



**UNILORIN SOCIAL SCIENCE SEMINAR SERIES**

**Occasional Publication No. 1**

**Faculty of Business and Social Sciences  
University of Ilorin  
Ilorin**

**Edited by: Dr. J. Funso Olorunfemi**



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1. Determinants of Inflation in Nigeria  
C. F. Okunribido

2. Spatial Distribution of Rainfall in Dry Years

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## NIGERIA'S PEACE-KEEPING INITIATIVE IN WEST AFRICA: THE LIBERIAN CASE STUDY

J. A. Omede

### Abstract

*The formation of the ECOWAS peace-keeping force (ECOMOG) in Liberia was initiated by Nigeria in 1991. The raison d'être of the peace-keeping force was, among other things, to help solve the conflict in Liberia and, most of all, to prevent the crisis from spreading into neighbouring countries. It is particularly interesting to note that the task set by Nigeria in sponsoring the ECOMOG has generated lots of controversy both from within and outside the country. The major snag in the peace-keeping initiative, however, centred mainly on the peace-enforcement policy that was later adopted by the Nigerian authorities. This policy shift, coupled with the actual participation of the ECOMOG troops as a belligerent in the Liberian conflict, has contributed immensely to the undue prolongation of the peace process in Liberia. In order to prevent a re-occurrence of this "blunder", we conclude this study by asserting that African leaders should in future be neutral, detached, committed and, above all, imbibe the principle of "preventive diplomacy" in order to successfully manage and resolve conflicts such as the Liberian crisis.*

### Introduction

The on-going Liberian crisis that drew the attention of the world in 1989 actually started long before this period. Internal rivalry among contending factions of indigenous and Americo-Liberians, nepotism, favouritism, etc., are the manifestations of the political, social and economic configuration of the country. By late 1989, however, Liberia was plunged into actual civil war through the armed confrontation that developed between the government of

**Samuel Doe and the opposition forces of the Charles Taylor-led National Patriotic Front of Liberia (NPFL).**

During this period, there were rampant, indiscriminate killings of innocent citizens and destruction of properties. The war situation became extremely gory and fratricidal, and Liberia was turned into a battle field, a crisis-ridden country.

Because of the imbroglio so created, the situation in Liberia became extremely unbearable both for the Liberian people as well as for foreign nationals. The entire West African sub-region was also faced with the problems of maintenance of peace, security and political stability in the country.

The state of lawlessness and warfare in Liberia between 1987 and 1990 led to the Nigerian initiative of creating the ECOWAS standing mediation group (ECOMOG) in Liberia. The aim of ECOMOG was that of keeping the peace and restoring normalcy and democracy in Liberia. More importantly, ECOWAS leaders also felt that the Liberian situation was a test case for "Africans to take the initiative in the solution of a problem in the sub-region rather than waiting for external actors to intervene".<sup>1</sup>

### **Objectives of the Study**

The main purpose of this paper is to examine the role played by Nigeria towards finding a lasting solution to the Liberian crisis. Towards this end, we shall attempt to:

- a. examine the background to the Liberian crisis;
- b. analyze the role played by Nigeria towards the formation of the ECOWAS monitoring and peace-keeping force (ECOMOG) in Liberia;
- c. examine the controversy surrounding the initiative of resolving the Liberian conflict; and
- d. recommend solutions towards an effective resolution of the Liberian crisis.

### **Theoretical Framework and Literature Review**

The ECOWAS cease-fire monitoring group in Liberia (ECOMOG) was created at the instance of Gen. Ibrahim Babangida, the former Nigerian President. It was based on the need to find a collective African solution to the multifarious problems plaguing the West African sub-region, rather than depending on extraneous international intervention. This approach, it is argued, is most vital for the continuous survival and the maintenance of the West African sub-region's territorial integrity, national security and sovereignty. To us therefore, the concepts of collective regional security and preventive diplomacy are the background on which the Nigerian initiative and the formation of ECOMOG was premised.

A proper elucidation of these concepts would assist us in understanding the rationale for the formation and operation of ECOMOG in Liberia.

