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# Violent Peacekeeping: An Evaluation of the Performance of ECOWAS in the First Liberian Civil War (1989-1996)

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ASIM RIZVANOVIC, SEP 5 2013

*I wish to express my gratitude to the people of Liberia for inspiring me to tackle this project; particularly the countless former combatants who inspired me to investigate ECOWAS. I hereby wholeheartedly dedicate this dissertation unto them. My parents too deserve recognition for their on-going support. Finally, I extend my gratitude to my supervisor and tutor, Dr. Taku Tamaki, who has provided intellectual insight and personal support throughout my time at university.*

## List of Abbreviations

**AFL** – Armed Forces of Liberia

**AP** – Associated Press

**BBC** – British Broadcasting Corporation

**CNN** – Central News Network

**ECOMOG** – Economic Community of West African States Monitoring Group (in the case of Liberia usually consisted of Nigeria, Ghana, Sierra Leone, Gambia and Guinea)

**ECOWAS** – Economic Community of West African States (Cape Verde, Senegal, The Gambia, Guinea-Bissau, Sierra Leone, Guinea, Liberia, Cote d' Ivoire, Niger, Nigeria, Ghana, Togo, Benin, Burkina Faso and Mali)

**FCO** – Foreign and Commonwealth Office (United Kingdom)

**HRVIC** – Human Rights Violations Investigation Commission

**HRW** – Human Rights Watch

**IGNU** – Interim Government of National Unity

**INPFL** – Independent National Patriotic Front of Liberia

**NATO** – North Atlantic Treaty Organisation

**NPFL** – National Patriotic Front of Liberia

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**OAU** – Organisation of African Unity

**PMAD** – Protocol relating to Mutual Assistance on Defence

**PNA** – Protocol relating to Non-Aggression

**RUF** – Revolutionary United Front

**TRC** – Truth and Reconciliation Commission

**ULIMO** – United Liberation Movement of Liberia for Democracy

**ULIMO-J** – United Liberation Movement of Liberia for Democracy – Johnson faction

**ULIMO-K** – United Liberation Movement of Liberia for Democracy – Kromah faction

**UN** – United Nations

**UNSC** – United Nations Security Council

**XGNS** – Xinhua General News Service

## **Abstract**

This dissertation examines the performance of ECOWAS in the first Liberian civil war (1989-1996). I begin with an introduction to the Liberian conflict and Liberia, allowing me to contextualise the intervention. From the viewpoint I establish, I consider the build-up to the intervention and show that due to a poor framework and lack of intra-ECOWAS consensus, the organisation violated the right to self-determination of the Liberian people, as well as contravened its own protocols. Next, I investigate the actual intervention, arguing that it was a biased, violent attempt at bringing peace. I find that ECOWAS caused the war to be prolonged, and that the organisation itself was just as violent as the rebels it was seeking to pacify. Finally, I draw briefly on subsequent conflicts that the organisation has launched itself into, arguing that despite similar experiences in Liberia, the organisation was unable to evolve. These failures I compound together to argue that ECOWAS was unsuccessful in its mission in Liberia.

## **Chapter One: Introduction**

*“The journalists came here to fill in the blanks... Utterly impossible”*

*Charles Taylor*

The Economic Community of West African States (ECOWAS) is a sub-regional organisation in West Africa, with a membership consisting of Cape Verde, Senegal, The Gambia, Guinea, Guinea-Bissau, Sierra Leone, Liberia, Mali, Cote d’Ivoire, Nigeria, Togo, Benin, Niger, Burkina Faso, and Ghana. In this dissertation, I seek to examine the role played by ECOWAS as well as its military component, the ECOWAS Monitoring Group (ECOMOG), in the Liberian conflict, and to consider its performance as a conflict-management mechanism.

The first Liberian civil war ended over seventeen years ago, and as Liberia is currently at peace, it is too often unquestionably accepted that ECOWAS was successful in its attempt to bring about peace within the state. For example Khobe (2000) proclaims that ECOWAS was successful, but other authors such as Gberie (2003) disagree with such sentiments. Gberie (2003: 154) argues that peacekeeping missions can only be undertaken by West African states with “enormous foreign assistance”. It does then appear that at the very least there is dissent amongst the literature, with sides supporting varied positions, or advocating different agendas. I therefore seek to contribute to the discussion by widening the foci. Instead of merely concentrating on ECOMOG, I draw on ECOWAS itself to

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support my claim that the organisation only hindered Liberia, rather than pacified it. I will also briefly compare the relative performances of ECOWAS in the conflicts of Sierra Leone and Guinea-Bissau, to show that the organisation was unable to learn from its own mistakes in Liberia.

## *Chapter Plan*

In this introductory chapter I highlight my research questions, and consider the current available literature, and how my own work fits in with that. My methodology and limitations are shown here as well. In the second chapter I provide a historical background of Liberia, portraying the environment into which ECOWAS would intervene. The creation of ECOWAS, how this impacted on the intervention, and the legal aspects and issues of self-determination are dealt with in chapter three. Chapter four concerns the intervention proper, and there I will look into the political and military behaviour of ECOWAS to highlight what I aim to show are gross failures. The concluding chapter assesses the relative performance of ECOWAS in two subsequent interventions, in Guinea-Bissau and in Sierra Leone. This I do to highlight that ECOWAS has not learnt sufficient lessons from Liberia, and in actual fact went on to make the same mistakes many years later.

## *Clarification of Terms and Limitations of Study*

It is of importance to note that in this dissertation I deal with the entirety of ECOWAS as an organisation, as opposed to limiting myself to dealing with the states that officially partook in the military intervention in Liberia. The term 'Community' is used throughout interchangeably with 'ECOWAS'. It is also of note that the term 'West Africa' always refers to ECOWAS member states.

I use the term 'failure' to indicate performances of the organisation that contravened its intended purposes. For example, when a member state breaches an ECOWAS protocol, I state that to be failure. Such failures I sum together to evaluate the performance of ECOWAS in its relationship with Liberia. It is vital to understand that Community members followed differing policies; hence performance appraisals are gauged by the organisation's stated aims, as opposed to gauging them against any one state's intentions.

Finally, it is highly important to be aware of the fact that this dissertation merely deals with the first Liberian civil war (1989-1996).

## *Research Questions*

The first question I seek to answer is how did the formation of ECOWAS lead to member states being able to act out policies on their own accord? This question relates to the problem of intra-ECOWAS policy incoordination. As member states contributed to the conflict in Liberia in a disparate way, it is vital to consider how such failures were allowed to occur. To answer this it is imperative to consider the protocols that ECOWAS was built on. Secondly, I question the legality of the conflict, and ask whether ECOWAS contravened the UN Charter and the Liberian peoples' right to self-determination. This question concerns some of the legal aspects of the conflict and seeks to examine whether or not ECOWAS contravened the UN Charter by intervening in the Liberian conflict. It also seeks to examine whether ECOWAS barred the Liberian people from their right to self-determination. Thirdly, I examine issues of bias and ask if Nigeria or ECOWAS biased, and if so, how this affected the conflict. It is important to question the bias of Nigeria (as a supposed regional hegemon), as well as that of ECOWAS. Bias by either party would result in an 'unnatural' resolution of the conflict, as well possibly prolonging it and hence causing further damage. Finally I question if ECOWAS learnt sufficient lessons from the case of Liberia so as to excuse it from its failures. This I perform by briefly investigating the performances by ECOWAS in the conflicts of Sierra Leone and Guinea Bissau. The aim of this is to inquire as to whether or not ECOWAS learned from the mistakes that it had made in Liberia, as an improvement would possibly pardon some of its earlier mistakes, if it has managed to evolve into a more effective organisation.

## *Methodology and Potential Challenges*

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Throughout this dissertation I predominantly rely on secondary sources, including books, journal articles, official reports, and news articles (both online and print-based). I also make use of primary sources such as treaties, protocols and election results. Such documents are bound to be liable to disparate interpretation, hence I utilise secondary sources in conjunction so as to provide more balanced analyses. The vast majority of this dissertation draws on qualitative research, although I do supplement this with portions of quantitative data from organisations such as Human Rights Watch and the US Energy Information Administration when necessary.

My primary research is limited to utilising such documents as exemplified above, as any further primary research such as conducting a widespread opinion poll of the Liberian population would be immensely time-consuming and costly.

There is a danger in that some sources may be biased in favour or contra ECOWAS, as some have been written by participants of the Liberian conflict, hence I would be reticent to accept all such sources without juxtaposing them with similar sources by different authors.

## *Current Research*

The following literature review is of course not indicative of the entirety of the literature available on the topic, but is rather an attempt to portray how the topic has been approached in the past, and how such approaches have faltered or succeeded in their contribution to the discussion.

