIDIR, 2000), p. 31.

²⁰ Abubakar Kargbo, "The Long Road to Peace: 1991-1997" in Anatole and Robin-Edward, *Bound to Cooperate*, p. 38.

²¹ *Ibid.*, p.44.

In Guinea Bissau, political bickering degenerated into a crisis when President Joao Bernardo Vieira ordered the arrest of his senior army officer, Gen. Ansumane Mane. Mane was accused of supplying arms to the rebel separatists in the Cassamance region of southern Senegal. The gun-running accusation transformed into a major political crisis as Gen. Mane in response staged an attempted coup. A later investigation exonerated him of the charges but the stalemate pursued and because of the General's popularity, many loyal soldiers defected from the government camp and joined him in a hole up of part of Bissau. For 11 months, tension and fighting ensued and Senegal, supported by Guinea led an ECOMOG intervention of 2,400 troops to quell the instability in Guinea-Bissau.

A peace accord signed in Abuja in on November 2, 1998 paved the way for a broad-based government in December 1998. The UN joined ECOWAS in the peace process and established a Peace Support Office and a Trust Fund in Bissau (given the country's dismal poverty and financial liquidity crisis) in March 1999 as ECOMOG equally deployed some 712 Peacekeepers. In November of the same year, a Presidential election brought Kumba Yala to power²².

This was the background upon which the ECOWAS Mechanism was founded. The Mechanism thus drew from earlier protocols such as the 1978 Protocol on Non-Aggression, and the 1981 Protocol on Mutual Assistance on Defense. Sub-regional developments in Liberia, Sierra Leone, and Guinea Bissau between 1990 and 1999 were so challenging and complex that ECOWAS as an entity was tested in a baptism of fire. It was these events, their challenges, the failures and short-comings in resolving them, and the quest to right the wrongs and errors and perhaps the strong believe in sub-regional integration and solidarity that the precursor of the ECOWAS Mechanism for Conflict Prevention-ECOMOG saw the light of day.

Lessons learnt from previous interventions

Meeting in Banjul, The Gambia in July 1998, ECOWAS and regional official in an Experts Meeting acknowledged that the mechanism so far put in place to address the Liberian conflict was inadequate and largely ad hoc. Thus here was the urgent need for an institutionalized structure.

Nigeria's leadership posture: Nigeria bore the greatest responsibility in the ECOMOG interventions in Liberia and Sierra Leone. If regional peacekeeping or collective security efforts are to have regional balance in composition of troops, there was dire need for the command structure of the regional force to be balanced. The Nigerian dominance though welcome was indirectly contested by some member states. But the question remains whether any other single West African nation could replace Nigeria in this odious and financially costly task. The presence of a regional power broker that Nigeria was represented an asset for sub-regional security if well-laid down structures, roles and procedures were put in place. Nigeria therefore is an indispensable actor to the success of any future sub-regional peace and security initiatives, especially the military

²² International Peace Academy, *Operationalizing the ECOWAS Mechanism for Conflict Prevention, Management, Resolution, Peacekeeping, and Security* (Report on a partnership Task Force consultation between IPA and ECOWAS held in Dakar, August 2002), p. 10. General Mane was subsequently killed in November 2000 when he unilaterally declared himself head of the Armed Forces and revoked military promotions by President Yala.

dimension. According to Adebajo, the post cold war climate in West Africa, characterized by a declining French military role and increasing Franco-Nigerian diplomatic cooperation has paved the way for an increased Nigerian leadership role and hegemony in West Africa. However, Nigeria's unilateralism especially during the tenure of the then Foreign Minister, Tom Ikimi between 1995 and 1998 undermined and antagonized the rest of the West African states.²³ Adebajo amply captures some of the lessons learned from peacekeeping in Liberia, Sierra Leone and Guinea which are highlighted below.

Bad Governance: One common denominator of the conflicts in Liberia, Sierra Leone and Guinea Bissau is the personalized autocracies of leadership that helped trigger the conflicts. Lack of democracy, coupled with entrenched ethnicity and ruthlessness only helped to give a semblance of credence to armed rebellion as the only means to confront dictatorship. Doe of Liberia, Stevens and Momoh in Sierra Leone, and Vieira in Guinea Bissau were all anti-democratic in every sense of the word and were themselves the seeds of violence as a means of governance.