### **Collective Security and Preventive Diplomacy**

According to the UN charter, the concept of collective security stipulates that all member states agree to provide "a formal machinery for the adjustment of international tensions when the normal process of diplomacy prove ineffective".<sup>2</sup> More importantly, the UN charter further stipulates that member states must come to the support of any member victimized by aggression. In pursuance of this goal, the UN has established a machinery whereby diplomatic, economic and military sanctions may be imposed upon states which are a threat to general peace.<sup>3</sup>

From the on-going, we can then infer that the principle of collective security is aimed at establishing "mutual responsibility for pooling together resources of the several states in an effort to keep the peace."<sup>4</sup> Hence, the need for creating a viable collective security network in Africa through establishing the ECOMOG is premised on the assertion that: "The problems of security in Africa should only and can only be dealt with in a bilateral framework or in an exclusively African framework."<sup>5</sup>

## Preventive Diplomacy

In order to make collective security more acceptable to the various warring parties in a crisis situation, strategic analysts recommend the principle of preventive diplomacy.

According to Inis Claude, the central objective of preventive diplomacy is to "abort the development of situations where the need for the operation of a collective security might arise; that is, to prevent the extension of greater power confrontations that might produce violent conflict".<sup>6</sup> The emphasis of Claude's definition is that preventive diplomacy would act as an avoidance of intensified rivalry and not to frustrate a would-be aggressor. The main theme of preventive diplomacy as enunciated by Inis Claude is to offer the promise of assistance to competing states or blocs, in limiting the scope of their competition and helping all states to avoid war rather than helping some states to resist attack.<sup>7</sup>

It is important to emphasize here that both collective security and preventive diplomacy are aimed at preventing war, although the two approaches represent different preventive strategies. Thus:

Collective security focuses upon aggressive intent, while preventive diplomacy concerns itself with dangerous confrontation. The former assumes a situation in which one power may be tempted to strike, and uses the threat of overwhelming resistance to prevent such action. The latter undertakes preventive measures at an earlier stage, and of a different sort: it represents an attempt to aid both parties engaged in rivalry by inhibiting the development of situations conducive to an explosive showdown, deliberately or inadvertently precipitated. A collective security force is an action aimed to separate an aggressor forcibly from his victim. A preventive diplomacy force, is an action aimed to keep competitive forces, by mutual agreement, separated from each other.<sup>8</sup>

## Collective Security in Africa

The idea of Pan-Africanism and the creation of a Pan-African defence force (PADF), an important African collective security machinery, sprang from the writings of late Kwame Nkrumah's (former Ghanaian President) Pan-Africanism. To Nkrumah, Pan-Africanism is based on the need for Africans to present a strongly united front in solving their economic, political and security problems, failure of which could result in their likely recolonization by the Western powers.<sup>9</sup> Thus, in the Pan-African context, security is seen in the light of the defence of Africa's independence and solidarity. To the Pan-Africanist,

African security is national security of all African countries since any threat to African security represents direct or indirect threat to all Africans. Pan-Africanism shapes the strategic and foreign policies of African states. As a security doctrine and movement, it provides African states with a common focus and forum in security development matters as well as foreign policy...<sup>10</sup>

In pursuance of African collective security, African Leaders established institutionalized organs such as the OAU and ECOWAS in dealing with imminent or future conflicts. The African attempt at conflict resolution and crisis management is underscored by certain basic attitudes and orientations of Africans and which are embodied in the OAU charter. These attitudes include, among others, the unique inclination to combine Pan-Africanism with nationalism, a quest for autonomy in solving African problems, and a drive to liberate the entire African continent from colonialism and racial discrimination.<sup>11</sup> The above-mentioned attitudes and perceptions, it is hoped, would help control, eliminate and manage crisis and conflicts within the region and, more importantly, help give some meaning to efforts aimed at ending the discord that conflict generates among African states.

