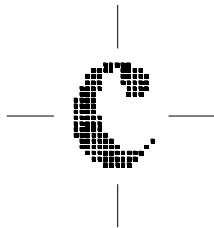


Project Conflict Prevention in West Africa (CPWA)

**Containing Conflict in the Economic Community
of West African States: Lessons from the
Intervention in Liberia, 1990-1997**

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Abbreviations

AAFC	Allied Armed Forces of the Community
AFL	Armed Forces of Liberia
CDC	Civic Disarmament Campaign
CEAN	Centre d'Etudes d'Afrique Noire (Bordeaux)
CEDEAO	Communauté Economique des Etats de l'Afrique de l'Ouest
CODESRIA	Council for the Development of Social Science Research in Africa
CPWA	Conflict Prevention in West Africa (Research Project)
CRC-NPFL	Central Revolutionary Council (faction; broke ranks with NPFL)
CSO	Central Selling Organization (De Beers)
ECOMOG	ECOWAS Cease-fire Monitoring Group
ECOWAS	Economic Community of West African States
EMSSU	Executive Mansion Special Security Unit
FDA	Forestry Development Agency
IFMC	Inter-Faith Mediation Committee
IGNU	Interim Government of National Unity
ILA	Interim Legislative Assembly
INPFL	Independent National Patriotic Front of Liberia
INN	International Negotiation Network
LDF	Lofa Defence Force
LIMINCO	Liberia Mining Corporation
LNC	Liberian National Conference
LNTG	Liberia National Transitional Government
LPC	Liberian Peace Council
MAD	Mutual Assistance in Defence (ECOWAS Protocol)
NATO	North Atlantic Treaty Organization
NGO	Non-governmental organization
NMOG	Neutral Military Observer Group
NPFL	National Patriotic Front of Liberia
NPP	National Patriotic Party
NPRA	National Patriotic Reconstruction Assembly
OAU	Organization of African Unity
OSCE	Organization for Security and Cooperation in Europe
Oxfam	Oxford Committee for Famine Relief
PANA	Pan-African News Agency
RUF	Revolutionary United Front
SMC	Standing Mediation Committee
SSS	Special Security Service
SUGOMO	Surgical Guerrilla Military Operations
TLA	Transitional Legislative Assembly

UK	United Kingdom
ULIMO	United Liberation Movement for Democracy
ULIMO-J	United Liberation Movement for Democracy (Johnson's faction)
ULIMO-K	United Liberation Movement for Democracy (Kromah's faction)
UN	United Nations
UNHCR	United Nations High Commission for Refugees
UNITA	União para a Independência Total de Angola
UNOMIL	United Nations Observer Mission in Liberia
US	United States

1 Introduction

As shown in the study of Biaya¹ the West African region possesses a multitude of actors and institutions that are active in the containment, if not prevention, of violent conflicts. The political status of these actors and institutions varies considerably, while they operate on different levels and in different contexts – each according to their own specific mandates.

At the so-called sub-state level non-governmental groups, both African and international, perform tasks that are directly or indirectly relevant to the containment or prevention of conflicts, or the promotion of peaceful, stable and minimal living conditions after the restoration of peace. Governmental actors such as local and provincial authorities or neo-traditional leaders are also active at this level, while central governments are the principal actors and protagonists that engage in both intra- and inter-state conflicts, and their mediation.

At the regional level, too, West Africa possesses an institution that is highly relevant to the course and mediation of certain conflicts, although the organization involved, the Economic Community of West African States (ECOWAS), was never intended as a regional security structure and its official mandate lies primarily in the economic realm. ECOWAS was established in 1975 to promote the development of the region by way of intra-regional cooperation in all fields of economic activity, involving the elimination of trade barriers, the encouragement of the free movement of goods, persons, capital and services and the harmonization of national policies in all areas that are relevant to the progressive integration of national economies.²

Ironically, while its track record in these areas has so far been disappointing,³ ECOWAS has developed, since the end of the Cold War, a high profile with regard to cooperation on political and security issues. This has come about primarily through the intervention, under ECOWAS auspices, in the Liberian civil war. Although this intervention was protracted and controversial and suffered numerous setbacks, the countries responsible managed to see it through. The result was that the intervention force –

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- 1 T.K. Biaya, 'Acteurs et médiations dans la résolution et la prévention des conflits en Afrique de l'Ouest' (*Project Conflict Prevention in West Africa*: Dakar, 1998). Here I would like to thank him for certain internal documents of ECOWAS and on ECOMOG. I would also like to thank the following persons for granting interviews or the provision of documentary sources: Roger Laloupo, Director of the Department of Legal Affairs of the Executive Secretariat of ECOWAS; Mr. Bastiaan Körner, Ambassador of the Netherlands in Nigeria; Dr Amos Sawyer, President of Liberia's former Interim Government of National Unity; Counsellor Alexander Zoe and Samuel Kofi Woods of the Justice and Peace Commission, National Catholic Secretariat, Monrovia; Mrs Adrienne Diop, Director of Information of the Executive Secretariat of ECOWAS; Samuel Ajavon of the Centre for Democratic Empowerment, Monrovia; Jonathan Cohen of Conciliation Resources, London; Dr Stephen Ellis of the African Studies Centre, Leiden; and François Prkic of the Institut d'études politiques de Bordeaux.
 - 2 K. van Walraven, 'Some Aspects of Regional Economic Integration in Africa', in *Hague Yearbook of International Law*, 1991, pp. 114-115.
 - 3 Even by its own admission official inter-state trade was, by the early 1990s, still very low (5%), with significant tariff reductions still to be accomplished and relevant protocols to be ratified. See *Contact: Le magazine de la CEDEAO*, October 1992, pp. 32-34.

called the ECOWAS Cease-fire Monitoring Group (ECOMOG) – stayed in Liberia and finally was able, in 1997, to put a peaceful end to the civil war by way of internationally supervised elections.⁴

Moreover, in the course of the conflict ECOMOG also got involved in trying to suppress an armed rebellion in neighbouring Sierra Leone, a conflict that was closely related to the civil war in Liberia. This culminated, in February 1998, in the violent overthrow by ECOMOG of the military clique that usurped power in Sierra Leone in the spring of 1997. As this did not lead to an end to the civil war or the rebellion against the government, thousands of ECOMOG troops were sent to Sierra Leone to defend its government at the end of 1998 – early 1999.⁵

Finally, when in June 1998 some sections of the army of Guinea-Bissau mutinied against the government of that country a meeting of ECOWAS foreign and defence ministers in Ivory Coast sounded off warnings that they might accede to a request of the Guinean President Vieira for military support to quell the rebellion. Subsequently a committee was formed of seven ECOWAS member states to mediate between the government and mutineers. To this purpose it was given a mandate to engage in dialogue and negotiations, while it was also allowed to impose sanctions and, as a last resort, to use force to end the conflict. In December 1998 Togolese troops arrived as part of an ECOMOG force mandated to monitor a peace agreement.⁶

Thus ECOWAS has quickly developed a role for itself in security matters. Even if its mandate has been disputed by West Africans, whether in governmental or non-governmental circles, and the activities of ECOMOG have in practice focused on only a small part of the vast West African region,⁷ ECOWAS can nevertheless be regarded as West Africa's principal, encompassing political and security structure. Furthermore, while much of this has been the result of factual developments, rather than *de jure* activities, the organization does possess certain official and explicit prerogatives that provide it with a mandate with regard to regional security issues.

ECOWAS therefore serves as the main point of reference for the research project of which this study is a part. As the objective of this project is to investigate West Africa's needs and requirements in the containment and prevention of conflicts, it is also imperative to analyse the strengths and weaknesses of ECOWAS itself in handling the region's security issues.⁸ This study aims to do this by analysing the organization's intervention in the Liberian civil war, with an emphasis on the role of ECOWAS as a multilateral, third party actor.⁹ It does not focus on Liberia's recent turbulent history as such, since the project's analytical perspective is on third party agencies or institutions engaged in efforts at conflict management or prevention. Moreover, several competent studies on the (pre)history of the Liberian civil war have already appeared, to which reference will be made in the course of this study. Naturally, ECOMOG's intervention cannot be seen in isolation from Liberia's political, historical, socio-economic

4 See the special issue of *New African*, December 1997.

5 See *Africa Research Bulletin* (Political, Social and Cultural Series; hereinafter as PSC), 1998, pp. 12991-12994 and Star Radio: Liberian Daily News Bulletin, 20/10/98 and 2/1/99. All Star Radio's bulletins cited in this study were taken from Africa News Online.

6 The committee was to work together with the group of Lusophone countries, which also tried to broker an agreement. See the reports of the Pan-African News Agency (PANA) of 4/7/98, 5/7/98, 4/8/98, 5/8/98, 11/8/98, 12/8/98, 14/8/98 and 28/12/98. All PANA reports cited in this study were taken from Africa News Online.

7 Namely the section of the Western Atlantic coast region stretching from the Ivory Coast – Liberia border to Guinea-Bissau.

8 See also 'Research on Conflict Prevention in West Africa (CPWA) – Project Document' (Netherlands Institute of International Relations 'Clingendael': The Hague, 1998), p. 6.

9 The roles played by unarmed Liberian social and political groupings (generally referred to as 'civil society') are treated extensively in Biaya, 'Acteurs et médiations dans la résolution et la prévention des conflits en Afrique de l'Ouest'.

and military context. Those contextual elements that are of direct relevance for our understanding of the intervention will therefore be included in the analysis.¹⁰

The diplomatic and military activities employed under ECOWAS auspices with regard to Sierra Leone and Guinea-Bissau also fall outside the scope of this study. However, the conclusions will, among others, touch on the question of ECOWAS as the general security organization for the West African region – in the present and future.

In line with the research project's general methodology the following chapters will deal successively with the institutions involved in the Liberian operation; the mandates concerned and the working methods employed by, or in the cadre of, ECOWAS; and the actual practice of its intervention. The final chapter attempts to extrapolate, from ECOMOG's vicissitudes, certain key factors that conditioned its successes and failures. It also provides some general conclusions and recommendations that are relevant to policies in the field of conflict prevention and containment.