Via this review, I aim to highlight the chief gaps in the current debate; some of which I intend this dissertation to contribute research to. The issue of Liberia has caught the world's attention intermittently over the past two decades, but the Tuareg uprising in Mali has sparked a resurgence of debate about the validity and usefulness of military interventions in African states (BBC, 2012), particularly, those states that occupy the western region of Africa. This renaissance of discussion is often fixated on the merits of the concept of 'allowing' African states to deal with African matters themselves, as opposed to inviting or submitting unto non-African states for support.

Molnár (2008: 55) argues that ECOMOG is a "viable solution for West African problems", adding that "its importance to handle regional crisis cannot be denied" (2008: 61). It does seem undeniable that ECOMOG (and by extension ECOWAS), plays a key role in conflicts in the region (simply because it exists), but this does not inherently define its role as a "viable solution". Molnár (2008: 60) admits the various contentious issues surrounding the involvement of ECOWAS, such as the "prolongation of the war itself", but does not seem to concede that such results are massively damaging to a state (HRW, 1997). Molnár (2008: 61) concludes by arguing that "it [ECOMOG] has built the basis for further developments to create a viable state in Africa". This ambiguous statement purports all the hallmarks of eurocentrism, and disappointingly, the author offers no clear definition of what exactly a "viable" solution looks like, though she does offer the means to that solution: ECOMOG. The approach by Molnár seems to lack any clear methodology, and she crassly highlights events that are pertinent to the argument being made, whilst at the same time spuriously disregarding vital facts such as ECOMOG's cooperation with militant groups, hence disallowing a balanced analysis.

Khobe (2000) too is supportive of ECOWAS, praising the organisation in its role in the conflict, stating that "...[ECOMOG] is a positive security development requiring some finetuning", and that it "successfully...restored functional state structure in Liberia". It may be stated that the development of ECOWAS is conducive to the state of intra-African relations, but his second declaration is very susceptible to criticism indeed. What he does not mention directly is that it took seven years for a long enough lull in violence so as to allow elections, and a further six before Liberia would be at peace after the second civil war, and only after the UN had intervened. The validity of the argument that Khobe (2000) purports falls flat furthermore as questions of bias arise, due to his being Commander of ECOMOG in its mission in Sierra Leone. He describes the ECOMOG mission in Liberia as one which sought to "reinstate law and order" by defeating the "drug addicted combatants". The fact is that ECOMOG itself was committing acts of violence and other forms of criminality, as highlighted by Berman and Sams (2003) as well as Horvitz and Catherwood (2006), who at the very least partially nullify the praise Khobe (2000) so unapologetically dispatches. Furthermore, the methodology used certainly lacks any scientific rigour. Frequently ascribing acts of

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criminality unto rebels, he seems to lack or at least cite any evidence. Whilst he continuously sensationalises the topic, using the term “anarchy” throughout; he manages to conveniently disregard the severity of damage that ECOWAS caused to Liberia.

Khobe (2000), Molnár (2008), Jenkins (2005), Gberie (2003) and a plethora of other authors make their analyses based merely on the parties that contributed to ECOMOG. This is why I argue that the discussion vis-à-vis this topic is severely lacking, and hence my dissertation seeks to consider the entirety of the Community in its relationship with Liberia, and how said relationship affected that particular state. Although Gberie (2003: 147) treats the case of Liberia just by considering ECOMOG, he does sustain throughout his argument that ECOMOG, although well intentioned, was a failure; “[a] heroic failure”. It is clear though that Gberie (2003) could have gone much further in his analysis had he considered ECOWAS and not just ECOMOG.

Although the literature in my avenue of investigation is limited, there is more than enough evidence to sustain my position throughout this dissertation. Particularly useful is the paper by Mortimer (1996) which deals with the francophone states’ involvement (or lack thereof) in Liberia, with a specific focus on Senegal. Mortimer (1996: 306) describes how the “political consensus so imperative for success” lacked prior to Senegalese involvement, but even remained “elusive over the period of direct Senegalese participation”. Much like Gberie (2003), Mortimer (1996) simply does not seem to draw the various issues together to finally and conclusively show that ECOWAS failed Liberia.

Aoi (2011) highlights the evidence that indicates that Nigeria was a highly biased actor within ECOWAS, a position shared by Adeleke (1995), who provides a highly relevant account of the Nigerian role within ECOWAS. Adeleke (1995: 591) explains that “Nigeria orchestrated the formation of ECOMOG”, a widely supported theory, including by Aoi (2011) and Nweke (2010). Though this would appear true to some extent, it is a drastic oversight to ignore the reality that many Community members were apathetic, and hence the balances and checks that should have been enacted against Nigeria simply were not, as shown by Mortimer (1996), and yet other states even sponsored and helped instigate the war in Liberia, as argued by Huband (1990). Adeleke (1995) does draw attention to this, but does not ascribe such a failure directly to ECOWAS.

Adeleke (1995: 593) seems to hold an ambiguous position with regards to his views on ECOMOG, arguing that it would be a “fatal error” for West African states to rely on ECOMOG as a counter-insurgency tool; but does not heavily criticise the organisation. Adeleke (1995) also states that to merely focus on the legality of the conflict is to ignore the reality of the violence, a similar position to that of Molnár (2008). Both authors discount the usefulness of a legal appraisal, yet both seem to be unaware that humanitarian causes were certainly not of chief concern for ECOWAS, as shown by Jenkins (2005).

The work of Jenkins (2005) is particularly pertinent as he conducts a legal assessment of the ECOMOG intervention, usefully showing that human rights were not a priority. Though the work is beneficial, it is merely so with regards to an analysis of ECOWAS and its position in situ of a UN contingent. Jenkins (2005) supports the intervention as it conforms to Nanda’s (1998: 827) framework for the “validity of humanitarian intervention”. The framework is a lens with which to analyse a conflict and decide whether or not a humanitarian intervention is legal. Whilst Nanda’s overall methodology and research appears sound, the arrogance of purporting a legal framework based on such ethnocentric thought is clearly questionable, particularly considering Jenkins (2005) uses it to deliberate as to whether or not the intervention was legal.

Despite my opposition to some of Jenkins (2005) methods, I do utilise his paper as it is a useful legal appraisal, as long as its inherent eurocentrism is kept in mind. In this dissertation I build on the work of the likes of Gberie (2003), Adeleke (1995), Aoi (2001), and others, in an attempt to disprove the likes of Molnár (2008) and Khobe (2000), whilst attempting to avoid the traps of ethnocentrism as succumbed to by the likes of Jenkins (2005) and Nanda (1998). I aim to unite various bodies of evidence to show that ECOWAS, as a sub-regional organisation, failed Liberia.

## **Chapter Two: Coups, Cannibalism and Corruption: An Introduction to the First Liberian Civil War**

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## (1989-1996)

In order to accurately hypothesise my arguments, it is first vital to contextualise the intervention by portraying the system into which ECOWAS would intervene. A basic familiarity of the complexities of the Liberian conflict is a vital prerequisite in order to understand just how fallacious ECOWAS was in its activities before, during, and after the conflict.

### *The Creation of the Liberian State*

Since at least the 12<sup>th</sup> century, the geographic area that Liberia now occupies has been inhabited (Runn-Marcos and Kollehon, 2005: 5). The ethnic balance of the area was upset in 1820, when after the American Civil War, the American Colonization Society began transporting freed slaves to the zone, to set up the state of Liberia. The freed slaves that landed on the coast developed an identity which they called 'Americo-Liberian', rapidly establishing a disparity of identity with the indigenous population. Moran (2006: 2) states that "Liberia was never formally colonized"; technically correct, but far from the truth. The reality was that "its relationship with the United States has always resembled that between colonized and colonizer" (Rinehart, 1985 cited in Ngovo, 1999: 45). Wegmann (2008: 7-8) further enunciates this point, insisting that natives were banned from the "highest echelons of settler society". It was this very mentality that divided the populous.

The most significant period of time for the Liberian state prior to the commencement of the armed conflicts was during the tenure of President William Tubman and President William Tolbert (1944-1980). Both were members of the True Whig Party, and both were descendants of freed slaves. Tubman is widely regarded as one of Africa's first leaders to create a personality cult; he sought to portray himself as a president capable of taking on many roles (Dennis and Dennis, 2008: 42-43). His domination of the state and the lack of any autonomous institutions would spell disaster later for Samuel Doe, who would overthrow Tubman's successor, Tolbert. Despite Tubman's ambitions to control the state in an ever more totalitarian manner, he did realise the limitations of the institutions and began to slowly reform areas of the economic and political system. Tolbert, having succeeded Tubman, continued to push forward reforms and even accelerated them. Ordinary citizens became politically-inclined, and their loss of ignorance made them socially aware of what was really going on within the country (Fahnbulleh, 1993 cited in Ellis, 1994: 175). This dissatisfaction further augmented with the three chief economic problems Liberia faced in the 70s:

- i) Depressed rubber prices. Liberia is a major exporter of rubber, (Verité, 2012: 12).
- ii) Government plans to increase rice prices from \$22 per hundred-pound bag to \$26, (Global Security, 1985).
- iii) The drastic increase of oil prices. In 1960 the price of a single barrel was \$1.80; by 1980 it was \$35.69, (\$13.48 and \$95.89 in 2011 terms, respectively), (US Energy Information Administration, 2001).