In order to fully realize the goals of African security, African states agreed to a multilateral framework of settling crises within



the region. This agreement was codified in the ECOWAS protocol relating to mutual assistance and defence. This particular protocol resolves that "any armed threat or aggression directed against any member state shall constitute a threat or aggression to the entire community".<sup>12</sup> Under the terms of the protocol, it is also stipulated that "mutual aid and assistance would be given to any member state through the allied armed forces (AAFC) which would be composed of units of the armed forces of member state assigned to such duties."<sup>13</sup> ECOWAS members further agreed that

in case of internal conflict within any member state engineered and supported actively from outside, likely to endanger the security and peace of the entire community.

The Authority (of Heads of State and Government of ECOWAS) shall appreciate and decide on this situation in full collaboration with the Authority of the members- state parties concerned.<sup>14</sup>

From the OAU and ECOWAS had series of mediation efforts that were aimed at discouraging competitive external intervention to prevent the transformation of internal conflict into international conflict.<sup>15</sup> Recently however, a significant step was taken by ECOWAS. This step was geared towards the establishment of a standing mediation committee, whose operations would be to ensure that peace and harmony reigns within the sub-region, while at the same time encouraging the amicable settlement of inter-state disputes.<sup>16</sup> The suggestion for the standing mediation committee emanated from the Tripartite summit of Nigeria, Senegal and Togo on the 28 and 29 of January 1991.<sup>17</sup> Significantly, it was this decision of the mediation committee that paved the way for the establishment of the ECOMOG force.

#### The Formation and Constitutional Basis of ECOMOG

The purpose of the ECOMOG force was to restore peace and normalcy to Liberia, to act as a monitoring force, and a buffer between the warring parties to the Liberian conflict. The decision

to set up ECOMOG was further informed by the principle that regional stability, unity, mutual trust and good neighbourliness was necessary for achieving the ultimate ECOWAS goal of a harmonious and united West African society.<sup>18</sup>

It is worth mentioning that the proposal for setting up the standing mediation Committee and the monitoring force of the ECOWAS was at the initiative of the former Nigerian leader, General Babangida. Gen. Babangida's proposal was presented at the May 1990 Banjul Gambia gathering of the Heads of State and Governments of the organization of the ECOWAS.<sup>19</sup>

The proposal by Gen. Babangida that ECOWAS should intervene, through its mediation and monitoring body, in a timely fashion whenever disputes arise in the sub-region was seen as essentially a bold attempt at regional peace-keeping and most importantly as a desperate Nigerian initiative towards ending the fratricidal and genocidal killings of innocents by the warring parties in Liberia.

In carrying out its peace-keeping mission in Liberia, ECOMOG's functions were outlined as follows:

- a. Conducting military operations for the purpose of monitoring cease-fire, restoring law and order to create the necessary conditions for free and fair elections.
- b. Assisting the ECOWAS standing mediation committee in supervising the implementation and ensuring compliance by the warring parties with the provision of the cease-fire throughout the territory of Liberia.
- c. Remaining in Liberia if necessary until the successful holding of general elections and the installation of an elected government.<sup>20</sup>

For ECOMOG to be able to carry out its functions more effectively, all parties to the Liberian conflict were directed by the article of the cease-fire decision to, among others, comply with the following instructions:

- a. Cease all activities of a military and paramilitary nature as well as all acts of violence.

- b. Surrender all arms and ammunition to ECOMOG
- c. Refrain from importing or acquiring or assisting or encouraging the importation and acquisition of weapons of war materials.
- d. Fully cooperate with ECOWAS standing mediation committee and ECOMOG for the maintenance of the cease-fire and the restoration of law and order.<sup>21</sup>

Unfortunately, not all the warring factions in the Liberian crisis agreed to the objectives of the ECOMOG. The National Patriotic Front (NPFL) led by Charles Taylor, for example, resorted to military confrontation with the ECOMOG. To stem the offensive and aggressive assault by NPFL, the ECOWAS convened a peace meeting on 29-30 June 1991 at Yamoussoukro in Cote D'Ivoire extending to the 29-30 October of the same year.<sup>22</sup> In addition, a one-day extraordinary summit of the ECOWAS was held in Cotonou in the Republic of Benin in October 1991 when it was known that the NPFL refused to abide by the Yamoussoukro peace-plans. The Cotonou summit directed ECOMOG to ensure that the Yamoussoukro peace-plan is respected by all the Liberian warring factions. ECOMOG was thereafter given the mandate to go and enforce peace in Liberia and to ensure that the NPFL abide by the economic sanctions imposed upon it at the 15th summit of the ECOMOG in Dakar in August 1992.<sup>23</sup>

