

MANDATES IN THE SUCCESS OF A PEACEKEEPING MISSIONS: A CASE STUDY OF LIBERIA

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This article focuses primarily on the peacekeeping efforts in West Africa by sub-regional and international organizations such as Economic Community of West African States (ECOWAS) and the United Nations (UN). Particular emphasis was made on the peacekeeping activities of UN and ECOWAS in resolving the perennial Liberian conflict. The article analyzes the positions of researchers and scholars on the question of peacekeeping in Liberia with the aim of determining the significance of sub-regional peacekeeping missions during an armed conflicts in West African sub-region on one hand and the pivotal role of UN peacekeeping activities in Liberia on the other hand. Quite a lot of materials on the Liberian Civil War and the role played by ECOWAS in bringing the crisis to an end have been written. However, none of these works has critically examined the initial mandate of the ECOMOG mission in Liberia and why the mandate was later changed. Mandate is central to the success or otherwise of a peacekeeping mission.

This research work will attempt to fill this missing gap in the existing literature on the Liberian crisis and ECOMOG intervention. The article is aimed at examining some Peacekeeping Missions in Africa and their Mandates particularly the ECOMOG Mandate in Liberia during the Liberian Civil War and to see how it led to the success or otherwise of the Mission.

The mandate as an instrument has a dual nature, on the one hand, it's considered to restore peace, maintain security, strengthen governance and the rule of law, but on the other hand, it has weaknesses, unclear, ambiguous or lacked peacekeeping potential.

Keywords: ECOMOG, African Union (AU) and United Nations (UN) Peacekeeping Missions, ECOWAS, Liberia, AU, UN peacekeeping mission

The history of mankind is replete with conflicts and the attendant quest for security. As societies developed and communities emerged, conflicts took various forms and dimensions. In the same vein nation states have always aspired to acquire monopoly of the use of force as a means of advancing their foreign policy objectives. In Africa south of the Sahara, Songhai, Oyo, Kanem Bornu for example, used their pre-colonial military to advance their expansionist agenda. The use of force by nation for territorial expansion and spread of influence over perceived weaker nations often results in conflicts and wars.

The post World War II (WWII) era witnessed the emergence of intra-state conflicts as against inter-state conflicts especially in Africa which brought untold destruction of lives and property [1]. Africa has experienced numerous intra-state conflicts in countries such as Liberia, Burundi, Sierra Leone, the Democratic Republic of Congo, Cote d'Ivoire, Rwanda and Sudan.

Regional bodies like the ECOWAS and African Union have in most cases promptly intervened in crises to some extent in some African countries.

Foreign policy of any nation serves as a mirror of its domestic reality. It begins with identification and articulation of national interests. It is very important to assert that whatever this nations interest

represents, serves the principal consideration in the formulation and execution of national policies both at domestic and international levels. One of the cardinal points of Nigerian foreign policy is the maintenance of peace and security in Africa. This has enabled her to pay an active role in peacemaking and peace keeping in the continent. Since independence Nigeria has participated in many peacekeeping and related missions globally.

Most visible manifestation of the problems facing the continent is the intractable proliferation of conflict. Africa continued to witness protracted civil wars which have taken the centre stage in the political lives of the continent, with attendant devastating consequence for peace, security and sustainable development.

While most of the peacekeeping operations in which Nigeria has participated were UN mandated and led, a few came under the mandate of the Economic Community of West African States Monitoring Group (ECOMOG) then Organization of African Unity (OAU), now African Union. Nigerian took a leading role at the operational level. Even when the Nigerian government was most isolated diplomatically by the international community in the 1990s, peacekeeping remained a vital link to the world.

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As an institution, the Armed Forces of Nigeria have kept pace with the evolving doctrine of Peacekeeping Missions. This has gone a long way in projecting Nigeria's image in the international community and has improved its armed forces professional capabilities through exposure and interaction with troops from other countries. The performance of its troops has been widely acclaimed as her contingents in Peacekeeping Missions have repeatedly earned citations and medals for leadership, bravery, discipline, professional competence and integrity [2, p. 4].