### *The Failure of Liberia's Own Version of Glasnost & Perestroika*

On the 12<sup>th</sup> of April, 1980, Master Sergeant Samuel Doe led a coup d' état contra Tubman, and installed himself as the president. Doe, who was not Americo-Liberian but of the Krahn tribe, allowed for a more free press, but took control of the state apparatus by promoting his fellow Krahn tribesmen into areas of power, particularly within the AFL (Armed Forces of Liberia). Doe's tribally biased snatching and consolidation of power built on the ethnic tension caused by settler presence and dominance.

During the 1980s, despite Doe's horrendous human rights record, Liberia was receiving more aid than ever before (RAD-AID, 2009). Doe's close relationship with the US was seen as a problem for some regional players, particularly Libya. Libya wanted Doe out and supported Charles Taylor's National Patriotic Front of Liberia (NPFL), as part of Qaddafi's regional attempt to influence affairs (Ikechi, 2003: 42). The aforementioned fighters, alongside mercenaries from The Gambia, Sierra Leone and Burkina Faso (Hoffman, 2004), came across the border from Cote d'Ivoire on the 24<sup>th</sup> December, 1989. They began by attacking Butuo in Nimba County. The AFL and Mandingo tribe came together to fight back against the NPFL, igniting ethnic tensions. The AFL began to attack Gio and Mano tribe

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members due to mistrust of the two groups, particularly since many immediately supported the NPFL invasion (HRW, 1990). Doe singled out political opponents, ensuring they were purged (HRW, 1993).

Charles Taylor has been regularly accused of crimes such as cannibalism (Hudson, 2008), but in many cases he was simply unable to control his troops (Lidow, 2008; BBC, 2009). Taylor proved his prowess as a leader, and made use of the media, particularly the BBC Africa Service. Furthermore, with his use of boys as combatants, he was able to rapidly achieve a cult status. One rebel leader, 'General Butt-Naked' (Benjamin Milton Blayihi, now an Evangelist priest) says that by simply showing young boys violent films, he was able to make them conquer their fears, and to make them do what he wants because they believe in an alternate reality; "...so everything they are doing is a type of movie" (Anastasion and Strauss, 2011).

By the end of 1990, the NPFL was in control of the whole of Liberia bar Monrovia. Amnesty International (1996) reported that 700 000 citizens had fled the country, from a 1989 population of 2 150 000 (The World Bank, 2013). More than 80 000 Krahn had escaped the country, from a population of just 125000 (HRW, 1990). In the same year ECOWAS intervened to establish ECOMOG.

Despite Taylor's apparent success, one section of the NPFL had broken off to form the Independent NPFL (INPFL), led by Prince Johnson (who is currently a senator in the Liberian Congress). It was the INPFL who would finally capture Samuel Doe as he left the Executive Mansion to meet with ECOMOG commanders. Johnson abducted, tortured, and killed him (LiveLeak, 2011). The death of Doe did not make matters much simpler as Taylor refused to recognise anyone but himself as President (AP, 1990a). At the same time a Sierra Leone-sponsored armed group emerged called the United Liberation Movement of Liberia for Democracy (ULIMO) (Lidow, 2011: 56).

## *Uniting Against The NPFL*

The warring factions found a common enemy in Taylor, when on the 15<sup>th</sup> October 1992 the NPFL launched a raid against Monrovia, in 'Operation Octopus'. ECOMOG managed to stave off the attack, but its credibility as a neutral peace-keeping force was bought into question. ECOMOG not only went on the offensive against the NPFL, but it actively rearmed the AFL, and even conducted joint-operations (HRW, 1993).

The stalemate continued until 1996, when finally the Abuja Accord was able to bring a temporary peace to the country. Elections were held the following year with voter turnout of around 89% (Inter-Parliamentary Union, 1997). Despite Taylor's penchant for violence, he was elected with 75% of the votes for his party, the National Patriotic Party (Independent Elections Commission, 1997). It is widely maintained that his victory in the election was not a result of such a large segment of the population genuinely supporting him; it was more a case of a fear that if he did not win, the country would slide back into war, as he was the only candidate in a position to continue fighting (Harris, 1999).

## *Liberian Animism*

The conflict was dominated by stories of human rights violations. To the outside world, the idea of wearing a mask or female clothing during a battle is a senseless idea, with no rationale. It is though utterly fallacious to dispose of this philosophical standpoint with such repugnance. It is imperative to consider Liberian development not in constant relation to European thought and development, but against its own timeline. Various factors were at play during the conflict, one of them being a secret society known as Poro, whose tendencies can be applied to the sights seen on the various Liberian battlefields. Young fighters have been frequently captured on film wearing inappropriate eyewear or bizarre masks. Masks in Poro society are worn by 'devils' which exist partly as entertainers, but also as a means of punishing citizens they deem to be in violation of Poro code (Little, 1965). The person behind the mask (or in female clothing), believes that by using the mask, he (Poro is a male only society) has become a new person, and any act committed is the fault of the new personality. It is this very mentality that Liberian fighters adopted. They simply believed that any indiscretions were the fault of the 'mask'.

Cannibalism was widely reported in Liberia (Stucke, 1996). Images of young fighters consuming deceased enemies

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are plentiful, and western audiences are quick to be appalled. The rationale behind such acts is somewhat simple. It is not a question of lacking food, but almost a question of respect. By consuming dead enemy combatants, fighters believed that they would absorb any skills they possessed. Cannibalism in Liberia even retains a hierarchy of consumption, whereby leaders are to receive the heart and liver (Stucke, 1996). Despite the anecdotal and video evidence, the true statistics are unknown, and this must be kept in mind before too many assumptions are made.

## *Conclusion: The Continuing Misrepresentation of Liberia*

The media in general has played a devastating role in the defamation of Liberian society. A case in point is a 'documentary' by Vice (2010), wherein it portrayed Liberia as a society where cannibals and warlords are running amok. The utterly erroneous documentary was supported by many media outlets, such as CNN (Capper, 2010), and The Huffington Post (Sabloff, 2010). The reality in Liberia, is quite different. The country is still facing issues such as high rates of corruption (Rizvanovic, 2012), but it has improved immensely since the end of its second conflict. More thorough publications such as The Economist (2013), and AllAfrica (2011), as well as the UNSC (2012), have proven beyond all reasonable doubt that Liberia is past its truly dark days.

The overall situation in Liberia started with the arrival of freed slaves. The dominance and subsequent disallowed social evolution and progress of natives bred resentment, hatred and overall ignorance. The development of Liberia has been set back decades by non-native involvement. The settlers not only dominated the natives, but they laid the groundwork for ethnic tensions many decades later. This delayed development is all too obvious when analysing many social norms, traditions and belief-systems of various groups within the country.

Though I have seldom referred directly to ECOWAS in this chapter, it is mandatory to consider this brief cultural and historical analysis as it will prove indispensable in conjunction with an analysis of ECOWAS's actions in the conflict.

## **Chapter Three: Introducing ECOWAS: The Road to 'Peace-Enforcement'**

Having established a brief historical and cultural depiction of the Liberian civil war and Liberia itself, I am now able to shift the focal point back onto ECOWAS. The analyses provided in the posterior chapter will allow me to hypothesise my arguments contra ECOWAS in a specific continuum, as no two 'interventions' are ever the same. This chapter will portray how this economic sub-regional group arose, drawing on the case of Nigeria's influence on the matter, which will be vital for understanding that state's particular role in the conflict itself. It is oft argued and accepted that ECOWAS was biased purely due to the dominating Nigerian role. This though, I will re-examine, as although Nigeria's actions can be summed up to be consistent with realpolitik, in many ways the nation was surrounded by apathetic states not willing to contribute proportionately; hence I will argue that there was no incentive for Nigeria to detach from its self-prescribed modus operandi. It is useful to not only consider Nigeria's influence, but to contemplate the actions or lack thereof of other community members. Specifically, I will provide an interpretation of the key protocols that resulted in incoordination once the Liberian conflict actually commenced. I will further progress the discussion by arguing that it could be stated that ECOWAS did act within the UN Charter, but contravened its own protocols. This I will tie in with how the intervention prevented self-determination of the Liberian people.