#### **Nigeria's Interest and the Liberian Peace-Keeping Initiative**

From the findings of this study, the following were discovered to be some of the motivating factors behind Nigeria's initiative aimed at finding a lasting solution to the Liberian crisis:

- a. Willingness to play a larger role in regional peace-keeping efforts.
- b. The need to demonstrate the leadership role of Nigeria within the sub-region.
- c. The need to keep away external forces, thus reducing the possibility of internationalizing the conflict.

- d. The need to show the relevance of ECOWAS, a feat which African leaders resolved to accomplish through managing and resolving African problems through an African framework.
- e. The need to specifically curtail the Liberian crisis within that nation's boundaries, so that other African countries will not witness an upsurge of internal insurrections or civil strife.

In addition to the above-mentioned reasons, General Ibrahim Babangida had in his several broadcasts and speeches reiterated that Nigeria had no special interest in Liberia, but explained that "the situation in Liberia until the intervention of ECOMOG constituted a serious threat to the peace and security of the West African sub-region and indeed the African continent as a whole."<sup>24</sup> On the purpose of sending Nigerian troops to Liberia, the President again stressed:

Unless arrested, the carnage in that country (Liberia) could have spilled over to neighbouring countries, leading to external non-African intervention and thereby posing a security threat to us all. We therefore decided to send our troops to participate in this laudable peace-keeping mission. We have repeatedly declared that Nigeria has no territorial interest in that country or indeed anywhere outside our own borders.<sup>25</sup>

In addition, the initiative was also seen as a new thrust in Nigeria's foreign policy. Thus, by exercising the nation's new foreign policy orientations, Gen. Babangida asserted that "Nigeria has evolved to the point of acceptance of the fact and reality that the conduct of our international relations and foreign policy may at times involve certain contractual military and other obligations beyond our borders."<sup>26</sup>



### External Reaction to Nigeria Initiative

Despite the proclamations of the good intentions of Nigeria's role in ensuring and maintaining peace and security in Liberia, there are those who hold the view that Nigeria's intervention in the Liberian crisis is based on the Nigerian President's quest for personal gratification and power drive within the sub-region.

Firstly, the Francophone African countries believed that the formation of the ECOMOG at the behest of Nigeria was an attempt to dominate and impose the will of the English-speaking members on them, and they believe that the ECOMOG would be used in future by Nigeria to interfere in their domestic affairs. This perhaps explains why the bulk of the ECOMOG troops are from the English-speaking member countries of the ECOWAS. Secondly, according to Charles Taylor, Nigeria's involvement in the Liberian conflict was initially geared towards sustaining the Doe regime in power, and subsequently aimed at forming a puppet government in Liberia. To buttress his accusations, the NPFL leader alleged:

- a. That in 1990, Nigeria, under the leadership of President Babangida, sent a plane load of "gifts" presumed to be arms to President Samuel Doe. According to Charles Taylor, these gifts were not just pure relief materials but boxes of arms and ammunition sent by Nigeria and which was aimed at changing the tide of war in Liberia.<sup>27</sup>
- b. That a few months before the "gift" to Liberia, a respected member of the NPFL and a renowned economist – Dr. Fagbah Noy Tipoteh whose visit coincided with late President Doe's state visit to Nigeria – was detained in Nigeria for nine days without trial.
- c. That Nigeria, a close ally of the Doe's regime, refused to evacuate her citizens even at the face of threat by NPFL in form of a handwritten note, most especially when other countries were evacuating their citizens.<sup>28</sup>

- d. Taylor also based his argument on the fact that the Nigeria government refused to condemn president Doe's human rights violations in Liberia. He further wondered, why is it that it was when the NPFL took up arms to oust the Doe's regime that Nigeria and other ECOWAS leaders decided to intervene in resolving the conflict.<sup>29</sup>