One of the countries where Nigeria was involved in peacekeeping operations was Liberia. Nigeria's peacekeeping intervention in Liberia through ECOMOG was multilateral as Nigeria worked with other member states of the Economic Community of West African States (ECOWAS) to form a collective response to the security and humanitarian challenges posed by conflict in Liberia [3, p. 38]. It was the first such action by a sub-regional organization in Africa, relying principally on its own personnel, money and military materials to manage three conflicts in West Africa: Liberia, Sierra-Leone and Guinea - Bissau between 1990 and 1998.

As a result of total breakdown of law and order in Liberia, which resulted into wanton destruction of lives and properties, ECOWAS countries decided to intervene in the internal affairs of that country. Following the meeting of Heads of state of ECOWAS Security Standing Committee, it was agreed that a Peacekeeping force be deployed in Liberia. Five countries agreed to contribute troops for the peacekeeping operation. They include Nigeria, Gambia, Ghana, Guinea and Sierra-Leone. The group made up the ECOMOG Force [4, pp. 26-27].

Copious literature exists on the subject of the Liberian Civil War. There are four types of literature, which are connected to the theme of the article. The first group is devoted to the global peacekeeping and Nigerian Army participation [7, 13], Liberian crisis, its roots, formation, institutionalization [7, 8, 9, 10, 20]. The second part of the literature covers ECOWAS peace initiative [7, 11] as well as formation and mandate of ECOMOG [3, 7, 12, 13, 16]. The third one analyzes third party armed conflict mediation with reference to the Liberia and Sierra Leone crises, the role of politics in peace missions [14, 15]. The fourth group highlights the UN experience in peacekeeping operations and mandates [17, 18].

The 2011 International Monetary Fund (IMF) country report excavates the UN involvement in the Liberia crisis and the nature of the peacekeeping mandate [19, pp. 8-10]. The Mandate was to restore peace, maintain security, strengthen governance and

the rule of law. Since 2003, UNMIL has been visibly present in every facet of Liberia state building efforts and has made enormous contribution in the areas of security, civil administration as well as logical support.

Nevertheless, these books failed to critically access the role of mandate in the success or otherwise of peacekeeping operations using ECOMOG intervention in the Liberian crisis as a case study.

HISTORICAL BACKGROUND OF LIBERIA

Liberia means land of the free, was founded in 1822 as a result of the efforts of the American Colonization Society to settle freed American slaves in West Africa. Liberia traces its origin to the settlement along its coast in the mid nineteenth century by a small number of freed American slaves. The territory of Liberia had been inhabited for at least four millennia when the country became the first independent Republic in Africa in modern times. Liberia is the oldest republic in the continent having declared its independence in 1847. She was never formally colonized. It was established as a resettlement colony of freed slaves repatriated from America.

According to the 1974 census conducted in Liberia, its population was shown to be just over 1,5 million. By 1990 however, it had grown to nearly 1,8 million and continues to grow every year by some 3,4%. Ethnically, the population includes people of local tribal origin, the descendants of Africans who returned from various parts of the America's at the beginning of the last century to found a free country in the continent of their ancestors, descendants of Congolese who sought refuge in Liberia after being captured by slave traders, temporary or permanent immigrants from other African countries, and aliens from the Middle East, Europe, Asia and America.

Liberia is divided into 15 political sub-divisions - 9 counties and 6 territories. Geographically, the territories are located within the various counties, but administered by their own superintendents representing the president, and enjoy a measure of local autonomy including the administration of their own development budgets. Before 1964, the hinterland was divided into three provinces, but restructured into four countries, Bong, Lofa, Nimba and Grand Gedeh in 1964 [5, pp. 17-18].

THE LIBERIAN CRISIS

The America-Liberian elite at most represent only 5% of the total population of Liberia. However, they controlled political and economic power in the country almost to the exclusion of the majority of the

citizens. Of the country's 19 presidents before the April 12, 1980 coup that brought in Samuel Doe to power, none was an indigenous Liberian. To worsen the matters, 11 out of the 19 presidents were born in the United States of America. This led to the marginalization of the indigenous Liberians. Little or no attention was paid to their sensibilities with regard to their laws, customs and religious beliefs. The Americo-Liberia elites controlled effectively all the vital vehicles for political participation and expression of dissent in the country.