## *Conceptions of Pan-Africanism*

It was President William Tubman of Liberia who brought up the idea of a West African economic union in 1964 (African Union, 1999: 1). One year later, Liberia, Guinea and Sierra Leone signed an agreement, but one which carried no actual mandate (African Union, 1999: 1). The attempt was amidst a growing ethos of pan-Africanism, which though calling for integration, was heavily divided amongst various sects, with Ghana and Nigeria taking the lead on federalist and functionalist approaches, respectively.

It was Nigeria who would go on to dictate the terms of ECOWAS, growing as it was into a regional hegemon. Ali Mazrui (1977: 2) predicted that Nigeria "...helped by its oil and the size of its population", would in twenty years "...be more influential than either Britain or France". Although it has not quite achieved this (Citigroup, 2011), its sentience of its potential for regional hegemony drove forward the development of sub-regionalism in West Africa, and its



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influence is widely acknowledged (Ojo, 1980: 571). One must take care not to place the entire emphasis on Nigeria, as the regional 'consciousness' of pan-Africanism was growing regardless, which itself resulted from former colonised states gaining independence (1957 – 1960s), and from worldwide economic shocks and changes (Asante, 1993: 744). Alongside these issues, the fact that African states had to "fend for themselves individually for their security and defence" (Mazrui, 1977: 237), further made regional integration palpable.

The Organisation of African Unity (OAU), was formed in 1963. As an integrative organisation, the OAU was lacking any real direction as it was not a "supranational organisation but an intergovernmental body" (Robson, 1968: 14). This was not enough for Nigeria nor Ghana, both of whom sought closer integration, albeit via different systems (Ojo et al, 1989: 75). Ghana favoured a Federalist approach, immediately isolating itself amongst a continent of neo-functionalism advocates (Ojo et al, 1985: 75). This pan-African debate is relevant to a limit of appreciating its existence; for full analyses see Nzewi (2008), Michel (2012), and Gandois (2008).

Nigeria in particular was anti-federalist, and the primary cause of this would be that it subscribed to the theory that centralised federalism may have difficulties in sustaining economic growth (Bagchi, 2003: 28); growth was of vital importance. Furthermore, Nigeria and other states were concerned with the constitutional changes that federalism makes necessary (Ojo et al, 1985: 75). Bagchi (2003: 28) asserts that the chief weakness of the federalist model is sustaining economic growth. Though this may be the case, others argue that federalism, with all the institutions it requires, will be in a far stronger position to counter economic shocks (Rodrik et al: 2004: 1). This distinct weakness in the functionalist/neo-functionalist approach is a direct symptom of its slow method of integration, a process which hopes for positive spill-over effects (Wallace, 2004: 15); in reality these may not materialise. This gradual integration forgoes many of the institutions that federalism brings, and lacks the legal mandate to enforce universal standards across community members. A lack of institutions can be a determining factor when it comes to attaining sustained economic growth (Rodrik et al, 2004). The importance of this debate is that Nigeria's chief focus was the economic realm, and it disregarded the advantages of federalism.

Nigeria's ability to conduct and guide African integration was clear, as the system of integration gradually became moulded by Nigeria, believing in the doctrine that "step-by-step economic decisions are superior to crucial political decisions" (Lieber, 1972: 42), and that overall, "...economic integration must precede political union" (Ojo et al, 1985: 143). This disparity with the view of Ghana laid the foundation for future trouble (Ojo et al, 1985: 144), as shall be shown. In retrospect, it is clear that the Nigerian position was fallacious in that by instigating cooperation predominantly economically, the future ECOWAS would experience problems as a result of political disagreement. Prior to focusing on growth, the Community should have focused on internal security, welfare, good governance and justice, as a state will not benefit from the fruits of economic growth without the aforementioned factors (Smith, 1776: 546). It seems as though that, for Nigeria, its ambitions of becoming the industrial heart of Africa were pivotal (Ojo, 1980: 573). It was specifically Nigerian entrepreneurs working within the Nigerian Chamber of Commerce, Industry, Mines and Agriculture who pushed for integration, and it was their very efforts that "ultimately led to the formation of ECOWAS" (Ojo, 1980: 579). This determination to pursue economic growth, coupled with Nigeria's overall aim to become a regional superpower meant that it essentially 'cut corners' when it came to integration, so as not to give up any sovereignty.

Although security commitments were omitted from the first treaty of ECOWAS, Nigeria very much had security on its mind, particularly its own. The Nigerian civil war (1967-1970) saw the rebelling side, Biafra, receive support from both France (FCO, 1969) and Francophone states (Fountain, 2000). By establishing itself as regional hegemon, Nigeria would be able to conduct affairs in the region, and diminish France's neo-colonialist influence (Kabia, 2009: 58). A Federalist approach would have required surrendering some degree of sovereignty, and so too would have a more 'political union'. By cementing its position as a regional superpower, Nigeria, as a direct effect, would benefit from 'soft-power', comparable to the US doctrine of 'dollar diplomacy', (US Department of State, n.d.). Nigeria's own aggressive attitude to secessionist movements it would come to export to other West-African states, of relevance in this case, Liberia.

## *Forming ECOWAS*

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The section above allows a brief insight into the pre-ECOWAS era, and portrays how Nigeria was very much the driving force behind regionalism in West-Africa. The following section moves onto the actual creation of ECOWAS, and I will highlight the key failures in its conception; failures that manifested themselves in the Liberian conflict.

In 1975, on the 28<sup>th</sup> May, fifteen states from the West African region became signatories to the 'Treaty of Lagos', forming ECOWAS. Nivet (2006: 13) argues that the treaty stipulates that membership is based purely on geographical factors, and examining the treaty, this is indeed the case, as there are no other requirements (Treaty of Lagos, 1975). In comparison the EU has a different type of criteria, including economic and democratic standards (European Parliament, 1998; Treaty of Maastricht, 1992; European Council, 1993). Importantly, the treaty does not specify any security matters, it merely allows for the creation of "...other Commissions or bodies as may well be established or provided for by this treaty" (Treaty of Lagos, 1975); this overlooked factor would become an indication of ECOWAS-style integration, with many facets such as security continuously being ill-considered.

Due to the absence of key areas, as mentioned above, it quickly became apparent to the Community, as it has to the EU, that integration is not a "terminal state", but a continuous process of "indefinite nature" (Haas, 1970: 18). Haas is correct in his description of integration, but in reality, policy-makers will not always be aware of this, and if they are, they may reject further integration, often citing sovereignty issues (Johnson, 2009). Eventually though, in 1978, the Community signed the 'Protocol on Non-Aggression', (PNA). The protocol states that the Community "...cannot attain its objectives save in an atmosphere of peace and harmonious understanding among the member states of the community" (PNA, 1978). It requires signatories to "...refrain from the threat or use of force" (PNA, 1978) and to "...refrain from committing, encouraging or condoning acts of subversion" (PNA, 1978). The attention is paid merely to the macro-level and does not take into account any other issues, such as societal and environmental problems. This method was counter Buzan (1981: 20), who argues that security must take on a "broader framework". This is indeed highly applicable to West Africa, where conflicts are more often than not a result of ethnic, religious, and economic divides (International Alert, 2004).

Three years later, the ECOWAS pattern of lacklustre integration continued with an updated version of the PNA, but more importantly with the 'Protocol Relating to Mutual Assistance of Defence' (PMAD). The integration called for by the latter is not unlike one of the principles of NATO. The North Atlantic Treaty reads: "The parties agree that an armed attack against one or more of them in Europe or North America shall be considered an attack against them all" (1949). The similarity can be seen in the PMAD, "...any armed threat or aggression directed against any Member State shall constitute a threat or aggression against the entire Community" (1981). The protocol also required that states submit unto the Community "...units from the existing National Armed Forces in case of any armed intervention" (1981). This attempt to create an integrated force lacked any clear definition, meaning that states could get away without 'pulling their weight'. Ajulo (2001: 75) writes that ECOWAS generates "...legal rules and regulations applicable in all member states", but the verisimilitude of this statement must be considered carefully. It does indeed create such rules, but Slinn and Allott (1982: 1-2) state that there must be regional consensus vis-à-vis regulation and conflict-resolution in order to achieve an effective system. Ajulo (2001: 78), then by his own admission accepts that "...the legal systems in West Africa are largely eclectic". Ajulo's second point here is symptomatic of the situation within ECOWAS, and constituent members were happy to frequently reinterpret protocols via their own understanding in order to achieve various goals; a drastic failure which would manifest itself as delays and apathy when the time for intervention came, as shall be shown.

## *Humanitarian Motivation?*

The legal implications of the intervention I will now analyse, fusing the ECOWAS background and legal framework that I have established hitherto to allow me to portray an invalid intervention.