Also there are those who hold the view that ECOMOG is a creation of Nigeria to achieve her expansionist tendencies. This, they asserted, is why Nigeria has invested more human and material resources in the enterprise than any other country.<sup>30</sup>

Critics of the peace enforcement mandate are quick to point out that ECOMOG is fast constituting itself into an army of occupation.<sup>31</sup> Speaking in this light, a US State Department spokesman, Richard Bourcher, commented in 1992 that the threat of widening military conflict jeopardizes the ECOMOG program of encampment, disarmament and elections negotiated by West African leaders.<sup>32</sup>

### Internal Reaction to Nigeria's Initiatives

At the formation of the ECOMOG, most Nigerians perceive the nation's initiative at peace-keeping in Liberia as a novel approach to conflict resolution. They were therefore full of commendations for their leader for taking such a bold initiative at regional peace-keeping within the sub-region. Gen. Yakubu Gowon (rtd), Nigeria's former head of state under whose regime the nation witnessed a civil war between 1967 and 1970, considered the Nigerian move at solving the crisis in Liberia quite commendable. General Gowon argued:

Any responsible leader in a country like Nigeria ... that is faced with a problem in the region that may threaten the existence of a member country and possibly may spread to others should stop it because if not stopped, it could set the entire region ablaze with instability, revolution etc.<sup>33</sup>

At the inception of the ECOMOG, an interview conducted by the author with the public and members of the military revealed two basic facts. One, majority of the members of the military believed that the government at that time adopted a diversionary tactic aimed at drawing the military's attention away from the tension generated by worsening economic conditions within the country. So, in order to keep the military busy and thus forestall a bloody or palace coup, the government embarked on the Liberian mission with such tenacity never witnessed before in the nation's history.

The second point revealed by the interview pointed towards the cankerworm of corruption in the Nigerian society. Majority of the members of the public believed that the government committed itself to the implementation of the Liberian peace process so actively in order to squander the profits made from the sale of oil during the Gulf War crisis of 1991.

### **An Assessment of the Cost of Nigeria's Involvement in the Liberian Crisis**

#### **Financial Costs**

One of the fallouts from spearheading a major peace-keeping operation such as ECOMOG is the associated financial and economic cost required to maintain troops and equipment, provide logistic support, procure arms and render other supportive services. Though the ECOWAS created a special emergency fund for the ECOMOG operations in Liberia with an initial amount of fifty million U.S. dollars (\$50m), which shall be derived from contributions of member states of the community donor governments and institutions outside the region, we should note that this amount is far from being adequate for keeping the peace in Liberia.<sup>34</sup> To help ECOWAS out of this dilemma, the USA in September 25, 1991 made an initial contribution of \$500,000 in peace-keeping funds to ECOWAS and a subsequent bilateral grant of 3.75 million

dollars in foreign military financing funds to support the ECOWAS peace process and ECOMOG participants who are in dire financial circumstances. In addition, on October 3, 1991 the USA further announced an additional \$3.3 million to help the ECOMOG peace-keeping force in Liberia.<sup>35</sup>

Apart from the funds and financial contributions from the USA, Nigeria has expended on the peace-keeping operations so far:

- a. a conservative estimate of three billion naira into ECOMOG, out of which 2.8 billion is through the Nigerian National Petroleum Corporation (NNPC) alone.
- b. "between \$250 million and \$500 million out of the \$5 billion the Federal Military Government reaped from the Gulf War oil sales windfall."<sup>36</sup>
- c. In servicing the ECOMOG peace mission, it was alleged that the NNPC opened credit lines to the tune of \$150 million (about 2.7 billion naira) with a London bank for the purpose of financing ECOMOG.<sup>37</sup>
- d. The Federal Government was also accused of engaging in over-spending leading to N35 billion fiscal deficit in 1991. By the middle of the 1992 fiscal year, there existed a N14.8 billion budgetary over-spill by the Federal Government, thereby resulting in Red-Budgeting. In fact, a World Bank publication reveals that not more than "some \$2 billion increase in oil proceeds that resulted from the Gulf-war windfall were explicit in the Federal Government's spending of oil revenue through dedication accounts and other devices outside the purview of statutory budgetary and accounting controls."<sup>38</sup>
- e. Maj. Gen. Ike Nwachukwu (rtd), the minister of external affairs during the inception of the ECOMOG also confirmed that not less than 70 percent of the expenses of ECOMOG was being picked up by Nigeria for military and strategic reasons.<sup>39</sup>