10 For more in-depth treatment of the civil war the reader is referred to specific studies of Liberia. See, for example, S. Ellis, *The Mask of Anarchy: The Destruction of Liberia and the Religious Roots of an African Civil War* (London, 1999).

2 Institutions Relevant to the Intervention in Liberia

Introduction

Several ECOWAS organs and related procedures have been relevant to the intervention in the Liberian conflict: the so-called Authority with, in a subservient position, the Council of Ministers; the Standing Mediation Committee; the organization's Executive Secretary; the military intervention force itself, ECOMOG, made up of member state contingents and headed by a Force Commander; the Special Emergency Fund; the Special Representative of the Executive Secretary and his supporting staff; the so-called Committee of Five and the Monitoring Committee of Nine; and, finally, the ECOWAS Observer Group for the Liberian Elections. While this chapter focuses on the structure of these institutions and organs, the next chapter will discuss the contents of their mandate and show how this mandate was relevant to the intervention in Liberia.

General ECOWAS Institutions

The Authority of Heads of State and Government

Among the general, permanent ECOWAS organs of relevance to the intervention in Liberia one should first mention the Authority of Heads of State and Government. As its name implies it is made up of the Heads of State and Government of the member states of the Community and as such it acts as its 'principal governing institution'.¹ Excluding extraordinary summits, its sessions are held once a year, with the presidency and venue rotating among the membership. The Authority is the legislative and supervisory organ of the Community. It therefore has the general direction and control of the Community's executive functions and defines the norms and rules, which are binding for all other organs. Both in terms of the structure of the Community itself and, as shown in subsequent chapters, the practice of intervention in Liberia, the Authority must be considered as the crucial ECOWAS institution.

1 Article 5 of the Treaty of the Economic Community of West African States (ECOWAS). Text in *Africa Contemporary Record*, 1975-76, C 157-73. In the revised Treaty drafted in 1993 (see the next chapter; text publ. by the ECOWAS Executive Secretariat, Abuja, Nigeria, no date.) it is simply referred to as 'the supreme institution of the Community' (art. 7). References to the ECOWAS Treaty in this and the next chapter are mainly to the original version, as the revised one could not form the basis for intervention in Liberia three years earlier. However, mention will be made in footnotes where the revised version differs from the old Treaty.

The Council of Ministers

The Council of Ministers convenes at least twice a year, has the power to recommend to the Authority and may dictate to subordinate organs of ECOWAS.² While it is therefore able to affect Community policy, the ECOWAS Treaty clearly subjects the Council to the power of the Authority, something that, in practice, is reinforced by the dominant position of heads of state in the context of the national political systems.³ While for the purpose of the Community's general mandate the Council is often made up of the ministers of economic and financial affairs,⁴ it may also serve as the cadre for meetings of the ministers of foreign affairs and those of defence.⁵

The Executive Secretary

The last ECOWAS institution catered for in the ECOWAS Treaty and relevant in the context of the intervention in Liberia is the office of Executive Secretary. In terms of the ECOWAS Treaty the Secretary has a predominantly administrative function. While article 8 provides for a policy-making role,⁶ the political importance of this office seems to be restricted due to the economic-technical bias of the organization's mandate and the Secretary's subordination to the power of the Authority.

Institutions Established on an Ad Hoc Basis

The Standing Mediation Committee

The Standing Mediation Committee (SMC) was established on a *de facto* basis in April 1990, upon the initiative of Nigeria.⁷ In May of that year the ECOWAS Authority formally approved the SMC's formation at its Banjul summit.⁸ Explicitly intended as a permanent organ, the Committee was made up of four ECOWAS member states designated by the Authority, in addition to the member state holding the Authority's presidency, who also headed the SMC's meetings. The composition of the Committee was to be revised every three years.⁹ In 1990 the SMC was thus made up of Nigeria, Ghana, Gambia, Togo and

2 Article 6 ECOWAS Treaty. However, the provision stipulating its power to dictate to subordinate institutions was not included in the revised Treaty, possibly because it introduced a new Economic and Social Council and a Community Parliament. Yet in the context of African politics it is unlikely that this ended its dominant position vis-à-vis other organs.

3 See also K. van Walraven, *Dreams of Power: The Role of the Organization of African Unity in the Politics of Africa 1963-1993* (Aldershot, 1999), pp. 59 and 186.

4 Van Walraven, 'Some Aspects of Regional Economic Integration in Africa', p. 115.

5 An example is the meeting of foreign and defence ministers in Abidjan, Ivory Coast, on 3 July 1998, which discussed the mutiny in Guinea-Bissau. See the report of the Pan-African News Agency of 15/7/98 and the revised article 10 of the ECOWAS Treaty.

6 Article 23.a in the new Treaty.

7 According to H. Howe, 'Lessons of Liberia: ECOMOG and Regional Peacekeeping', in *International Security*, Winter 1996/97, p. 151.

8 Decision A/DEC. 9/5/90. Text in *Official Journal of the Economic Community of West African States (ECOWAS)*, November 1992.

9 *Ibid.*, article 1.

Mali.¹⁰ It was in this organ that the decision was taken to establish ECOMOG, a plan that was prepared by a Sub-Committee on Defence Matters inside the SMC.¹¹

The ECOWAS Cease-fire Monitoring Group

According to the original SMC decision establishing ECOMOG, the ECOWAS Cease-fire Monitoring Group was to be made up of military contingents of the five SMC member states, plus Sierra Leone and Guinea-Conakry.¹² However, at its first extraordinary session, in November 1990, the ECOWAS Authority explicitly appealed to other member states to contribute contingents¹³ and in the course of the intervention other countries would, indeed, send troops to participate in the force's operations. The SMC decision stipulated that ECOMOG was to be placed under the authority of the ECOWAS Authority's president and the command of a 'Member State'.¹⁴ The decision also laid down that ECOMOG be placed 'under the command of a Force Commander' appointed by the Committee.¹⁵ While in combination these prescriptions may seem confusing or contradictory, in practice command structures were very clear as all ECOMOG commanders except the first were Nigerian and it was Nigeria that dominated the force.¹⁶ The institutional link between ECOMOG and ECOWAS was expressed by way of a Special Representative of the Executive Secretary and supporting staff, who were to be stationed in Liberia to collaborate closely with ECOMOG's Commander and to facilitate the operations of ECOWAS in that country.¹⁷

The Special Emergency Fund

When the Standing Mediation Committee established ECOMOG it also decided to form a Special Emergency Fund to finance the force's operation. The establishment of the Fund was explicitly related to the intervention in Liberia, thus not to a general peace-keeping/making role for ECOMOG in West Africa. The Fund's initial capital was targeted at fifty million US dollars. ECOWAS member states were asked to contribute but contributions were not made mandatory. Institutions and governments beyond the region and Africa were, however, called upon to contribute as well and the Fund's operation was to be ruled by the financial regulations of the Community.¹⁸ At the time, the SMC also decided to establish, in due course, an ECOWAS Observer Group for the Liberian Elections which should monitor elections to

10 Howe, 'Lessons of Liberia', p. 151 n. 13.

11 C.E. Adibe, 'The Liberian conflict and the ECOWAS-UN partnership', in *Third World Quarterly*, 1997, pp. 473-474.

12 Decision A/DEC. 1/8/90, article 2.1. Text in *Official Journal of the Economic Community of West African States (ECOWAS)*, November 1992. Sierra Leone and Guinea-Conakry, while not SMC members, nevertheless attended the meeting at which ECOMOG was established. See its Final Communiqué 6-7 August 1990. Text in *The Liberian Crisis* (Justice & Peace Commission, National Catholic Secretariat: Monrovia, July 1994), pp. 83-87.

13 Resolution A/RES. 2/11/90. Text in *Official Journal of the Economic Community of West African States (ECOWAS)*, November 1992.

14 Decision A/DEC. 1/8/90, article 2.1.

15 *Ibid.*, article 2.2.

16 See further chapters 3-4. The Nigerian wish to assert its control over the force was the principal reason for the replacement of the first commander, General Quainoo, who was Ghanaian, by a Nigerian officer. Howe, 'Lessons of Liberia', p. 154.

17 Decision A/DEC. 1/8/90, article 2.6.

18 Decision A/DEC. 3/8/90, articles 1-5. Text in *Official Journal of the Economic Community of West African States (ECOWAS)*, November 1992.

be held at a later date, in order to ensure that these would be free and fair. The group would be financed by the Special Emergency Fund.¹⁹

The Committees of Five and Nine

Finally, two institutions established on an *ad hoc* basis that were relevant to the intervention in Liberia were the so-called Committee of Five and the Monitoring Committee of Nine. The Committee of Five was formed at the conclusion of a meeting in Yamoussoukro, Ivory Coast, in June 1991 between the heads of state of Nigeria, Gambia (at the time chairman of the ECOWAS Authority), Togo, Burkina Faso and Ivory Coast, as well as Charles Taylor, the principal Liberian warlord, and Amos Sawyer, the President of the 'Interim Government', on which more below. The meeting, which barely lasted two hours, seems to have been an *ad hoc* initiative taken outside the purview of ECOWAS.²⁰ Nevertheless, the Committee, which consisted of Gambia, Togo, Senegal, Guinea-Bissau and Ivory Coast, was from its second meeting referred to as the 'ECOWAS Committee of Five'.²¹

The Monitoring Committee of Nine originated through a decision of a joint meeting of the Committee of Five and the Standing Mediation Committee, organized in Cotonou, Benin, in October 1992. This decision held that both Committees would work together towards implementation of the ECOWAS Peace Plan, more particularly the execution of the accords of Yamoussoukro (on which more in chapter 5).²² The Committee of Nine convened its first meeting at summit level (*i.e.* heads of state) in Abuja, Nigeria, in November 1992.²³

The rationale for the formation of both these committees and their mandates will be discussed in the next chapters.

19 Decision A/DEC. 4/8/90. Text in *Official Journal of the Economic Community of West African States (ECOWAS)*, November 1992.