Humanitarian intervention as a definition is "fraught with ambiguity" (Murphy, 1996: 3). For the purposes of my following argument, I will utilise the definition proposed by Tesón, who defines "permissible" humanitarian intervention as the "proportional international use or threat of military force, undertaken in principal by a liberal government or alliance, aimed at ending tyranny or anarchy [and] welcomed by the victims..." (2001: 3). Sarooshi (1993: 1) goes as far as stating that "humanitarian assistance is non-coercive"; as I shall show, the ECOWAS switch

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from peacekeeping to peace-enforcement can certainly be said to be 'coercive', and subsequently not a humanitarian mission. Even more controversial is that in the run-up to the intervention human rights were not cited as a primary reason to intervene (HRW, 1993), and were in fact only mentioned once by ECOWAS, in message S/22133, (UNSC, 1991).

All ECOWAS member states are also members of the United Nations, and hence, legally bound to the UN Charter. The significance of this is that the Charter bans the use of force, making it permissible only in certain circumstances (1945); significantly, these circumstances do not explicitly extend to humanitarian interventions; consequently, such operations are lacking in legal framework (Sarooshi, 1993: 1). To the detriment of the UN's established aims, how state actors play out various roles is not exactly determined by laws, neither by artificial notions such as 'sovereignty'; rather it is up to individual actors to manoeuvre within such constructs and constraints (Wheeler, 2000: 22). This ambiguity resulted in ECOWAS members conducting policies from differing standpoints, whilst attempting "...[to remain] within the framework of the United Nations Charter" (Sanderson, 1999: 204). An example is how the Community gauged at what point the Liberian conflict took on an international dimension, with Ghanaian Secretary for Foreign Affairs arguing that it did so once several thousand Nigerian and Ghanaian expatriates in Liberia had begun to suffer at the hands of the NPFL (XGNS, 1990a), whilst other policy-makers decided it was much later on (Mingshan, 1992).

ECOWAS should have had consent from the United Nations Security Council (UNSC) prior to conducting the intervention (UN, 1945). Such consent would have then rendered the action legal, as the UNSC is endowed with the capability to enable regional organisations to perform such operations (Sarooshi, 1993: 2; UN, 1945). Despite this lack of consent, there was no condemnation of the action by the UNSC; only in 1992, in Resolution 788, it did finally take notice (UNSC, 1992). Rather than condemn the action, the UNSC welcomed "the continued commitment of [ECOWAS]" (UNSC, 1992). One year later, in Resolution 813, the UNSC both hailed and commended ECOWAS (UNSC, 1993). The significance of these dates is that finally after two years did the UNSC take any 'action', and this paired with the concept that exists "no provision in the Charter which expressly grants regional organisations the ability to undertake enforcement action on their own initiative" (Sarooshi, 1993: 3), means that ECOWAS acted on its own accord. Despite the lack of approval, Jenkins (2005: 18) concludes that the absence of UNSC condemnation for the ECOWAS action acts as a "ratification" or "possibly even implied consent". This coupled with the fact that the intervention was the first of its kind, as never before had an economic-bloc conducted such an operation, meant that an important precedent had been sent. Whilst on this count ECOWAS could be accused of grossly contravening the UN Charter, it would be spurious to accuse it unswervingly as such, as the UN itself decided to ignore Liberia. The ignorance of the UN is more susceptible to blame in this case, and I am reticent to attribute too much fault to ECOWAS.

Finally, it is important to consider the concept of 'self-determination', due to the incumbent President of Liberia having lost almost all control of the state at the time of the intervention. ECOWAS cited a letter from President Doe as an excuse for intervening. In the letter, Doe called for a peacekeeping force to come into the country, so as to "forestall increasing terror and tension and to ensure a peaceful transitional environment" (Weller, 1990: 61). Technically, under the PMAD, such a call for intervention by an incumbent head of state should legitimise such an action, but prior to giving ECOWAS this acknowledgment, the actual legitimacy of Doe must first be considered. Doe came to power through violent means, and subsequent elections were widely considered to be rigged. Besides this, the fact that Charles Taylor controlled the "bulk of the national territory" (WRITENET, 1994), further calls into question Doe's legitimacy. Taylor's zone, 'Greater Liberia', possessed its own currency, banking system, airfields, and deep-water port, amongst other things (Reno, 2010: 113), whereas Doe merely held onto some parts of the capital, Monrovia. Taylor's endeavours included smuggling diamonds from Sierra Leone (Armstrong, 2012), and working with the US owned rubber company, Firestone (TRC, 2009). Doe's diminished status in Liberia meant that he had no choice but to seek outside help. ECOWAS (at least the pro-intervention sect), did not consider the legitimacy of Doe, and intervened regardless, directly assaulting the NPFL, rather than abstaining from the use of "coercive" force (Sarooshi, 1993: 1). This decision to intervene and act on behalf of a head of state, who had lost control of the majority of the country, is yet another failure on the part of ECOWAS. At the very least, the bloc should have established itself as a neutral force.

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Continuing this argument, I will now propose that ECOWAS barred the Liberian people from 'self-determination'. The UN states that "...all peoples have the right to freely determine, without external influence, their political status" (1970); the key phrase in this sentence being "external influence". In the defence of force as a means of attaining self-determination, it can be argued that the "...resort to force by liberation movements should only be effected as a response to a forcible denial of self-determination" (Cassese, 1995: 198). The criterion of "forcible denial" was met, as human rights violations only increased under Doe, and democracy was non-existent (TRC, 2009). At the time of intervention, the vast majority of Liberia was under Taylor's control, and it was ECOWAS who joined the war in 1990, and through its aggressive 'peace-enforcement' managed to cause great losses to the NPFL (BBC, 1998). To balance this argument, it is useful to consider that ECOWAS was not the only "external influence" in the conflict, with the NPFL receiving outside support, as shown in chapter two. ECOWAS actually cited Article 18 of the PMAD (which concerns internal rebellions sponsored by outside actors), as the chief reason for intervention, rendering it even more important than Doe's invitation. This article does enable an ECOWAS intervention, but the ironic fact remains that two ECOWAS states, Burkina Faso and Cote d' Ivoire were supporting Taylor (Keating, 2012). Despite all of this, it is clear that Taylor may in retrospect claim to have been more legitimate than Doe, as he did go on to win an election, in 1997. The question over ECOWAS's 'success' in the campaign is seriously brought into question at this stage, considering the fact that it went on the offensive against the NPFL, only for Taylor to actually win the election.

ECOWAS was constructed on perfunctory arrangements in an eclectic socio-political environment, led by a self-interested state (Nigeria), and with member states that were barely able to agree on a theory of integration. Prior to attempting such pivotal operations, ECOWAS should at least have had some form of political ethos. The full blame of the Liberian conflict cannot be ascribed unto it, but it is doubtless that member states can be said to be accessories to the actual conflict. On the whole, it is clear that ECOWAS was in no shape to take on an intervention in Liberia, and any argument to claim that it was a question of human rights need only realise that human rights were certainly not a part of the ECOWAS agenda.

I have shown that ECOWAS failed due to poor integration, a callous disregard for concepts such as legitimacy and self-determination, as well as its indifference to the UN Charter. The next chapter will continue onwards, drawing on the pre-intervention mistakes explained hitherto, and portraying how said mistakes manifested themselves during the intervention.

## Chapter Four: The Military Intervention

In chapter three I have highlighted the pre-intervention failures by ECOWAS and argued that they were numerous and diverse, and that the culpability lies with the Community as opposed to just any one state. I am now able to advance my argument that overall ECOWAS failed in its intervention in Liberia, by moving onto the actual conflict itself.

In this chapter I show that individual states pursued individual policies; something made possible due to the poor framework of ECOWAS. This 'talking-shop' of an organisation went on to blur its own status as a peace-keeping force. Constituent states propagated and enabled the conflict within Liberia. Certain members took part in the intervention and in the switch from peacekeeping to peace-enforcement contributed to the marginalisation of the NPFL, the proliferation of factions, and overall portrayed a biased attitude that was ineffective within the doctrine of peacekeeping. The legality may be questionable, but authors such as Adeleke (1995: 587) state that to "...focus on the legalism is to ignore the security and humanitarian problems". This is an important comment, but the author is reticent to not explain nor recognise that humanitarian issues were not a chief concern at all, as I have shown in chapter three. The humanitarian ideal is highlighted by authors such as Adeleke, but others, such as Jenkins (2005), and I disagree with this, and this chapter will show that the authors supporting ECOWAS due to its pragmatism are false; ECOWAS failed.