To many observers, however, these billions of naira spent by Nigeria in her peace-keeping mission in Liberia represents an opportunity cost of the goods and services that could otherwise have been provided for starving Nigerians. Coupled with this is the fact that the money so far spent on the ECOMOG mission constitutes a drain on the economic resources of the nation since it entails the diversion of money from new investments, thus retarding economic growth.

### Human Costs

The direct confrontation between ECOMOG and Charles Taylor-led NPFL troops resulted in the loss of lives of Nigerian soldiers and innocent Liberian citizens. Through the ECOMOG peace enforcement mandate, direct artillery and infantry assault were resorted to by both sides. This resulted in terrible casualties for the ECOMOG troops and the Nigerian troops in particular. The incident of July 31, 1992, when NPFL forces were alleged to have killed two ECOMOG soldiers, one of them a Nigerian, is noteworthy. On the 15th of October 1992, Charles Taylor categorically declared war on ECOMOG. Taylor accused ECOMOG of mounting artillery and jet bomber assault against his troops. In response to these attacks, Taylor launched "OPERATION OCTOPUS" – an all-out offensive against the ECOMOG troops on the 15th of October 1992. He bombarded the ECOMOG position for almost three hours. This assault resulted in unprecedented massive casualties on both sides.<sup>40</sup> The extent of human cost may never be made public for political reasons.

### Conclusion

The Nigerian initiative at keeping the peace in Liberia was a bold attempt at maintaining peace and security within the African continent. In meeting her responsibilities as a regional leader, Nigeria has contributed immensely, in terms of troops, finance and other logistic requirement, to the ECOMOG peace mission in Liberia. Unfortunately, the problem generated by the armed

confrontations between the ECOMOG force and the Charles Taylor-led NPFL forces leaves a lot to be desired.

Today the Liberian crisis remains a quagmire – a stalemate, with the general implications of heightened crisis, loss of human lives, refugee problems, instability and insecurity within the West African sub-region. In order to put an end to these problems, ECOWAS leaders have made repeated calls to the U.N. and the USA to help mediate in the conflict. Despite the call on the international community for assistance, West African leaders still believe in solving the Liberian problem through a sub-regional effort. General Babangida's repeated call for a conflict resolution in the African region through a regional framework is particularly of relevance here. According to him (Babangida) Africans must continue to address the Liberian problem within a sub-regional framework and whatever problem encountered in doing so should be accepted as part of a long-term learning process from which we all stand to benefit.<sup>41</sup>

It is the opinion of this author that for any meaningful resolution of the Liberian crisis, all the warring factions must be incorporated into the peace process. We also believe that ECOMOG should be upgraded into a truly multinational peace-keeping force. Finally, we would like to recommend that future peace-keeping initiatives by either the ECOWAS, O.A.U. or any other regional / sub-regional body should bear in mind the following points:

- a. The consideration of the willingness on the part of the various combatants in a crisis and emphasis on preventive diplomacy.
- b. Adoption of a commitment and control between both the various warring factions and the peace-keepers themselves.
- c. An explicit declaration of the mandate of the peace-keeping operations that will reflect the political consensus behind the deployment of forces.



- e. Ensuring the neutrality of the peace-keepers, so that they do not give room for doubts about their honest intentions in such a mission.

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37. *The African Concord*, August 10th 1992, p. 23.
38. For full details see: *The African Guardian* of september 28, 1992, p. 22.
39. *The African Guardian*, p. 22.
40. *The African Guardian*, p. 22.
41. See the *Newswatch* (Nigeria) of November 2, 1992, p. 37.
42. For full details of the proposed solutions to the Liberian crisis, See The Address of President Babangida delivered in Abuja (October 29, 1992) at an International Seminar to intimate the World about the Liberian crisis. See also the *Daily Times* (Nigeria) October 30, 1992, p. 1.