Though the Liberia constitution makes provision for citizens numbering three hundred and above to establish a political party and compete for political power, that right was never conceded by the ruling True Whig Party (TWP) until the advent of the Progressive Alliance of Liberia (PAL), led by Baccus Mathews in 1975. The TWP remained in power for over a century, 1878 to 1980. It was unable to respond fully to the political yearning of educated indigenous Liberian who were proud enough not to sell their birth rights to the Americo-Liberia political oligarchy. This reluctance on the part of the TWP to reform and accommodate "non-conformist" into its fold contributed in no small measure to the collapse of the first Republic in April 1980.

On April 12, 1980, a group of non-commissioned officers of Liberia Armed Forces, led by Master Sergeant Samuel Doe, staged a military coup that overthrew the Liberian government and assassinated President William Tolbert. The coup appeared to be a reaction to the political dominance and marginalization of indigenous Liberians by the Americo-Liberian elite, rising social discontent, and political repression both in military and in the broader Liberian society. The coup at least temporarily brought to an end the political dominance of the Americo-Liberians, which began with the founding of the country and former US slaves in 1847.

Doe who became President following the coup, soon imposed a reign of terror on Liberians, especially those in the opposition. He alienated the political elite and drove many of them into exile. Even as he sought perpetuate himself in power, he polarized his power base, the Armed Forces of Liberia (AFL), by recruiting and surrounding himself with his Khran tribesmen. This resulted in an insurgency by the National Patriotic Front of Liberia (NPFL) led by Charles Taylor. Said to be supported by Libya, Ivory Coast served as the launching pad for Taylor's forces while training took place in Burkina Faso.

The Liberian crisis took a dramatic turn when the rebel NPFL forces split into two with Yomie Johnson in control of the splinter group, the Independent National Patriotic Front of Liberia (INPFL), while Charles Taylor still maintained the control of the

main rebel group. At that time Samuel Doe was swiftly losing control of Liberia.

By July 1990, Doe had virtually lost control over the country. He was holding only a small part of Central Monrovia, mainly around the Presidential palace. Johnson was holding the Free Port area, while Taylor was in control of the remaining parts of Liberia [4, pp. 26-27].

The Liberian conflict had degenerated into an unspeakable tragedy by May 1990. Thousands of people had died in conflict related situations, most of them civilians, and hundreds of thousands of others had been turned into refugees as a result of the war. Thousands of civilians, Liberian nationals, citizens of other ECOMOG nations, diplomats and foreign citizens were exposed to the hazards of war, starvation and disease [6, pp. 73-79].

As a result of continuing intransigence on the part of the factions and the worsening plight of Liberians, the Thirteenth Session of the Authority of Heads of State and Government of ECOWAS convened in Banjul, the Gambia, from 28-30 May, 1990, under the chairmanship of Blaise Compaore of Burkina Faso. It was at the meeting that President Ibrahim Babangida of Nigeria proposed the setting up of a Mediation Committee. The Standing Committee was charged with a purely mediatory role between all factions. It was neither mandated for, nor permitted to intervene militarily in the conflict [6, pp. 73-79].

After the Banjul summit, ECOWAS Heads of State and Government and their respective foreign Minister embarked on a busy round of meetings and consultations. Discussions were held extensively with the warring parties and with other interested groups of Liberians. As a result of this round of consultations, a ministerial level meeting of the Standing Mediation Committee was held in Freetown, Sierra-Leone from 5 - 20 July, 1990. But very little was achieved at this meeting as the warring factions refused to put an end to hostilities.

This led the West African Heads of States under the umbrella of ECOWAS Security Standing Committee to hold a meeting in July, 1990 and took a decision to establish a peace keeping force in Liberia.

The ECOWAS Cease-fire Monitoring Group (ECOMOG) was subsequently established with a view to bringing to an end the unwarranted killing and loss of properties in Liberia.

MANDATES AND LEGAL BASIS FOR PEACEKEEPING MISSIONS

The issue of clear mandate is a knotty problem, which we are often faced with in most missions,

particularly in ECOWAS operation. The nature and scope of the mandate of a peace support operation to a large extent is a key determinant of its success or failure. The consequential mismatch between response options and the rules of engagement often leaves the troops in a quandary resulting in inaction. Most Peacekeeping Mandates were/are either unclear, ambiguous or lacked the power of dealing decisively with the rebels or militia. This was clearly experienced in most ECOMOG, AU and UN Peacekeeping Missions.

The mandates in Liberia, Darfur and Sierra Leone generated criticism and were seen as insufficient and did not make adequate provision for the protection of civilians that it was the host country to offer security for the population.