### *The Ultimate Talking-Shop*

On the 24<sup>th</sup> December, 1989, Charles Taylor instigated his insurrection against the government of Liberia. According

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to the Liberian Justice Minister Jenkins Scott, Taylor entered Liberia through Cote d' Ivoire (who complied with, and actively supported Taylor), with ninety-six combatants (AP, 1990b). Taylor was also receiving support from Burkina Faso (Huband, 1990; Adeleke, 1995: 575), as well as Libya (Pear, 1990). The relevance in this lies with the compliance and support of the NPFL by both Burkina Faso and Cote d' Ivoire, both of whom are members of ECOWAS. The aforementioned states are required to renounce violence and encouraging acts of subversion against each other (PNA, 1978). This disparity of policy contributed to the ineffectiveness of the force (ECOMOG) (Molnár, 2008: 55). Other issues as basic as language were causing problems, with soldiers often unable to understand each other (Howe, 1997: 168). Leaving such minutiae to chance, it is clear that even basic communication between troops would be lacking.

On the flipside, President Doe and his incumbent regime were receiving support from Nigeria and the wider Anglophone community within ECOWAS (Newbreed, 1990). Nigeria even donated \$20 million to fund the Ibrahim Babangida School of Political Science and Strategic Studies in Liberia, during the actual conflict (Adeleke, 1995: 578). The school's namesake, Ibrahim Babangida, was the incumbent President of Nigeria, and the Doe-Babangida relationship only becomes more curious when it is apparent that the only time Doe left Liberia during the conflict, was to visit Nigeria (Adeleke, 1995: 578). Nigeria's stance vis-à-vis the conflicting parties was constantly brought into question, with many critics arguing that it was merely a ploy to prop up the Doe regime. Tom WoWeiyu, who was an NPFL spokesman in Washington, accused Nigeria and the other members of ECOMOG that the intervention was merely a manifestation of their collective aversion to allowing citizens of a regional state to topple a government (Knipe, 1990). WoWeiyu was not the only Liberian to hold this sentiment. Ellen-Johnson Sirleaf (who has been the President of Liberia since 2006), also explained that any intervention by ECOWAS or anyone else would be tantamount to an intervention (Knipe, 1990). Charles Taylor in particular expressed his anti-Nigeria sentiments. Taylor was aware of the Doe-Babangida relationship, and this proved a continuous issue when it came to negotiations, with Taylor refusing dialogue with any party that was dominated by Nigerians (AP, 1990c). Sirleaf, WoWeiyu and Taylor were all keen to rid Liberia of Doe, and hence their accusations that Nigeria was biased must be considered carefully. All three were party to the francophone sect of ECOWAS, enjoying the fruits of that particular sect's support therefore it is doubtless that whether or not Nigeria really was biased, those particular players would accuse them of such. Regardless, there is no doubt that what Nigeria said it wanted to do abroad, and what it did at home was highly disparate; the Nigerian regime was frequently accused of human rights violations, (HRVIC, 2001).

A particular event that Nigeria attempts to use to disprove its alleged allegiance was the death of Doe. Prince Yormie Johnson, someone who was supposedly in favour of dialogue, stating that "...you cannot shoot your way to power..." (Eljime, 1990), executed Doe on September 9<sup>th</sup>, 1990. This particular event proved crucial in the post-Doe conflict, as it allowed Nigeria to carry on with its role, without suffering any accusations of merely caring about sponsoring Doe (Adeleke, 1995: 580). Although Molnár (2008: 56) argues that Nigeria had given up support for Doe some time before his death, it was almost impossible for Nigeria to prove its true position until the death of Doe. At the very same time it "eliminated" Burkina Faso's and Cote d' Ivoire's "...excuse for supporting Taylor" (Adeleke, 1995: 580).

The corresponding sects within ECOWAS were certainly no secret, with even the President of ECOWAS, Dauda Jawara, openly accusing Burkina Faso of supporting the rebellion (XGNS, 1990b). Even more surprising was the announcement by the President of Burkina Faso to continue supporting the NPFL (Mortimer, 1996: 295). The split in ECOWAS was not limited to just supporters of differing sides, but some members of the Community simply chose to abstain from participation. Particularly controversial was the role, or rather lack thereof, played by Niger and Senegal. The two states, rather than contribute to the ECOMOG force from the outset (as was legally required), chose to instead send troops to the Gulf to partake in the US-led operation (Ameyibor, 1990). The seriousness of such acts is visible considering statements made by Charles Taylor, who made it clear that the NPFL would not submit unto an intervening force that was led by Nigeria (Mortimer, 1996: 296). Bearing in mind the evidence and false promises made by states such as Niger, it is clear that Nigeria simply had no choice but to make up the body of ECOMOG. It also bankrolled the operation, contributing \$12 billion, far more than any other Community member (Bah, 2005: 78). President Babangida even called for wider African, not just ECOWAS participation, stating that he had "...no objection to other African Nations' contribution of troops to Liberia for peacekeeping purposes" (XGNS, 1993).

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Within Nigeria, the appetite for intervention was low. Radio Nigeria (1990) expressed that “the people of Liberia should be able to exercise their inalienable right to decide who should lead them”, a distinctly anti-ECOMOG overtone that espoused support for self-determination of the Liberian population. The significance of this is that there did not exist some universal Nigerian determination to establish itself within Liberia. Even President Babangida was forced to state that “...Nigeria has no territorial ambition in war-torn Liberia”, also adding “...ECOMOG compromises soldiers without enemies or faction in the Liberian conflict” (XGNS, 1990c). Whilst I think the veritas of his first statement holds firm, there is no doubt that the security of Liberia was closely tied to that of Nigeria, as part of the wider regional security complex (Bah, 2005, 78; Buzan et al, 1998: 200). I severely disagree with his second statement. There is evidence that proves beyond any reasonable doubt that ECOMOG was a biased military force, and this becomes clear as the mandate switched from peacekeeping to peace-enforcement; this I will cover in detail in the following section.

It is also vital to note that it took US involvement to convince certain states to partake. On an official visit to the US, President Diouf of Senegal was “...urged by both the President, George Bush, and the Secretary of State, James Baker, to commit troops [to ECOMOG]”, (Mortimer, 1996: 297). The importance of this matter was not understated by Herman Cohen, the Assistant Secretary of State for African Affairs, who stated that “...this should give Charles Taylor the confidence that he needs” (Mortimer, 1996: 297), referring to Taylor requesting wider Community participation in ECOMOG. At the very same time, France pushed for Senegal to stay out of Liberia (Mortimer, 1996: 297). France was also accused by Nigeria of supplying weapons to the NPFL (XGNS, 1990d). Senegal eventually did intervene, likely due to President Bush who forgave \$42 million of Senegalese debt to the US, as he “...sought to underscore his support for Senegal” (Yang, 1991). Despite the Senegalese involvement, Taylor did not follow through with the promise to agree to a ceasefire. “Both governments [US & Senegal] were banking, naively as it turned out, on the validity of Taylor’s ‘anybody but Nigeria assertion’ ” (Mortimer, 1996: 298). Herman Cohen later stated that he had no idea that Charles Taylor had no intention to follow through with what he had said (Faes, 1992: 38-39). Analysing the differing positions the regional states took, it is clear that the NPFL was not only borne of ECOWAS divisions, but thrived under them. Perhaps even more significantly, the fact that the US and France both played a role in the conflict, but on opposite ends of the spectrum, highlights that the environment was of a multi-layered nature. The blame, hence, cannot be solely ascribed unto Nigeria.

The point of this section has been to show that although it is common thought to accuse Nigeria of bias, the actual significant bias existed within other ECOWAS states such as Burkina Faso, who, importantly, were not members of the intervening force, but rather backers of the rebellion. From the very first day ECOMOG as an ECOWAS peacekeeping force was severely hindered.

## *A Biased Force*

Hereon I will deal with the military and strategic actions taken by ECOMOG and provide an analysis of the switch from peacekeeping to peace-enforcement, arguing that although at times ECOMOG was able to bring a modicum of peace to Liberia, there were times when ECOMOG itself was the chief aggressor. “They [ECOMOG] were just as bad as anyone else. Maybe even worse. They will see you and beat for nothing, and there [is not] anything you or anyone can do about it” Taylor (2012). Taylor, in his NGO work, has been exposed to many different victims of ECOMOG, many of whom say they saw no distinction between ECOMOG and Taylor’s NPFL; “for us they [ECOMOG and the NPFL] were the same thing and represented the same problem”, adds Taylor (2012).