20 The text (publ. in *Official Journal of the Economic Community of West African States [ECOWAS]* November 1992) refers to 'heads of state' and the ECOWAS Chairman present, not ECOWAS member states. The committee is merely called a 'five member committee' and only the names of the countries sitting on the committee are mentioned, not their institutional representation such as governments or heads of state. However, Roger Laloupo, Director of the Department of Legal Affairs of the Executive Secretariat of ECOWAS, asserted that the meeting was one of ECOWAS. Interview with author, Abuja, Nigeria, 22 September 1998. See for a reference to the time the meeting commenced and ended the French text of the decision in *Journal Officiel de la Communauté de l'Afrique de l'Ouest (CEDEAO)*, November 1992.

21 See the *Official Journal of the Economic Community of West African States (ECOWAS)*, November 1992, which published the Committee's communiqués.

22 Final Communiqué 20 October 1992. Text in *Liberian Studies Journal*, 1992, no. 2, pp. 265-269.

23 Final Communiqué 7 November 1992. Text in M. Weller (ed), *Regional Peace-Keeping and International Enforcement: The Liberian Crisis* (Cambridge, 1994), pp. 241-244. While Mali, an SMC member, was not present, the meeting was also attended by Benin (which held the chair of the ECOWAS Authority), Guinea-Conakry and Burkina Faso. The latter two were member of neither two original committees, but represented anti- and pro-Taylor oriented states respectively.

3 The Question of Mandate: Ecowas and its Powers to Intervene

Introduction

As mentioned in chapter 1, the mandate of ECOWAS may lie primarily in the field of economics but this does not mean that the organization lacks prerogatives, both implicit and explicit, that are relevant to issues of regional security. This chapter will scrutinize the various legal sources and arguments on which the organization can or could base intervention and mediation in conflicts in general and its involvement in Liberia in particular, while it will also analyse the *actual* arguments and procedures used when the decision was taken to intervene in that country.

The ECOWAS Treaty

The original ECOWAS Treaty did not contain any explicit provisions that could justify the Community's intervention in Liberia, or in conflicts generally. However, the preamble of the Treaty speaks of the 'need to accelerate, foster and encourage the economic and social development' of the member states and, to this purpose, emphasizes the importance of inter-state cooperation. Article 2 mentions economic cooperation as an ECOWAS objective, which is related to the purpose of 'fostering closer relations among its member states'.¹ As conflicts could easily jeopardize the goal of closer ties, it is not difficult to construct arguments that could justify ECOWAS concern with, and involvement in, mediation or intervention in conflicts. For example, in deciding to establish the Standing Mediation Committee, the ECOWAS Authority argued, among others, that regional security, stability and peace were necessary conditions to ensure cooperation and integration, goals that could be put in jeopardy by disputes and conflicts.²

The Treaty also contains some practical provisions that the member states can use in mediation efforts. For example, while the Authority of Heads of State and Government must convene 'at least once a year', it can determine its own rules of procedure for its regular sessions 'and at other times', thus providing for the possibility of extraordinary sessions – at which specific conflicts can be discussed.³ In practice, the Authority has at times used this prerogative – for example, when it approved the SMC decision establishing ECOMOG.⁴ Moreover, the Authority has the explicit power to establish other bodies not provided for in the ECOWAS Treaty.⁵ One can think here of committees to mediate in

1 Preamble and article 2 of ECOWAS Treaty.

2 Decision A/DEC. 9/5/90.

3 Article 5 ECOWAS Treaty. The revised Treaty (art. 8) refers explicitly to extraordinary sessions. The Authority is explicitly empowered to use ordinary and extraordinary sessions to discuss conflicts under the Protocol on Non-Aggression and the Protocol on Mutual Assistance in Defence to be discussed below.

4 Decision A/DEC. 1/11/90. See for this the French text in *Journal Officiel de la Communauté de l'Afrique de l'Ouest (CEDEAO)*, November 1992.

5 Article 4 ECOWAS Treaty.

conflicts. Its decision to approve the formation of the SMC itself is an obvious example of this.⁶ As an organ that is supreme within the institutional context of ECOWAS and that is composed of the highest, or second highest, level of West Africa's political leadership, the Authority enjoys, in fact, a broad mandate to concern itself with political issues (such as conflicts) – as long as its members manage to reach a consensus among themselves.⁷

Similarly, the Council of Ministers has the power to convene extraordinary sessions, while it, too, is in practice allowed to establish committees to mediate in conflicts.⁸ The Executive Secretary has the explicit prerogative to examine 'the functioning of the Community' and report on this to the Council of Ministers.⁹ Although this provides for a role in ECOWAS policy-making and implementation and, thus, a potential role in conflict mediation, in practice the Secretary performs this function in strict subordination to the real policy-making organs, the Council and Authority. Neither the old nor the revised (1993) ECOWAS Treaty stipulates an explicit political mandate for the Executive Secretary. His role in this area is essentially *de facto*. This is made possible by, among others, his regular contacts with the chairman of the Authority, which provide him with information about political issues.¹⁰ Indeed, it appears that, since the intervention in Liberia, the political and diplomatic role of the organization's chief functionary has increased.¹¹ The next chapter will give an assessment of his actual influence over the Liberian operation.

As mentioned in chapter 1, the Liberian civil war led ECOWAS to develop an active role in conflict mediation. In recognition of this shift towards political issues the Community adopted, in July 1991, the 'ECOWAS Declaration of Political Principles'.¹² Thus, while Adeleke interprets the 1993 Treaty revisions as an attempt to re-establish consensus among West Africa's leaders over the role of ECOWAS in Liberia,¹³ political affairs had by then already become part and parcel of the Community's mandate. Although Liberia enhanced the urgency of this mandate, the 1993 revisions may have had less to do with the intervention by ECOMOG as with general post-Cold War developments in Africa's international organizations.¹⁴ In any case, these revisions could not justify the organization's intervention in Liberia, as

6 Decision A/DEC. 9/5/90.

7 While the new Treaty (art. 9) requires unanimity, two-thirds majorities or consensus, in practice consensus is still the preferred basis for decision-making. Interview with Roger Laloupo, Abuja, Nigeria, 22 September 1998.

8 See for the convening of extraordinary sessions article 6.4 ECOWAS Treaty. A recent example of the formation of committees is the one formed to follow up implementation of resolutions adopted to contain the conflict in Guinea-Bissau. See the report of the Pan-African News Agency of 5/7/98.

9 Article 8.10 ECOWAS Treaty. In the revised Treaty article 19.e confers a broad power of reporting to the Secretary.

10 Interview with Roger Laloupo and Mrs Adrienne Diop, Director of Information of the Executive Secretariat of ECOWAS, Abuja, Nigeria, 22 September 1998. The importance of these consultations is paralleled in the case of the OAU. See Van Walraven, *Dreams of Power*, pp. 291-293.

11 For example, in the week that Roger Laloupo, Director of the Department of Legal Affairs of the Executive Secretariat of ECOWAS, was interviewed for this study, the Executive Secretary was in Abidjan, engaged in mediation between rebels and the government of Guinea-Bissau. After a quick return to the Secretariat in Abuja he would go on to New York.

12 See Economic Community of West African States: ECOWAS Mechanism for Conflict Prevention, Management and Resolution and for Peace-Keeping and Security; Meeting of Ministers of Defence, Internal Affairs and Security, Banjul, 23-24 July 1998, Draft Mechanism (Executive Secretariat: Banjul, July 1998), p. 2 (hereinafter as Draft Mechanism).

13 See chapter 5. A. Adeleke, 'The Politics and Diplomacy of Peacekeeping in West Africa: The Ecowas Operation in Liberia', in *Journal of Modern African Studies*, 1995, p. 590.

14 Interview with Roger Laloupo, Abuja, Nigeria, 22 September 1998. See also K. van Walraven, 'Intergovernmental Organizations and Preventing Conflicts: Political Practice Since the End of the Cold War', in *ibid.* (ed), *Early Warning and Conflict Prevention: Limitations and Possibilities* (The Hague, London and Boston, 1998), ch. 2.

they were only approved at the Authority's summit in Cotonou, Benin, in July 1993,¹⁵ thus three years after ECOMOG had disembarked in Monrovia harbour.

Nevertheless, the revised Treaty for the first time explicitly stipulated a role for ECOWAS in regional security matters. Article 4 now emphasizes, as one of the principles between ECOWAS member states, the maintenance of regional peace, stability and security.¹⁶ In fact, through its article 58 member states undertook to cooperate towards the formation of 'appropriate mechanisms' to prevent and resolve both 'intra-State and inter-State conflicts', such as by consultations between national border authorities; national joint commissions to examine problems in the relations between neighbouring states; the provision of assistance in the observation of elections upon the request of the member state concerned; the employment of good offices, conciliation, mediation and other procedures for the peaceful settlement of disputes; the establishment of a 'regional peace and security observation system'; and possibly the fielding of peacekeeping forces. In order to provide substance to these provisions details would be defined in special protocols to be drawn up at a later stage.¹⁷ In the concluding chapter we will return to these wider issues.

The Two Protocols and their Non-Existent Institutions

While the ECOWAS Treaty did, for long, not contain any explicit provisions empowering the organization to mediate in conflicts, the Community nevertheless possessed a few written mandates in this issue area well before its intervention in Liberia. These mandates were drafted in the form of two protocols dating from 1978 and 1981.¹⁸

The first is called 'Protocol on Non-Aggression' and obliges the member states, all of which signed and ratified the Protocol,¹⁹ not to resort to the threat or use of force in their inter-state relations, in particular by acts of subversion or aggression against the territorial integrity or political independence of other member states. Member states also committed themselves not to allow their own territory to be used by foreigners as a base for military operations against another state.²⁰ While the members obliged themselves to try and resolve any disputes peacefully, any dispute that would not be resolved amicably would have to be referred to a committee appointed for this purpose by the ECOWAS Authority, or to the Authority itself if such committee would fail.²¹ It is not clear who would be allowed to refer the dispute and whether the Authority or its committee would be allowed to act of its own accord. However, for the purpose of this study it is important to note that the Protocol could not have provided ECOWAS with a mandate to intervene in Liberia, as it deals with purely inter-state conflicts. While there was, as will be shown below, an important external element to the unfolding of the Liberian civil war, it was – or became

15 The Treaty came into force in 1995. Interview with Roger Laloupo, Abuja, Nigeria, 22 September 1998.

16 It also stipulates the promotion of democratic systems of governance and the protection of human rights.

17 Article 58.2. By the autumn of 1998 these protocols had not yet been drafted, although it was the intention to rewrite the Draft Mechanism mentioned in note 12 in the form of a protocol upon its approval by the Authority. Interview with Roger Laloupo, Abuja, Nigeria, 22 September 1998.