THE ECOMOG MANDATE IN LIBERIA

On 6 August 1990, the first session of the ECOWAS Standing Mediation Committee was held in Banjul, the Gambia, under the chairmanship of the then president of that country Dauda Jawara. The Head of States of Ghana, Guinea, Nigeria, Sierra Leone, Mali and Togo with the then Organisation of African Union Secretary General and the members of the Interfaith Mediation Committee were observers in attendance.

The Committee began by noting the wanton destruction of human life and property and the displacement of persons caused by the armed conflict, and called on all parties to the conflict to observe an immediate cease-fire and to surrender all arms and ammunition to the custody of ECOMOG. It was at this meeting that ECOMOG was born for the purpose of ensuring that the cease-fire agreed upon was respected by all concerned. As member countries that attended the meeting returned to their various countries, Nigeria, Sierra Leone, Ghana and Guinea assembled 3,000 men strong force with Nigeria contributing 1,375 officers and men. Francophone countries could not contribute troops to ECOMOG initially because of some diplomatic bottlenecks.

The formation of ECOMOG was the first of its kind in the world by a sub-regional body. Thus, on August 10, 1990, ECOMOG was established with an initial strength of about 3,000 all ranks. The contributing nations included Nigeria, Ghana and Guinea with a battalion each while Sierra Leone and the Gambia contributed battalion minus and company strength respectively [21, p. 12].

The force landed in Monrovia on the 24 August 1990 after a stiff opposition to start a fruitful journey of seven years. Subsequently, more troops were

brought in mostly from Nigeria. The rest later came in from Guinea and Mali.

At the inception of ECOMOG, the mandate was peacekeeping. It was to create safe corridors for civilians and other victims of the crisis to escape to safety in neighboring countries, evacuate foreign national and restore law and order.

The Nigeria Contingent (NIGCON), which formed the bulk of ECOMOG force, was put together by the federal Republic of Nigeria in response to ECOWAS peace initiative; officers, men and equipment were drawn from all the services under the Ministry of Defence. The Nigeria Navy and the Nigeria Air force virtually followed suit. The force was conveyed to Liberia largely by both naval and commercial vessels. Few elements, especially the command outfit, came by NAF planes.

Against all odds, operation liberty took off from Sierra Leone on Thursday 23 August, 1990 with a mixed grill of white helmeted ECOMOG troops sailing to Monrovia. In the convoy there were two main vessels, Nigeria's Naval ship NNS Ambe [2, p. 18], and Ghanaian merchant ship MV Tano River. There were other support gun boats namely GNS Yogaga and GNS Achimota. The other two were fast attack crafts contributed by Nigeria, NNS Ekpe and NNS Damisa [2, p. 18]. There was of course a tug boat, Dolphin Mira.

On Friday 24 August 1990, all the vessels berthed at Freeport Monrovia Liberia by 1700 hrs. The first field commander that led the force into Liberia from Freetown, Sierra Leone, was Lt Gen Arnold Quinoo, a Ghanaian Army General. The ship anchored amidst fierce fighting between the NPFL rebels of Charles Taylor and the INPFL force of Prince Johnson.

Heavy gunfire rocked the air, interspersed with bombs from mortar lasting till late evening. It is important to mention that the peacekeepers arrived into the warm hands of Prince Johnson as against the heavy gunfire and bombing against ECOMOG by Charles Taylor and his NPFL rebels. After a successful landing, the then field commander briefed Prince Johnson on ECOMOG mission and mandate in Liberia, which principally was peacemaking and monitoring of the cease-fire. At the ends of briefing, the peacemakers took all-round defence to secure all headquarters.

The initial deployment of peacemakers was in three fronts and the mission was to secure Monrovia's safe haven out of reach of NPFL range of gunfire. The Nigerian Battalion (NIBATT) 1 with all its complement, under the command of then Lt Col G.J.Ochiedo, was tasked to secure the northern sector of Monrovia up to St. Paul's Bridge. The central sector and the southern one were given to Ghana Battalion supported by Nigeria contingent

because the Battalion came without infantry support weapons. Their task was to clear central Monrovia including the presidential mansion and its suburbs up to James Spriggs Payne Airport.