The Liberian conflict can be dissected into four different time frames, which Olonisakin (2000: 166) describes as that of peacekeeping, enforcement, stagnation and enforcement again. Whilst the time frames have no fixed definition and often overlap depending on the location in reference, the point here is to highlight which actions occurred under each. The peacekeeping attempt was characterised by the various different political impasses, most of which were highlighted in the section above and require no further embellishment. The period of stagnation is generally categorised by failed attempts at diplomacy by all sides, and just like the peacekeeping stage, it was marred by political in-fighting. Explicitly useful here are the periods of “enforcement” (Olonisakin, 2000: 116), which will be dealt with as a whole.

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Prior to considering actual events, it is important to contemplate the theoretical framework with regards to 'peace-enforcement' as opposed to 'peacekeeping'. Adeleke states that when it comes to peacekeeping, "...the application of force may be deemed necessary or in fact inevitable if the situation on the ground calls for it" (1995: 570). Adeleke adds that "...the empowering authority may include peace enforcement in a force's mandate" (1995: 570). In the case of ECOMOG, the empowering authority was, or rather should have been, the UNSC. Drawing on the conclusion made in chapter two, that of the UN's implied consent for the action, is it then logical to assume that the UN also implied consent to 'enforcement'? Indeed, this is a totally overlooked matter in the available literature, but I would purport that as with the Liberian conflict itself, the actions by ECOMOG were simply overlooked on the world stage. Any attention was given unto Charles Taylor and various rumours and stories about him. Due to spatial limitations, I am unable to delve into this vital matter further, but it does at least show that ECOMOG's peacekeeping operation was very controversial, let alone its peace-enforcement operation.

Molnár describes the first period of enforcement as a "successful mission" (2008: 56). Support from "...the US, the backing of the Organisation of African Unity (OAU) and the United Nations (UN), and the atrocities committed by Taylor..." all contributed to the "success" of the mission (Molnár, 2008: 56). This is a groundless claim that Molnár shows no evidence for. I intend to disprove this hypothesis by highlighting key events, as well as showing that ECOMOG prevented the end of the conflict by forcing the NPFL to reconfigure its strategic approach, to instead use guerrilla-warfare tactics.

The decision to launch ECOMOG was taken on the 7th of August, 1990. The Ghanaian Foreign Secretary Obed Asamoah said on that date "...President Samuel Doe and...Prince Johnson welcome such an ECOWAS force, and hoped that Charles Taylor...would also accept it" (XGNS, 1990a). Considering that at this time Taylor controlled around 95% of Liberia (as shown in chapter two), the fact that ECOWAS, Johnson and Doe merely "hoped" that Taylor would accept the force is a highly contentious idea. Agbu (2000: 15) points out that "peacekeeping requires the consent of all parties", and that "peace-building as a strategy is all embracing and leaves little room for the exclusion of parties" (2006: 4). Yet ECOWAS decided to launch ECOMOG knowing full well that there was no universal consent. Asamoah even tried to belittle Taylor's standing in Liberia, merely referring to him as the "...leader of another anti-government faction" (XGNS, 1990a). It seems clear that there was no reason at all for Taylor to accept a foreign force, particularly one that was bent on subverting his attempts to control the only area of Liberia that had remained elusive to him: Monrovia.

Just over one month later, on the 4<sup>th</sup> of September, Taylor attempted to gain control of the Executive Mansion in Monrovia. The attack was rebuffed aggressively by ECOMOG, who had just received fresh orders to return fire whenever attacked (XGNS, 1990e). This increase in aggression signified the switch to 'peace-enforcement'. On the 3<sup>rd</sup> of October, 1990, ECOMOG took steps to further assert itself against the NPFL, bombing Robertsfield airport and Buchanan Port, two key assets for the Taylor regime. The loss had an almost siege-like effect on the region, and the strategic loss to Taylor was a major blow (Adebajo, 2002: 122). The destruction of the infrastructure was indeed a show of superiority by ECOMOG, but all it did was to force Taylor and his group to reconsider their tactics, adopt a guerrilla stratagem, and retreat into the dense jungles of the interior (XGNS, 1991). What this meant in reality for the conflict is that it became a stalemate and was prolonged, rather than coming to a natural conclusion (Mutwol, 2009: 113).

Violent crime as well as looting was commonplace amongst the poorly and irregularly paid ECOMOG force (Hutchful, 1999; Mutwol, 2009: 14); something that is impressed upon the Liberian population (Teh, 2001). The impact of the force was clearly not too different from that of the NPFL, or of any other force involved. The violence attributed to ECOWAS still resonates deeply with the Liberian population, "ECOMOG soldiers always disgraced themselves first, before they would begin to disgrace those who they were deployed to help" (Teh, 2001). The frustration of the stagnating conflict was prevalent around the country. Many Liberians had initially welcomed a counter-revolution by Taylor, in the hope to rid themselves of Doe's "suffocating tyranny" (Adeleke, 1995: 575). The stagnation caused by ECOMOG was undoubtedly contra the interests of the Liberian people.

Aside from prolonging the war, ECOMOG's chief fault lies in the many instances it cooperated with other forces, including with the AFL. The AFL, aligned with ECOMOG, attacked a Lutheran Church in Monrovia in 1990, killing

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over six hundred refugees (Adeleke, 1995: 576; Asylum Law, 1990). ECOMOG's intervention even led to the proliferation of new militias and rebel groups, some of which were fighting on all sides, but in most cases ECOMOG was using them to conduct attacks against the NPFL (AFP, 1995), which resulted in divisions between militias and ECOMOG dissipating over time (Hutchful, 1999). In fact, the reality was that the cultivation of warlords and mercenaries was very much the modus operandi of ECOMOG, frequently delegating operations unto such groups; a doubtlessly biased approach.

ECOMOG "stimulated ethnic rivalries" (Hutchful, 2000), and its bias and the stagnation caused by its involvement allowed Liberia to become a fertile land for the proliferation of armed groups (Amnesty International, 1995; Conciliation Resources, 1996). Despite cooperating with rival factions, ECOMOG did at times turn on allied groups, often arresting combatants without charge (Amnesty International, 1995; International Council on Human Rights, 2006: 134). The frustration felt by ECOMOG's personnel was taken out on detainees, and such actions were common, mainly due to the lack of accountability within the force. Commanders were regularly replaced, and the infantry were poorly, and sometimes not at all, paid (Howe, 1997: 161).

The prolongation of the conflict, the severe violence against both belligerent and civilian groups, and the steep levels of criminality represented a "...radical departure from traditional peace-keeping missions" (Molnár, 2008: 55). This "radical departure" description comes from an author who actually favours ECOMOG, adding that "...its importance to handle regional crisis cannot be denied" (Molnár, 2008: 61). This though is clearly not the case, and the fact that Charles Taylor went on to be elected as President in 1997 serves as the ideal milestone from which to consider ECOMOG's performance.

## *Summing Up ECOWAS's Achievements*

What exactly did ECOWAS accomplish during the Liberian crisis? The result appears to be poor, at best. Political divisions caused not only delays but actually allowed the NPFL to start the war, and any suggestion that Nigeria is the sole culpable party, need only take into account that the whole ethos of an intervening force is that it should be multilateral; it was other states that chose not to comply with ECOWAS protocols. The calamitous military performance and the shocking truth that ECOMOG conducted operations with totally unregulated militias serve to crush any argument that purports to ECOWAS being successful. At the very least, one could assume that ECOMOG supporters are allowing the force the benefit of the doubt, perhaps seeing the Liberian conflict as a sort of 'proving-grounds', which would allow ECOMOG, in the future, to carry out successful missions. To the detriment of the peoples of West Africa, this has absolutely not been the case, and this will form my final chapter. Even if it was true, the sheer inadequacy of ECOWAS as a regional group during the conflict displays it not as a serious organisation, but as a very dangerous talking-shop; one that is capable of causing drastic damage to a member-state.

## **Chapter Five: Conclusion**

The necessary analyses of the ECOWAS intervention in Liberia have been made thus far. Prior to finalising my conclusion, I will extrapolate my argument to gauge it against other conflicts that ECOWAS has intervened into, so as to allow me to postulate that ECOWAS has not learnt sufficient lessons from Liberia. This is done on the basis that, at the very least, the damage that ECOWAS did by involving itself in the Liberian case should have been offset by evolving into a more effective organisation. This will be followed with my final concluding statements, as I seek to prove the numerous failures of ECOWAS.

### *Plus Ça Change?*

From the Sierra Leonean conflict, to Mali's current internal uprising, ECOWAS, in some way, has partaken in events. Every single conflict in the region would require a full thesis to truly evaluate, but for my argument here, I am looking at the broader picture. I will briefly investigate the ECOWAS experience in two conflicts, that of Sierra Leone, and that of Guinea-Bissau; elaborating that ECOWAS did not learn sufficient lessons from the Liberian intervention.