18 Thus not to be confused with any future protocols mentioned in the previous paragraph, which may be drawn up to work out the details of the 1993 revisions in the ECOWAS Treaty.

19 The Protocol entered into force in 1982. A. Bundu, 'ECOWAS Protocol on Mutual Assistance in Defense (MAD) 1981: How Effective for Conflict Management in West Africa?', in *Report of the Workshop on Conflict Management Mechanism in West Africa* (African Strategic and Peace Research Group: Ogere, Nigeria, 1997), p. 19.

20 Protocol on Non-Aggression, articles 1-4. French text in *Le Bulletin de l'Ouest Africain* (publ. by Department of Information, ECOWAS Executive Secretariat, Lagos), no. 3, June 1995.

21 *Ibid.*, article 5.

– by definition also an intra-state conflict. Thus it is not surprising that neither the Authority nor the SMC ever mentioned the Protocol in their decisions establishing, or approving the establishment of, ECOMOG.²²

The second Protocol seems, at first sight, more relevant to the intervention in Liberia, at least certain provisions of it. This ‘Protocol on Mutual Assistance in Defence’ was signed in 1981²³ and stipulates, firstly, that the member states will consider any threat or act of aggression against any member state as a threat or act of aggression against the entire Community (article 2) and, secondly, that they are committed to provide each other with aid and assistance for their defence against all those threats or acts of aggression (article 3).

The Protocol provides that, if a member state becomes the victim of an ‘external’ armed threat or act of aggression (presumably from outside the Community) the head of state of the country concerned must send a written request for help to the chairman of the ECOWAS Authority with copies to other members. The Authority must then concern itself with the conflict, for the purpose of which it may convene in extraordinary session. It shall decide on possible military action and shall entrust its execution to the Force Commander of the alerted ‘Allied Armed Forces of the Community’ (AAFC – on which more below) – the Authority’s decisions being immediately enforceable on the member states.²⁴ In case of a conflict *between* two or more member states and the failure of the procedures stipulated in the Protocol on Non-Aggression, the Authority shall convene urgently and undertake mediation efforts. If necessary, it shall decide only to interpose the above-mentioned AAFC between the belligerent parties.²⁵

Perhaps more relevant to the Liberian case is the provision that, in case of an internal conflict supported ‘from outside likely to endanger the security and peace in the entire Community’, the Authority may, in collaboration with and on request of the member state government concerned, similarly convene in extraordinary session. In this case it shall also decide on military action and entrust its implementation to the Force Commander of the alerted AAFC – its decisions being equally at once enforceable on the member states. However, the Protocol also prescribes that no military intervention shall take place if a conflict remains a purely internal affair.²⁶

In addition, article 18 subjects any military action in an intra-state conflict fomented from outside to the procedures stipulated in article 9 of the Protocol. This provision holds that in case of military operations, a ‘Defence Council’, made up of the ECOWAS ministers of defence and foreign affairs and assisted by a ‘Defence Commission’ composed of the military chiefs of staff of each member state, will supervise the

22 This point is missed by S. Ellis, ‘Liberia 1989-1994: A Study of Ethnic and Spiritual Violence’, in *African Affairs*, 1995, p. 169.

23 Economic Community of West African States: A/SP3/5/81: Protocol Relating to Mutual Assistance on Defence; certified true copy, Edouard Benjamin, Executive Secretary. French text in *Le Bulletin de l’Ouest Africain*, no. 3, June 1995. It entered into force in 1986. By 1997 it had been signed by all member states save Cape Verde and Mali and ratified by all members with the exception of Cape Verde, Mali, Mauritania, Gambia and Benin. Bundu, ‘ECOWAS Protocol’, pp. 19 and 26, n. 1 and 2. Article 21 stipulates that every West African state acceding to the ECOWAS Treaty becomes party to both Protocols, while those signing and ratifying the Protocol on Mutual Assistance in Defence become thereby party to the Protocol on Non-Aggression (but which all members have already signed and ratified). Both Protocols have been ‘annexed’ to the ECOWAS Treaty and are to be considered as an ‘integral part’ of it. While signing the Protocol on Mutual Defense seems thus superfluous for a member state in order to be bound to it, its article 24 stipulates that its provisional entry into force nevertheless depended on the signature of the heads of state and government and its definitive validity on seven ratifications. Moreover, article 23 provides for the possibility to withdraw from the Protocol by way of a notification procedure.

24 Articles 16 and 6.

25 Articles 17 and 4.a.

26 Articles 4.b, 6.2, 6.3, 6.4, 16 and 18.

AAFC Commander's actions in liaison with the threatened member state(s) concerned. The Commander's actions are placed under the competent political authority of that, or those, threatened state(s).²⁷ Article 9 also lays down that the Defence Council will ensure that the Commander will get all means necessary for the intervention. These 'modalities' refer to the above-mentioned Allied Armed Forces of the Community, which are to be constituted by designated units inside the armies of the Community's member states.²⁸ In all cases intervention by the AAFC must be justified by reference to the legitimate defence of the territories of the Community's member states.²⁹

Nevertheless, the significance of this Protocol is minimized by the fact that none of the above-mentioned institutions (*i.e.* the AAFC, the Defence Council and the Defence Commission) had actually been put in place by the time of the decision to intervene in Liberia, an omission that continued during the entire course of the operation.³⁰ As shown below, this made any attempt to legitimize ECOMOG's intervention on the basis of the Protocol questionable.

The SMC, the Authority and the Mandate to Establish ECOMOG

Although it was the civil war in Liberia that formed the reason for the decision to establish the Standing Mediation Committee,³¹ the SMC was officially provided with a general and permanent mandate with regard to mediation in conflicts.³² Thus the Authority argued, in the preamble of the relevant decision, that regional security and stability, as well as peace and 'concord', were necessary conditions for effective cooperation and that the frequent conflicts and disputes between member states had a negative effect on the ultimate goal of ECOWAS, namely a harmonious and united West African society. It also referred to the Protocol on Non-Aggression. The decision's substantive provision laid down that, in case of a conflict between two or more member states, one of the member states can inform the Executive Secretary in writing of its intention to let the SMC mediate the conflict. The Executive Secretary must

27 In case of emergency the Defence Council is chaired by the Authority's president and assisted by the Executive Secretary and the Deputy Executive Secretary charged with military questions. The Council may be enlarged with other ministers of member states according to circumstance. It prepares the Authority's defence agenda, as well as a study of the situation at hand, the strategy to be adopted and the instruments of intervention to be used. After an intervention it draws up a report for the Authority. The Defence Commission is supposed to study technical defence problems. The Deputy Executive Secretary for military questions should handle the administrative aspects and follow-up of the Authority's decisions, update plans for the movement of troops and logistics and organize periodic joint military manoeuvres of member state military units, designated to be part of the AAFC as approved by the Authority. Articles 7-13.

28 See Article 13. Article 14 stipulates that the Commander is appointed by the Authority upon the advice of the Defence Council and represents, together with the Chief of Defence Staff of the country being assisted, the Joint Chiefs of Defence Staff of the AAFC.

29 Article 15. See for further discussions of the Protocol Bundu, 'ECOWAS Protocol' and J.E. Okolo, 'Securing West Africa: the ECOWAS defence pact', in *The World Today*, May 1983, pp. 177-184.

30 Interview with Roger Laloupo, Abuja, Nigeria, 22 September 1998. Thus in 1991 the SMC appealed for the implementation of the two Protocols, 'especially the setting up of the organs established under the Protocols'. See Economic Community of West African States. Third Summit Meeting of the ECOWAS Standing Mediation Committee, Lomé, Togo, 12-13 February 1991, Final Communiqué, par. 14. Text in *Official Journal of the Economic Community of West African States (ECOWAS)*, November 1992. In June 1998 the meeting of ECOWAS foreign and defence ministers that issued warnings on a possible intervention in Guinea-Bissau was dubbed, according to PANA, a 'defence council'. See its report of 5/7/98.