THE UN MANDATE

UN peacekeeping operations are deployed on the basis of mandates from the United Nations Security Council. Over the years, the range of tasks assigned to UN peacekeeping operations has expanded significantly in response to shifting patterns of conflict and to best address threats to international peace and security. Although each UN peacekeeping operation is different, there is a considerable degree of consistency in the types of mandated tasks assigned by the Security Council. Depending on their mandate, peacekeeping operations may be required to:

- Deploy to prevent the outbreak of conflict or the spill-over of conflict across borders.
- Stabilize conflict situations after a ceasefire, to create an environment for the parties to reach a lasting peace agreement.
- Assist in implementing comprehensive peace agreements.
- Lead states or territories through a transition to stable government, based on democratic principles, good governance and economic development.

Depending on the specific set of challenges, UN peacekeepers are often mandated to play a catalytic role in the following essentially peace building activities: disarmament, demobilization and reintegration of ex-combatants; demining; security sector reform and other rule of law-related activities and so on.

Security Council mandates also reflect a number of cross-cutting, thematic tasks that are regularly assigned to UN peacekeeping operations on the basis of the following landmark Security Council resolutions: Security Council resolution 1325 (2000) on women, peace and security and Security Council resolution 1612 (2005) on children and armed conflict [22].

MANDATE OF THE UNITED NATIONS MISSION IN LIBERIA

The original mandate of the United Nations Missions in Liberia (UNMIL) was set out by Security Council resolution 1509 (2003) which established the mission in September 2003. Throughout the years, the Mandate of the Mission was adjusted on several occasions to reflect on the security situation and new developments in the country. By its resolution 2215 (2015) of 2 April

2015, the Security Council decided that the mandate of UNMIL was to be the following, in priority order:

To protect, without prejudice to the primary responsibility of the Liberian authorities, the civilian population from threat of physical violence, within its capabilities and areas of deployment [23].

To facilitate the provision of humanitarian assistance, including in collaboration with the Government of Liberia, and those supporting it, and by helping to establish the necessary security conditions.

Reform of Justice and Security Institutions in Liberia under the UN intervention includes the following scope of functions: from assisting the Government of Liberia in developing and implementing, as soon as possible and in close coordination with bilateral and multilateral partners, its national strategy on Security Sector Reform (SSR) to technical assistance, co-location and mentoring programs as well as coordination of all the efforts with all partners, including bilateral and multilateral donors [24].

Human rights promotion and protection in Liberia under the UN intervention include the following: 1) to carry out promotion, protection and monitoring activities of human rights in Liberia, with special attention to violations and abuses committed against children and women, notably sexual and gender-based violence; 2) to support the strengthening of efforts by the Government of Liberia to combat sexual and gender based violence, including its efforts to combat impunity for perpetrators of such crimes [24].

To protect the United Nations personnel, installations and equipment and ensure the security and freedom of movement of United Nations and associated personnel. Furthermore, on 22 December, 2016, the United Nations Security Council decides to extend the Mandate of United Nations Mission in Liberia as set out in paragraph 11 for a final period until 30 March 2018, and requests the Secretary General to complete by 30 April 2018 the withdrawal of all uniformed and civilian UNMIL components, other than those required to complete the Mission's liquidation. The extended UNMIL Mandate covers Protection of Civilians, Reform of Justice and Security Institutions, Human Rights Promotion and Protection, Public Information and Protection of United Nations Personnel.

The extended UNMIL Mandate is to protect the civilian population from threat of physical violence within its capabilities and areas of deployment, particularly in the event of a deterioration of the security situation that could risk a strategic reversal of peace and stability in the country, without prejudice to the primary responsibility of the

Liberian authorities for the security and protection of its population.

CONCLUSION

In a given comparative analysis, the relationship between the three organizations includes a significant element of UN support for AU and ECOWAS in capacity building.

The authors came to conclusion that UN peacekeeping has been problematic and threatening, and so failed in bringing sustainable peace in Africa because of poor policies and ineffective instruments

which were not in line with African customs and traditions. Moreover, the UN faces increasing resistance from their host countries that the UN is seeking to assist. The instrument of peacekeeping has done more good than harm mostly in integrating the economy of Africa into the world economy. There is no doubt that the United Nations through these instruments has contributed to the development of Africa through African regional organizations (ECOWAS, AU), but most African scholars look at the development structures as exploitative not to the benefit of Africa itself, but to the benefits of Europeans.

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