### *Sierra Leone*



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Liberia's neighbour Sierra Leone suffered directly from Charles Taylor's exploits. Taylor, who was found guilty of aiding and abetting war-crimes in Sierra-Leone, is now serving a fifty year prison sentence in the United Kingdom (Al-Jazeera, 2012). Significantly, he sponsored a group known as the Revolutionary United Front (The Special Court for Sierra Leone, 2003), which went on to fight a war in Sierra Leone. For an in-depth background on the conflict, see Keen (2005).

ECOWAS's failures in this intervention, much like the Liberian case, commenced from the outset. In one instance, two hundred of its troops were captured by rebels (BBC, 1999a). The hapless attempt by ECOMOG had to be aided by a British military contingent, one that was able to operate on a more aggressive mandate (Hough, 2007: 13). ECOWAS conducted disproportionate attacks on rebels (BBC, 1999b), and conducted operations with unregulated combat groups, or delegated tasks to them (Ero, 2000). This prejudice was once again aimed directly against the rebels, with ECOMOG intervening in a very biased manner (Adebajo, 2002: 18). Furthermore, despite a similar style of warfare in Liberia, Gberie (2005: 122) states that ECOMOG troops "...completely lacked counter insurgency training". In the interest of fairness, it is necessary to state that ECOMOG was able to attain some military success (BBC, 1999c), but the majority of achievements are attributable to the UK (Berman et al, 2003).

## *Guinea-Bissau*

On the 7th of June, 1998, disgruntled military personnel attempted a coup against the incumbent administration of Guinea-Bissau. Generally, it was believed that the uprising would be quashed "quite rapidly" (Rudebeck, 1998: 484). Rudebeck (1998: 484) also adds that the conflict almost instantaneously took on a regional character. Subsequently, ECOWAS involved itself, and as has been seen ad nauseum in its other misadventures, aligned itself with the incumbent regime. This is particularly striking in this case, as around ninety per-cent of the military was in-favour of the rebellion, as well as a vast section of the civilian population (Ferreira, 2004: 46; Ostheimer, 2000: 112; Child Soldiers International, 2001). This figure espoused by the citations must be carefully considered as all three do not mention their sources; nonetheless it is widely accepted by a plethora of organisations including Conflict Transform (2002), and the SAIIA (1999). Therefore, whilst I do not give full confidence to as high a figure as ninety per-cent, it is clear that there was widespread support for the rebellion. The result of this popular support meant that ECOWAS was only able to prop-up the regime for a period of time, with the rebels eventually forcing a withdrawal of ECOMOG (Ostheimer, 2000: 107).

This bias, which was an attribute that was becoming synonymous with ECOWAS operations, was particularly a result of Senegal, who directly funded and armed the incumbent administration, believing its own domestic issues in Cassamance (south Senegal) were dependant on the Guinea-Bissau regime staying afloat (Adebajo, 2002: 18). This neatly ties in with a point that I have been reiterating throughout this dissertation, that it is negligent to simply assign all ECOWAS failures unto Nigeria; and this case study is emphatic of this point, as Nigeria neither partook in this intervention nor funded it (Heyns and Stefiszyn, 2006: 301).

Alongside the issue of bias, Obi (2009: 128) ascribes the failure of the intervention to "poor penetration and limited resources". Obi (2009: 128) further adds that "...the role of foreign powers [Portugal and France]...underscores the reality that ECOWAS needed international support for peacekeeping in the region". It is deplorable that after two interventions, still ECOWAS was unable to sustain troop numbers and equipment without relying on international assistance (Obi, 2009: 128).

The disturbingly poor intra-Community communication once again contributed to a failed intervention. Adebajo (2002: 116) expounds this point stating that the "...intervention was undertaken without the blessing of the full ECOWAS authority"; a point reiterated by Obi (2009: 127), and one which portrays just how badly organised the organisation was.

Having highlighted the chief taints of this particular intervention, it would appear clear that ECOWAS was failing in ever the same ways as it did in Liberia, rendering any argument purporting that it had evolved, moot. For a firmer grasp of the history and conflict of Guinea-Bissau, it would be useful to consult Barry et al, (2007).

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## *Making the Same Mistakes – Final Conclusion*

Considering the brief analysis of the two conflicts investigated here, it is clear to discover that despite years of experience and 'learning-by-doing', ECOWAS has simply been unable to evolve past its rudimentary peacekeeping ability. Obi (2009: 119) describes ECOWAS as "...Africa's most advanced regional peace and security mechanism". Though comparative literature on this is grossly underwhelming, this may well be true. Nonetheless, the significance of this is limited due to the objects of comparison; and in reality ECOWAS seems to be going from one failure to another.

The aim of this dissertation was to prove that ECOWAS, as a regional organisation, failed Liberia. The first research question asked how the formation of ECOWAS led to member states being able to act out policies on their own accord. As I have shown, the organisation was divided amongst sects opting for different modes of integration. This disagreement resulted in integration that called for a minimalist approach, ignoring key areas such as security. When the time came for revisions, the framework had already been established, and did not call for specific rules vis-à-vis issues such as governance, hence mutual policies were few and far between. The result has thence been policy incoordination and the undermining of fellow states.

Did ECOWAS contravene the UN Charter and the Liberian peoples' right to self-determination, was the second question. As I have shown, ECOWAS did indeed conduct the intervention out of its own initiative. Rather than ascribe the blame unto ECOWAS, I have argued that this was more the fault of the UN. The issue of 'self-determination', though, I have been far more critical on. Doe had seceded a large amount of legitimacy due to having lost the majority of the territory. Despite the controversial and ambiguous situation, ECOMOG aggressively forced Taylor back into the hinterland, and the question of its bias seems clear as it cooperated with groups against the NPFL. The war lasted seven years and despite ECOMOG's bias, Taylor won the presidential election, effectively nullifying ECOMOG's attempt to keep him out. It is challenging to defend ECOWAS on this count, and it would appear that the answer behind this question results in another failure for ECOWAS.

The third question was related to issues of bias, asking if Nigeria or ECOWAS was biased, and how this affected the conflict. This though is perhaps the most complex question. To answer it succinctly I would state that Nigeria was biased to the extent that it was allowed to be so; this bias should have been balanced by the involvement of the non-ECOMOG states. ECOMOG itself was highly, unashamedly, and undeniably biased. ECOWAS was split along differing camps; each was biased across different lines. On the whole, 'bias' in general was rampant and proliferated the war itself.

The fourth research question examined whether or not ECOWAS learn sufficient lessons from the case of Liberia so as to excuse it from its failures. It is striking that ECOWAS made the same mistakes in the two conflicts shown here as it did in Liberia. The most damaging effects, and both hallmarks of ECOWAS, have been bias and intra-Community incoordination. Reconsidering the evidence, it appears clear that there are several issues that repeatedly crop up; all of which add-up to result in failed interventions.

To sum up, all four research question answers have shown a large degree of guilt of failure on the part of ECOWAS. It appears undeniable that the organisation failed; the intervention was fundamentally a talking-shop of an organisation involving itself in a deeply complex society. The Community supported both the rebels and the incumbent government, a situation that is clearly going to result in an uncontrollable, unmanageable situation. It is interesting to note that in an ECOWAS (2010: 4) report, the organisation claims "the restoration of peace to...Liberia" as one of its accomplishments. The evidence which ECOWAS bases such a proud statement on I am yet to come across; au contraire, the majority of the evidence indicates otherwise.

## *Shortcomings*

The chief shortcoming of this dissertation is that I have delved into a plethora of aspects and concepts in order to sustain my argument in a very short amount of space. This has resulted in a need to be highly concise on complex topics such as international law. With an increased spatial limitation, I would be able to draw on such arguments with

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a wider range of evidence, and hence argue my hypothesis more convincingly.

## *Further Insights*

Research should be conducted far more deeply on the role played by the francophone states. This sector of the Community regularly avoids scrutiny, but much of the blame lies in the apathetic and subversive states such as Niger and Burkina Faso. Furthermore, it would be useful to conduct a grass-roots level study of how the Liberian population perceives the intervention.

## *Recommendations*

Though I have continuously aimed to indict ECOWAS of what I argue are gross failures, in reality I am positive for the future of the organisation. This though can only be possible by reforming the organisation and starting at the framework level. Aspiring hegemon states such as Nigeria will have to decide whether they want to pursue unilateral policies or commit to the organisation whole-heartedly. It will not be possible to sustain such a diverse organisation with the current system, and as has been seen from the case of Liberia, ECOWAS policy divergence only breeds destruction. Furthermore, defence agreements need to be totally revamped. Vague requirements result in differing responses. Such protocols need to establish direct rules and the means to punish transgressors. The failure in Liberia has shown just how vital it is that a vast amount of states partake in any intervention. This balances any biased states, and adds legitimacy to such actions. ECOWAS needs to take strong heed of this, and improve as such for the future.

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