31 Interview with Roger Laloupo, Abuja, Nigeria, 22 September 1998.

32 Thus, while it was to become completely absorbed by the Liberian crisis, in mid 1990 it also mediated in the conflicts between Senegal and Mauritania and between Senegal and Guinea-Bissau. See *Africa Confidential*, 21/11/97.

then inform the Authority's chairman and the members of the Committee without delay. The Authority's president subsequently convenes the Committee and informs the belligerent parties of its willingness to mediate. The decision does not stipulate the working methods to be followed in these mediation attempts: it simply refers to 'mediation procedures' and 'mediation efforts'.³³

As mentioned in the previous chapter, it was the SMC that took the decision to establish ECOMOG and intervene in Liberia. Since the Committee's mandate allowed it to mediate in inter-state conflicts only and the Liberian crisis was, or had by then developed into, a predominantly intra-state conflict – albeit with external linkages –, this decision could be considered *ultra vires*, notwithstanding the final remark in the preamble of the decision that the SMC regarded itself as 'an appropriate mechanism' to solve the Liberian problem. Moreover, in the decision's preamble the Committee referred, first of all, to the Protocol on Mutual Assistance in Defence.³⁴ As shown above, however, Protocol interventions can only take place in inter-state conflicts or internal ones fomented from outside. While certain West African regimes were clearly involved in the Liberian conflict, it seems that the 'outside' the Protocol speaks of refers to acts or threats from outside the West African region as a whole.³⁵ Finally, the powers under the Protocol to engage in military intervention in an internal conflict with such external linkages are, under article 18.1, subject to the involvement of certain defence institutions that had not yet been established. Thus Abass Bundu, at the time the Executive Secretary of ECOWAS, concluded in a later article that 'the legal basis for ECOWAS military intervention [had] to be found outside of the 1981 Protocol'.³⁶

Furthermore, when Samuel Doe, the embattled President of Liberia, asked for intervention by an ECOWAS peacekeeping force, his formal request was directed at the SMC and its chairman, and not at the chairman of the ECOWAS Authority as prescribed in article 16 of the Protocol.³⁷ While the chair of the SMC and the Authority were held by the same member state, the SMC was more narrow in composition than the plenary Authority, in which all member states would be able to participate in the relevant decision-making. Moreover, in deciding to intervene in the civil war, the Committee claimed in its defence that it was acting on behalf of the Authority – which was questionable at best.³⁸ Thus, since the Authority did not explicitly sanction the SMC's decision until November 1990,³⁹ by which time ECOMOG had already been engaged in considerable military and political action, it must be concluded that this initial phase of the Liberian operation was *ultra vires* in terms of ECOWAS regulations.⁴⁰

33 Decision A/DEC. 9/5/90.

34 Decision A/DEC. 1/8/90.

35 See articles 2-4 and 16-18, as well as the preamble.

36 Bundu, 'ECOWAS Protocol', p. 23.

37 Text of the letter, dated 14 July 1990, in *Official Journal of the Economic Community of West African States (ECOWAS)*, November 1992.

38 It also stipulated that the decision would enter into force immediately upon signature and that ECOMOG's operations would commence forthwith. See Decision A/DEC. 1/8/90, articles 1, 4 and 6.

39 Significantly, in giving its approval the Authority did not refer to the Protocol on Mutual Assistance in Defence, as the SMC had done. See Decision A/Dec. 1/11/90, preamble and article 1 (in *Official Journal of the Economic Community of West African States [ECOWAS]*, November 1992). Since the ECOWAS Treaty did not have a provision against interference in internal affairs, one may argue that the Authority, as the supreme Community organ, did have the power to claim right of intervention in domestic conflicts. In any case, its approval of the SMC decision was in line with a general trend on the African continent, as exemplified by the Organization of African Unity, towards a concern with intra-state conflicts. As shown above the competence of ECOWAS was in this respect explicitly formulated in the Treaty revisions of 1993. See also Van Walraven, *Dreams of Power*, ch. 8.

40 Similarly, K. Otent Kufuor, 'The Legality of the Intervention in the Liberian Civil War by the Economic Community of West African States', in *African Journal of International and Comparative Law*, 1993, pp. 523-560. Our assessment was implicitly supported by Roger Laloupo, who, when asked whether the establishment of ECOMOG was illegal in terms of ECOWAS procedures, said that it was not illegal as it was

The ECOWAS Peace Plan and the Mandate of ECOMOG

The SMC decision to establish ECOMOG was part of what was to become known later as the 'ECOWAS Peace Plan'.⁴¹ This plan involved, among others, an appeal of the Committee to the belligerent parties to observe an immediate cease-fire in order to work towards the restoration and maintenance of peace and security throughout Liberia. To this purpose the warring parties had to a) cease all military or para-military activities and refrain from acts of violence; b) lay down arms and ammunition and transfer them to the ECOWAS Cease-fire Monitoring Group; c) abstain from the importation or acquisition of arms and other military equipment; d) abstain from all activities that could prejudice the formation of an Interim Government (on which more below) or the holding of elections; e) free all political prisoners and prisoners of war; f) respect the 1986 Liberian constitution until its suspension for the benefit of the interim administration; and g) cooperate fully with the SMC, the Executive Secretary and ECOMOG with a view to ensure the effective maintenance of the cease-fire and the restoration of law and order.⁴²

The SMC resolved that an Interim Government would administer Liberia and take all necessary action for the preparation of free and fair elections that were to be organized for the realization of a democratically elected government. This interim administration would, among others, lift the ban on political parties and facilitate the return of refugees and political exiles. In order to create a representative Interim Government the SMC decided to convene a national conference of all Liberian political parties and interest groups, adding that the members of the administration would have to be chosen from among citizens, who belonged to such a political party or interest group and were of high integrity and public stature. The leaders of the various belligerent parties would not be allowed to head the Interim Government, while the leader of that administration would be barred from standing in the prospective parliamentary and presidential elections to be held within twelve months.⁴³

The SMC decision establishing ECOMOG stipulated that the latter was to assist the Committee in the supervision of the implementation and respect by the parties to the conflict of the cease-fire throughout Liberia, if necessary until the holding of general elections and the installation of an elected government.⁴⁴ To this purpose the Committee prescribed that ECOMOG's formal mandate would involve the power to 'conduct military operations for the purpose of Monitoring the ceasefire, restoring law and order to create the necessary conditions for free and fair elections to be held in Liberia'.⁴⁵ In the SMC's final communiqué this mandate was formulated more succinctly as 'keeping the peace, restoring law and order and ensuring that the cease-fire [would be] respected'.⁴⁶

endorsed by the Authority. Interview with author, Abuja, Nigeria, 22 September 1998. Here there is an interesting parallel with the intervention in Sierra Leone, where troops from Nigeria, Guinea-Conakry and Ghana intervened in 1996-97 on an *ad hoc* basis – something that was only formally and explicitly approved by the ECOWAS Authority in 1997. See *Africa Research Bulletin* (PSC), 1997, pp. 12733-12735 and Decision A/DEC.7/8/97. See for justification of ECOMOG's intervention in Liberia in terms of the UN Charter and general international law, for example, D. Wippman, 'Enforcing the Peace: ECOWAS and the Liberian Civil War', in L. Fidler Damrosch (ed.) *Enforcing Restraint: Collective Intervention in Internal Conflicts* (New York, 1993), ch. 4.

41 As such referred to by the ECOWAS Authority in Decision A/DEC. 2/11/90. Text in *Official Journal of the Economic Community of West African States (ECOWAS)*, November 1992.

42 Decision A/DEC. 1/8/90, article 1.2.

43 *Ibid.*, articles 1.2.d and 1.3 and Decision A/DEC. 2/8/90. Text of the latter in *Official Journal of the Economic Community of West African States (ECOWAS)*, November 1992.

44 Decision A/DEC. 1/8/90, article 2.3 and 2.4.

45 *Sic! Ibid.*, article 2.2.

46 Final Communiqué 6-7 August 1990.

This formulation shows, at first sight, that ECOMOG's mandate amounted to a peacekeeping role, something that is reinforced by the name of the intervention force as cease-fire *monitoring* group and references in ECOWAS publications to ECOMOG's purpose as one of *maintaining* the peace.⁴⁷ One can, however, argue that the way in which the mandate was phrased also left room for an alternative interpretation: besides the reference to monitoring the cease-fire and keeping the peace there were references to *restoring* law and order – words that allude more to an *enforcement* role.⁴⁸ Moreover, in the context in which the decision to establish ECOMOG was taken, it was quite clear that at least some of the participating countries, notably Nigeria, were prepared to use force if necessary. While Charles Taylor, whose NPFL⁴⁹ was on the verge of overrunning Doe's forces, did, at the time, not hide his vehement opposition to ECOMOG, the countries establishing the intervention force were similarly determined to carry through its deployment and send in the troops almost immediately.⁵⁰ ECOMOG was thus equipped with a broadly phrased mandate catering for any eventuality in the Liberian theatre, including the possibility of resorting to enforcement action.⁵¹ In fact, the 1993 Cotonou Agreement to be discussed in the following chapters refers explicitly to 'peace enforcement powers'.

In its written motivation of ECOMOG's mandate the SMC considered, firstly, the destruction of human life and property and the creation of flows of refugees and displaced persons. It also argued, rather obviously, that events in Liberia were prejudicial to the stability and survival of the Liberian people. Thirdly, the SMC states expressed their concern about the fate of non-Liberians, especially, of course, that of 'citizens of the Community', *i.e.* their own nationals, thousands of whom had become trapped in the fighting in Monrovia. Considering, furthermore, that law and order in Liberia had totally collapsed, the Committee concluded that it was determined to reach a peaceful and lasting settlement of the conflict and put an end to a situation that seriously upset the lives of innocent Liberians.⁵²

In the communiqué accompanying its decision the Committee added, as part of its rationale for intervention, some remarks about the atrocities being committed against civilians, stressing that some of these had sought sanctuary in churches, hospitals and diplomatic missions but had nevertheless become the victim of outrages that were contrary to all recognized standards of civilized behaviour. It also emphasized the fate of other ECOWAS citizens who had no means of escape or protection, noting that the entire population (of Monrovia presumably) was being held hostage and deprived of food and health facilities, with corpses lying unburied in the streets and carrying the risk of epidemics. The communiqué observed that this had not only traumatized the Liberian population but also shocked the sub-region and the international community as a whole. The flow of refugees and displaced persons, it was added, also entailed the risk of spill-over of hostilities into neighbouring countries.⁵³

Thus the formal rationale for SMC action consisted of three or four motivations: concern about the humanitarian plight of the Liberian population; worries about the fate of one's own nationals; and fears

47 See, for example, articles in *Le Bulletin de l'Ouest Africain*, no. 3, 1995, p. 10 and no. 5, 1997, p. 10.

48 See in this vein also Howe, 'Lessons of Liberia', p. 151 + n. 14. The ECOWAS Authority's decision of November 1990 sanctioning the SMC's actions used the same language as the SMC did, thus referring to both maintaining peace and restoring law and order.

49 National Patriotic Front of Liberia.

50 See *Africa Confidential*, 24/8/90; *West Africa*, 13-19/8/90 and 20-26/8/90; and *Africa Research Bulletin* (PSC), 1990, p. 9802.