Half hazard intervention: ECOMOG interventions in Liberia and subsequently in Sierra Leone and Guinea Bissau gave the organization some bitter lessons. ECOMOG failed to secure a clear mandate from both ECOWAS and the UN before the intervention. It failed to act in concert with other important sub-regional states in order to garner key Francophone support for intervention. ECOMOG's failed intelligence before the invasion in Monrovia in 1992 and Freetown in 1999 was a great liability. Lastly, ECOMOG failed to secure military and logistical equipment and the necessary financial support before undertaking the intervention. In Guinea Bissau, the mistakes of Liberia and Sierra were still made. The peacekeepers were logistically ill-equipped for their mission; the number of troops was grossly inadequate to maintain security in the country; the funding of the mission depended entirely on France, an external power that probably had its own agenda in the conflict²⁴. Even Senegal that pressed for the ECOMOG intervention during which Nigeria declined to send troops was motivated by the concerned for its own national security imperatives.

External hands in internal conflicts: French military support for African dictators since independence gave leaders a sort of security and protection. Special military cooperation agreements and accords were signed and most West Africans have remained suspicious of French intentions. French and Portuguese "gunboat diplomacy" in their support for various factions in Guinea Bissau²⁵; the American long years of military and financial support to Samuel K. Doe all played negatively in the 1990s by instilling a spirit of suspicion, procrastination and mistrust. But external hands have also played a key role in the resolution of sub-regional conflicts. The US, EU, UN, donor agencies and relief organizations have all contributed enormously in providing logistics and financial support to ECOWAS and individual states.

Impunity of spoilers: One of the greatest dilemmas of has been the inability of the regional body to deal with the notorious spoilers like Taylor, Sankoh, Mane, and Vieira. In Liberia and Sierra Leone, warring factions kidnapped and killed ECOMOG and UN with impunity, seizing their weapons and vehicles. In Abuja in 1999, Mane refused to allow Senegalese or Guinean forces deployed in Bissau as part of an ECOMOG force

²³ Adekeye Adebajo, "The ECOWAS Security Mechanism: Toward a *Pax West Africana*", Paper presented at the CODESRIA General Assembly Meeting, Kampala, December 2002. (see http://www.codesria.org/Links/Home/Abstracts%20GA%2012-20/Ecowas_Adebajo.htm).

²⁴ Ibid.

²⁵ Ibid.

and his military hostility against ECOMOG forced the latter to pull out pre-maturely. The RUF in Sierra Leone had requested that Nigerian, Ghanaian, and Guinean troops pull out as condition for signing the 1996 Abidjan accord, while Charles Taylor who reneged on all agreements he signed consistently demanded the pull out of Nigerian troops as condition for implementing various peace accords²⁶.

Cooperation between ECOWAS and UN: The experimental years of ECOWAS in peacekeeping clearly demonstrated that need for ECOWAS and the UN to close ranks. It is the role of the UN Security Council to ensure international peace and security. The three interventions of the 1990s pressed for a UN active role in conflict prevention and peacekeeping in West Africa. The UN subsequently recognized this imperative after feet dragging and diplomatic prevarications. The creation of the UN sub-regional Office for West Africa, located in Senegal is a great step in the right direction. It is hoped this would open avenues for close collaboration between the UN and ECOWAS in all domains, including conflict prevention and peacebuilding.

Civil Society as key partner in peace process: Civil society has emerged as an indispensable partner in peacebuilding in West Africa especially in the wake of conflicts in Liberia, Sierra Leone and Guinea-Bissau. These countries have been stripped off the legitimacy the state enjoyed and governments no longer command the respect and monopoly of governance especially in the provision of social services. Civil society has been in the forefront of building broken relations, especially in the crucial phase of the post conflict reconstruction and reconciliation. In Liberia, the Inter-Faith Council played a key role in the mediation process, like wise the Inter-Religious Council of Sierra Leone.

²⁶ Ibid.