51 Also Howe, 'Lessons of Liberia', p. 151 and Wippman, 'Enforcing the Peace', p. 167. While under international law enforcement action may only be taken by organizations other than the UN Security Council if the latter has authorized them to do so, the Security Council has never given an explicit permission to ECOWAS. Washing its hand of the issue, it has limited itself to applauding the actions of ECOWAS and ECOMOG. Wippman, 'Enforcing the Peace', pp. 183-187.

52 Decision A/DEC. 1/8/90, preamble.

53 Final Communiqué 6-7 August 1990.

about the flows of refugees and the risk of expansion of hostilities. The next chapter will discuss the rationale for ECOMOG's deployment further and attempt to gauge the *actual* importance of these official, and possibly other (undeclared), motivations for intervention.

In deciding to deploy ECOMOG the SMC also stipulated that the intervention should be governed by rules and regulations that would have to be elaborated by the Executive Secretary in consultation with the chairman of the ECOWAS Authority.⁵⁴ These ECOMOG regulations⁵⁵ defined, among others, the international status of ECOMOG as a subsidiary organ of the Community, equipped with privileges and immunities, carrying the Community flag and using uniforms and insignia as determined by the Force Commander. It was explicitly stated that, while the members of ECOMOG came from member states' national armies, during their tour of duty in Liberia they had an exclusively international mission. They had to abide by the laws of the country in question, had to abstain from all political activities and were subject to the instructions of the Force Commander.

The Commander was to have 'full command authority' over ECOMOG, which he would derive from the chairman of the ECOWAS Authority through the Executive Secretary. Replacement of commanders of national contingents would have to be made in consultation with the Force Commander. He could receive instructions of competent Community institutions as transmitted by the Executive Secretary through his Special Representative. The Force Commander would have to guarantee discipline in a general way, with national commanders responsible for discipline and order in the national contingents. Other provisions catered for procedures of investigation of incidents and troop casualties and the deployment of military police, with the Force Commander being entrusted with organizing encampments, provisioning, logistics, communications and equipment, and medical facilities. Information and relations with the press were made the responsibility of the Special Representative of the Executive Secretary, who was to take care of administrative and financial matters.

The Committees of Five and Nine: Mandates and Raison d'Etre

Finally, a few words about the powers and functions of the two institutions that were established some time after the deployment of ECOMOG, namely the Committees of Five and Nine.

Officially the Committee of Five was formed, among others, to work together with the non-governmental mediation group of former President Jimmy Carter, the International Negotiation Network (INN), in watching over the respect of the cease-fire by the warring Liberian parties and in guaranteeing security in zones under the Committee's or INN's respective control, until the end of the electoral process that was to put a peaceful end to the civil war.⁵⁶ As will be shown in chapter 5, however, the Committee of Five became an important instrument in mediating between the various Liberian factions – for some time wresting the intervention initiative from the Nigerians: in the process it emphasized a more diplomatic, rather than military, approach that was more advantageous to the position of Charles Taylor and represented a major inroad by Francophone member states, notably Ivory Coast, in an ECOWAS sponsored intervention clearly dominated by English-speaking countries, especially Nigeria.⁵⁷

The official mandate of the Monitoring Committee of Nine was to work towards implementation of the ECOWAS Peace Plan and the accords of Yamoussoukro. To this purpose it was required, among others, to

54 Decision A/DEC. 1/8/90, article 2.5.

55 Text in *Official Journal of the Economic Community of West African States (ECOWAS)*, November 1992.

56 See *Official Journal of the Economic Community of West African States (ECOWAS)*, November 1992, p. 22.

57 See also R.A. Mortimer, 'Senegal's Rôle in ECOMOG: the Francophone Dimension in the Liberian Crisis', in *Journal of Modern African Studies*, 1996, p. 296.

plead with the UN Security Council to impose mandatory sanctions on the warring parties in case they would continue violating the cease-fire.⁵⁸ However, its establishment cannot be seen in isolation from 'Operation Octopus', the surprise attack that Taylor's NPFL unleashed on ECOMOG's forces in Monrovia in the autumn of 1992.⁵⁹ As shown in chapter 5, this effectively ended the Ivorian-led diplomatic initiative mentioned above and led to an offensive by ECOMOG to evict Taylor's forces from the city, thus giving rise to a more robust approach.

58 See Final Communiqué 20 October 1992.

59 See, for example, Ellis, 'Liberia 1989-1994', pp. 170-171.

4 The Intervention in Liberia: Actual Practice (I)

Introduction

As was emphasized in the first chapter, this study does not provide a narrative of the Liberian civil war. In focusing on the role of ECOWAS as third party actor this chapter will, moreover, analyse specific aspects, or themes, that were part of its intervention in Liberia, rather than provide a historical record of the events concerned. Justification for this approach lies in the objective and methodology of the research project of which this study is a part. However, while providing this thematic focus, the chapter will maintain a rough chronological sequence. It will deal successively with the meaning of the procedural irregularities surrounding the decision to intervene in Liberia; the reasons of the various member states for taking action; the nature of ECOMOG's strategy, in particular its initial preference for civilian actors, rather than the warlords; the vicissitudes of ECOMOG's military actions, including the question of its impaired neutrality, the extent of Nigerian domination of ECOMOG and the lack of institutional control by ECOWAS over the intervention process; and the meaning of malpractices in some of ECOMOG's contingents. These different themes made up the context in which the mediation efforts took place that led up to the Abuja accords and the 1997 plebiscite. The protracted process of negotiations that this involved will be discussed in the next chapter.

Flawed Procedure and Contested Deployment

As shown in the previous chapter, from a legal and institutional point of view the procedures followed in deciding on ECOMOG's deployment were irregular. Firstly, the institutions that were supposed to handle the Community's decision-making on military issues had never been put in place – a fact that, as alluded to by Abass Bundu,¹ pointed to a lack of consensus about the desirability of multilateral institutions with a mandate and capability to intervene militarily in inter- and intra-state conflicts. Secondly, the organ in which the decision to establish ECOMOG was taken – the Standing Mediation Committee – acted *ultra vires* since (1) its official mandate involved mediation in inter-state conflicts only; (2) any military action had to take place in the context of the above-mentioned, absent, institutions; (3) the decision could have been taken by the chairman only in his capacity as president of the Authority, rather than of the SMC; and (4) the latter's claim, that it was acting on behalf of the Authority, was dubious.

These irregularities were evidence that something was wrong with the collective consensus that was supposed to underlie the decision² to send troops to Liberia. In fact, various member states had expressed serious reservations about, or outright opposition to, the intention of some countries to intervene in the conflict. In view of this the protagonists of intervention could never have come to their decision, had they followed proper procedures and attempted to have it approved by the competent Community organ, the

1 'ECOWAS Protocol', p. 19.

2 See note 7, chapter 3.

plenary Authority. Thus in October 1990 Ivory Coast, which was opposed to intervention, vainly called for an extraordinary session of the Authority in an attempt to discuss the matter.³

Especially Burkina Faso severely criticized the SMC's actions. Its President, Blaise Compaoré, expressed 'total disagreement' with the intervention which, according to him, could lead to regionalization of, what he claimed to be, an internal conflict. He argued, quite correctly, that the Committee did not have the competence to intervene in such an intra-state war, but could only intervene in conflicts between member states. ECOWAS should therefore not intervene without the consent of all parties to the conflict.⁴ On a milder note Senegal expressed reservations about not having been consulted over ECOMOG's mandate and with Togo criticized the self-willed actions of the Committee. Mali, too, was concerned that the SMC had violated its mandate. While Togo and Mali had nevertheless promised to send troops, at the eleventh hour they backed away from this, because of Ivorian pressure and, in the Malian case, fears to antagonize the Libyan leader Qaddafi.⁵ The intermediary position which these two countries took enabled them, later on, to act as a broker between the (predominantly Anglophone) protagonists of intervention and those (mainly Francophone) states that opposed it.⁶

The concrete interests lying behind the different arguments on ECOMOG's legality will be analysed in the next paragraph. The upshot of the controversy was, in any case, that in combination with Nigeria's dominance of the intervention force ECOMOG and its constitutive procedures were not sufficiently embedded in structures guaranteeing proper institutionalized control. On the contrary, it rested to a considerable extent on conjunctural circumstances, in which calculations of self-interest or other motives not stipulated in ECOMOG's official rationale also played a role, side by side with the formal motivations for intervention described in the previous chapter. These factors, in turn, similarly affected the pattern and course of intervention, thus adding to the controversy surrounding the force's deployment.

Moreover, ECOMOG had been provided with a mandate which nearly amounted to a *carte blanche* for military action. As was going to become clear very quickly, it was permitted to engage in enforcement activities, which by their very nature could go against the wishes of belligerents and thus enhance the contested nature of the operation. For example, the President of Guinea-Conakry, Lansana Conté, was quite adamant when he observed that ECOMOG would fulfil its mission, whether some belligerent parties liked it or not.⁷ This statement was directed at Charles Taylor, whose NPFL was very close to victory and was therefore opposed to external intervention. In fact, Taylor claimed that he controlled 95 per cent of Liberia's territory and therefore had the right to rule. ECOMOG's deployment, to him,

3 BBC Monitoring Report, 15 October 1990. Text in Weller, *Regional Peace-Keeping and International Enforcement*, p. 103.

4 See for example Howe, 'Lessons of Liberia', p. 153 n. 18; Wippman, 'Enforcing the Peace', p. 168; and E.K. Aning, 'Managing Regional Security in West Africa: Ecomog and Liberia' (Centre for Development Research Working Paper 94.2: Copenhagen, 1994), p. 11.

5 Libya's role is discussed further below. Wippman, 'Enforcing the Peace', pp. 166-7; Mortimer, 'Senegal's Rôle in ECOMOG', p. 295; and E.J. Inegbedion, 'ECOMOG in Comparative Perspective', in T.M. Shaw and J.E. Okolo (eds), *The Political Economy of Foreign Policy in ECOWAS* (Basingstoke and London, 1994), p. 230. See for the change of heart by Togo and Mali Y. Gershoni, 'From ECOWAS to ECOMOG: The Liberian Crisis and the Struggle for Political Hegemony in West Africa', in *Liberian Studies Journal*, 1993, no. 1, pp. 32 and 35; *Africa Research Bulletin* (PSC), 1990, p. 9801; G.J. Yoroms, 'ECOMOG and West African Regional Security: A Nigerian Perspective', in *Issue: A Journal of Opinion*, 1993, nos. 1-2, p. 87; and *Africa Confidential*, 17/5/91.

6 Interview with Dr Amos Sawyer, (from 1990 to 1994 President of Liberia's former Interim Government of National Unity), Saly, Senegal, 16 October 1998. Thus, it was in Bamako, Mali, and Lomé, Togo, that some of the first cease-fire accords were hammered out, as well as a formal policy consensus of ECOWAS on Liberia.

7 See Wippman, 'Enforcing the Peace', p. 167.

constituted a form of illegal intervention violating Liberian sovereignty. Expressing his determination to hold on to his gains Taylor therefore warned that the NPFL would fight ECOMOG and make it pay a very high price if it would disembark.⁸ Thus, from the start ECOMOG was a highly disputed initiative.

The Rationales for Intervention and the Positions of Member States

In view of the horrors that befell the Liberian people it may seem morally superfluous, even arrogant, to discuss the actual reasons of, and the cogency of the justifications for, the intervention by ECOMOG. However, it is contended here that in Liberia, as in intervention cases generally, several motives may exist side by side without being mutually exclusive. This is especially the case if third party intervention takes place in a more or less multilateralized setting. Thus, concerns about the humanitarian plight of the Liberian population are not simply called in question if, as will be shown in this paragraph, less altruistic or edifying reasons played a role in the deployment of ECOMOG. Yet as stated above, these need to be investigated as they were part of the factors that influenced the course of intervention – and thus conditioned ECOMOG's chances of failure and success.⁹ Furthermore, it is always necessary to demonstrate an explicit, causal link between the decision to participate in an intervention and the purported motivations – whatever reasons, including humanitarian ones, are involved. Naturally, this causes major evidential problems, as documentation of deliberations in presidential offices, foreign ministries or summit conferences is seldom accessible. Thus one has to rely on clues, circumstantial or direct, which can be gauged from published documents like resolutions and communiqués, from information divulged to the researcher by some of the actors concerned and from reports of journalists, diplomats and other observers.¹⁰ We will therefore assess the different kinds of motivations that may have played a role in the decision to intervene, as well as the significance these had for each of the countries involved.

Humanitarian considerations and concerns about the effects of refugee flows and the risk of expanding hostilities were explicitly cited by the SMC and may, indeed, have been an important part of the decision to go in. The civil war in Liberia was characterized by horrendous atrocities and acts of unimaginable savagery, including cannibalism.¹¹ The factions involved recruited their soldiers from specific ethnic groups, from which they got their support; as the war got into full swing hostilities were frequently marked by ethnic massacres. Many of the fighters involved were, moreover, children¹² and part of their behaviour, such as the way they dressed¹³ and the goods they looted, appeared irrational to many. These events were noted with shock by both African and Western observers.¹⁴ The latter reported

8 Adibe, 'The Liberian conflict and the ECOWAS-UN partnership', p. 474; Wippman, 'Enforcing the Peace', p. 167; and Howe, 'Lessons of Liberia', p. 153 n. 18.

9 See also Aning, 'Managing Regional Security in West Africa', pp. 10-16.

10 These should preferably be based on insight information. In all cases sources need, however, to be scrutinized carefully and interpreted in context. See K. van Walraven, 'The Privatization of Violence in Africa: The Role of ECOMOG in Liberia' (seminar paper African Studies Centre: Leiden, April 1998), pp. 6-7.

11 See for its religious aspects and importance to Liberian political culture, traditional and modern, Ellis, 'Liberia 1989-1994', pp. 187-194.

12 See on this aspect J. Fleischman and L. Whitman, *Easy Prey: Child Soldiers in Liberia* (New York, 1994).

13 See for an interpretation of this in terms of religious practices in common Liberian cults Ellis, 'Liberia, 1989-1994', p. 194.

14 See for an example of an alarmist, Western perspective on intra-state conflict in Africa (based on the civil war in Sierra Leone), R.D. Kaplan, 'The Coming Anarchy: how scarcity, crime, overpopulation, tribalism, and disease are rapidly destroying the social fabric of our planet', in *The Atlantic Monthly*, Febr. 1994, pp. 44-76.

on the nature of the war with a mixture of horror and fascination.¹⁵ This state of affairs may have challenged West African regimes for an answer, if only in order to uphold their conceptions of elite self-esteem,¹⁶ especially when it became apparent that troops from the United States, the former colonial power, landed in Monrovia only to leave immediately upon evacuation of US nationals.¹⁷ Iraq's invasion of Kuwait, which had taken place a few days before this operation, subsequently focused American eyes firmly on the Middle East. The Security Council also declined to concern itself with the Liberian conflict, in part because of opposition from Ivory Coast and the two African countries represented in the Council, Ethiopia and Zaire.¹⁸

Humanitarian concerns coupled to Western disinterest can, of course, only be a partial explanation, as some West African governments stressed that the conflict should run its course and therefore did not apparently care a great deal about the afflictions that Liberians were made to suffer. Yet in the case of Nigeria the humanitarian tragedy may have been felt as a challenge to its self-held image of leader state responsible for the security of the West African region. Ever since its own civil war Nigeria had been claiming its role as leading state on the continent,¹⁹ and the conflagration taking place in Liberia could therefore be seen as contradictory to this role and image. Thus in November 1990 Ibrahim Babangida, Nigeria's President, referred to the human catastrophe as 'an international embarrassment'.²⁰ In assuming responsibility for Liberia Nigeria was, moreover, reported to have received the encouragement of the United States.²¹

Furthermore, the fact that thousands of their own nationals were trapped in the carnage turned humanitarian considerations into a matter of more immediate self-interest, especially for Nigeria, Guinea-Conakry and Ghana. Hundreds of their citizens were killed in the fighting between Liberian factions,²² with Taylor's forces sacking the Guinean and Nigerian embassies and at one moment holding a couple of thousands Nigerians hostage.²³ While Ghana's foreign minister reportedly gave the predicament of his

15 As noted in Ellis, 'Liberia 1989-1994', p. 165.

16 Such acts of window-dressing had occurred frequently in the past in the context of the Organization of African Unity. See on this psychological dimension Van Walraven, *Dreams of Power*.

17 This operation began on 5 August 1990, *i.e.* one day before the SMC took its decision to establish ECOMOG, a decision that had already been agreed in outline in July. However, the United States had already stated several times before that it would not intervene in Liberia to try and stop the war. See *Africa Research Bulletin* (PSC), 1990, p. 9802 and Adibe, 'The Liberian conflict and the ECOWAS-UN partnership', pp. 473-4.

18 Wippman, 'Enforcing the Peace', p. 165.

19 See also O. Arikpo, 'Nigeria and the OAU', in *Nigerian Journal of International Affairs*, 1975, no. 1, pp. 1-11; T.M. Shaw and O. Aluko (eds), *Nigerian Foreign Policy: Alternative Perceptions and Projections* (London and Basingstoke, 1983); and O.J.B. Ojo, 'Nigeria', in T.M. Shaw and O. Aluko (eds), *The Political Economy of African Foreign Policy: Comparative Analysis* (Aldershot, 1984), pp. 190-220.

20 As cited by Adeleke, 'The Politics and Diplomacy of Peacekeeping in West Africa', p. 570.

21 S. Ellis, 'Liberia's Warlord Insurgency'; paper for the conference on African guerrilla movements, African Studies Centre: Leiden, 30 January 1997), p. 3 and Inegbedion, 'ECOMOG in Comparative Perspective', p. 230.

22 Though 200 were massacred by the NPFL on 31 August, *i.e.* a couple of weeks *after* the decision on ECOMOG's deployment had been taken. *Africa Research Bulletin* (PSC), 1990, p. 9841. This particular event could therefore not have been part of the decision to intervene, while the massacre could be interpreted as an act of Taylor's revenge in the face of ECOMOG's impending deployment. However, by early August it was clear that ECOWAS citizens were running considerable risks.

23 On 15 August Taylor blocked the evacuation of citizens from ECOMOG countries. *Africa Research Bulletin* (PSC), 1990, p. 9841. Yet, since this took place one week *after* the SMC decision, it may be viewed as a retaliatory response to that decision rather than as part of the decision's original rationale. See also Adeleke, 'The Politics and Diplomacy of Peacekeeping in West Africa', p. 570 and Howe, 'Lessons of Liberia', p. 150 n. 10. Also M.A. Sesay, 'Civil War and Collective Intervention in Liberia', in *Review of African Political Economy*, 1996, pp. 38-9.

country's citizens as a principal reason for intervention, it is noteworthy that countries which were lukewarm about ECOMOG, such as Senegal, did not have many of their nationals trapped.²⁴ Since Burkina Faso and Ivory Coast felt important reasons to oppose ECOMOG, on which more below, humanitarian concerns did not figure prominently in their posture on the conflict.

The steady flow of refugees, mentioned in the SMC decision, was another factor for the protagonists of ECOMOG. Guinea-Conakry in particular suffered from an inflow of refugees and was, indeed, a vocal supporter of intervention.²⁵ Sierra Leone, too, was confronted with thousands of refugees and called for action to be taken.²⁶ However, since it was these countries, together with Ivory Coast, which bore the brunt of the refugee burden, this aspect was probably not the most important motive for countries like Ghana and Nigeria – even though most West African states had to cope with ship-loads of desperate Liberians trying to escape the slaughter. As discussed further below, it is likely that Ivory Coast, in supporting Taylor and opposing ECOMOG, had anticipated a more 'conventional' military take-over by the NPFL – rather than the collapse of the Liberian state altogether and the flows of refugees this brought to Ivorian territory.²⁷

The SMC mentioned concerns about the expansion of hostilities only in passing. Yet this aspect seems to have been an important consideration for the protagonists of intervention,²⁸ especially for countries bordering on Liberia (Guinea and Sierra Leone), but also for countries like Nigeria, Ghana and Gambia, which were – somewhat – removed from the battlefield. In fact, it has been argued that the Guineans were especially worried about the developments unfolding in Liberia, so much so that they threatened to take unilateral action if nothing was done in the framework of ECOWAS.²⁹

Much of this had to do with the political nature, social make-up and spatial dimensions of Taylor's insurgency. Charles Taylor exposed a kind of revolutionary adventurism that has to be seen in the context of a ruthless quest for power. His political ambitions were mainly based on support from disaffected elements from the Mano and Gio ethnic groups, who had been the target of Doe's hostility and therefore formed the backbone of the NPFL rank and file. However, his political drive was marked by considerable ideological flexibility³⁰ and a great diversity of alliances. The latter were all instrumental in furthering his principal objective – the Liberian presidency³¹ – and included an Americo-Liberian entourage, Libyan

24 Adibe, 'The Liberian conflict and the ECOWAS-UN partnership', p. 474 and Mortimer, 'Senegal's Rôle in ECOMOG', p. 295.

25 Roger Laloupo emphasized the flow of refugees as being a serious threat to Guinea. Interview with author, Abuja, Nigeria, 22 September 1998. Also Wippman, 'Enforcing the Peace', pp. 163 and 168. Some 2.6 million Liberians got displaced with 600.000 to 700.000 fleeing to other countries. By 1997 some 400.000 lived in Guinea and 200.000 to 350.000 in Ivory Coast. *Africa South of the Sahara*, 1999, p. 618.

26 Together with Guinea it was mentioned in the SMC decision as among the original troop contributing countries. Also *Africa Research Bulletin* (PSC), 1990, p. 9772 and *West Africa*, 20-26/8/90.

27 Ellis, 'Liberia's Warlord Insurgency', pp. 8 and 22.

28 In November 1990 the ECOWAS Authority explicitly referred to the regional setting of the conflict. See Decision A/DEC. 2/11/90. This aspect was also mentioned by Roger Laloupo, in interview with author, Abuja, Nigeria, 22 September 1998.

29 Interview with Amos Sawyer, Saly, Senegal, 16 October 1998.

30 See on this also A. Sawyer, 'Elements of an Institutional Approach to Conflict Prevention, Management and Resolution in Africa: Keynote Address'; Conference on Nature of Conflicts and Policy of Containment of Conflicts in West Africa [CODESRIA-Clingendael conference on the causes of conflict and practices of conflict prevention in West Africa], Saly, Senegal, October 14-18, 1998, p. 3.

31 As aptly noted by *The Liberian Crisis*, p. 23 (see note 12, ch. 2). See for some notes on Taylor *West Africa*, 8-12/90 and M. Gaud and L. Porgès, 'Biographies de quatorze chefs de guerre', in *Afrique Contemporaine*, 4th trimester 1996, pp. 195-7.

trained radicals, Western (especially French) business interests and the regimes in power in Burkina Faso and Ivory Coast. More generally, Taylor's crusade sprang from a large reservoir of dissatisfied youths from across West Africa who found non-violent ways to power and wealth blocked by incumbent regimes. Many of these frustrated, angry youngsters had left-wing radical leanings, some had university education or intellectual backgrounds and others were ex-soldiers who had to flee their country after failed coup attempts. Many of them flocked to Libya, where they got involved in military training or obtained an education denied to them at home.³² To a greater or lesser extent they were affected by Libyan political teachings or the left-wing populism of the late Thomas Sankara, or Jerry Rawlings in his earlier days. With Libya presenting itself as the base of Third World radical movements and aiding them with arms, money and training, it was in this country that Taylor later pursued recruitment for his rebellion against Doe. The NPFL thus included, among others, Burkinabès, Ghanaians, Gambians, Nigerians, Togolese and Sierra Leoneans.³³

Indeed, Taylor's rebel army had assumed an international character from the start. With the active backing of Burkina and Ivory Coast, on which more below, it represented to some extent a conventional invasion supported from outside, rather than a domestic insurgency. Internationalized from the beginning, the Liberian civil war amounted to a West African crisis that could easily provoke a regional response.³⁴

In the perception of some West African leaders the involvement of disaffected youngsters³⁵ from all over the region considerably increased the threat posed by the Taylor rebellion. More particularly, the fact that they were organized in irregular militias was especially abhorrent to countries whose leadership often came from the armed forces. The attitude of Guinea's Lansana Conté to the NPFL is a case in point.³⁶ The Nigerian leader Babangida and the Gambian President Jawara also went on record expressing their concern about the regional security implications of an NPFL victory in Liberia. Although these statements were made long after the actual deployment of ECOMOG,³⁷ there seems little doubt that some West African leaders feared that, with socio-economic and political conditions comparable to those in Liberia and a Taylor-led regime ready to aid rebellions elsewhere, their own countries could become the target of a similar type of insurrection. Indeed, subsequent developments in neighbouring Sierra Leone seemed to prove their point.³⁸

32 See for an interesting study of black African students in Libya C. Duton, 'Black Africans in Libya and Libyan Images of Black Africa', in R. Lemarchand (ed), *The Green and the Black: Qadhafi's Policies in Africa* (Bloomington and Indianapolis, 1988), ch. 9.

33 See Ellis, 'Liberia's Warlord Insurgency', pp. 8-9; Aning, 'Managing Regional Security in West Africa', pp. 11-12; and *Africa Confidential*, April 1991, 19/4/91.

34 Oral intervention by Amos Sawyer in the course of the CODESRIA-Clingendael conference cited in note 30, 15 October 1998 and Sawyer, 'Elements of an Institutional Approach to Conflict Prevention, Management and Resolution in Africa', pp 3-4.

35 See for the element of an inter-generational struggle P. Richards, *Fighting for the Rain Forest: War, Youth and Resources in Sierra Leone* (Oxford and Portsmouth, NH, 1996) and *ibid.*, 'Sierra Leone and Liberia: a crisis of youth?', in O.W. Furley (ed), *Conflict in Africa* (London, 1995), pp. 134-170.

36 Interview with Amos Sawyer, Saly, Senegal, 16 October 1998.

37 See *West Africa*, 26/11-2/12/90 and 16-22/11/92.

38 Ironically, the regimes in Sierra Leone and Gambia were later toppled by sections of their armed forces that had participated in ECOMOG's intervention in Liberia. Sesay, 'Civil War and Collective Intervention in Liberia', p. 39. See for analyses of these coup makers, for example, C.M. Fyle, 'The Military and Civil Society in Sierra Leone: the 1992 military coup d'état', in *Africa Development*, 1994, no. 2, pp. 127-146; A. Zack-Williams and S. Riley, 'Sierra Leone: the coup and its consequences', in *Review of African Political Economy*, 1993, pp. 91-98; E. Sall, 'Gambie: Le coup d'état de juillet 1994', in *L'Afrique politique*, 1995, pp. 181-192; and J.A. Wiseman, 'Military rule in the Gambia: an interim assessment', in *Third World Quarterly*, 1996, p. 920 ff.

Yet it remains debatable whether this threat on its own would have enticed Nigeria, the principal power in ECOMOG, to take action. While it was larger and more heterogeneous than other countries and therefore faced innumerable sources of dissidence, Nigeria also had a much larger and more developed politico-military elite, which could not be toppled as easily as its counterparts in some of the small West African countries.

However, the alliance patterns which Taylor had forged raised some strategic issues for the Nigerian leadership. As mentioned above, Nigeria had for long regarded itself as leader of the region. Since Libya's support of the NPFL was part of a persistent search by Qaddafi for influence in West Africa,³⁹ this represented a direct challenge to Nigeria's claim to regional hegemony. Moreover, Taylor not only enjoyed considerable support of Burkina Faso, but also of French commercial interests⁴⁰ and Ivory Coast, whose government had, together with its former colonial tutor France, always opposed the Nigerian bid for the leadership of the region.⁴¹ The allies of the NPFL therefore constituted the principal rivals of Lagos on the more strategic question of regional hegemony, something that could easily trigger a Nigerian counter-move and thus provide the Liberian civil war with a geo-political dimension covering the entire region.⁴²

Furthermore, the fact that Nigeria had both economic and personal ties with the embattled Samuel Doe added to the threat posed by the Francophone/Libyan backed insurgency. Since the 1970s Nigeria had invested in various sectors of the Liberian economy, such as oil, road-building and iron ore mining. According to Aning, Nigerian businessmen therefore pressured their government to intervene in the conflict.⁴³ President Babangida was also a personal friend of Doe's, with whom he established business ties by participating in the Liberian national oil company. Nigeria also donated twenty million dollars towards the foundation of an institute of higher learning in Monrovia.⁴⁴

Thus, strategic and security motivations, economic ties, personal considerations and humanitarian self-interest may all have affected the Nigerian posture on the Liberian crisis. Without access to government archives and the testimonies of those directly involved it would be hard to estimate which of these considerations were of prime or decisive importance. Yet in this context there are two important observations to be made. Firstly, while it was rumoured that Lagos had organized arms caches for Doe and it was reported as having been willing to offer troops to defeat the NPFL in an exercise of unilateral intervention,⁴⁵ in the end it decided to pursue its objectives through ECOWAS. In this it may not only have

39 See on Libyan foreign policy, for example, Lemarchand, *The Green and the Black* and R.B. St John, *Qaddafi's World Design: Libyan Foreign Policy, 1969-1987* (London and Atlantic Highlands, 1987).

40 W. Reno, 'Foreign Firms and the Financing of Charles Taylor's NPFL', in *Liberian Studies Journal*, no. 2, 1993, pp. 180-1.

41 See on Ivorian foreign policy, for example, C.K. Daddieh, 'Ivory Coast', in Shaw and Aluko, *Political Economy of African Foreign Policy*, pp. 122-144. France itself, however, began to establish closer (commercial) ties with Nigeria during the 1980s. See G. Martin, 'Continuité et changement dans les relations franco-africaines', in *Afrique 2000*, Jan. – March 1997, no. 26, pp. 10-11.

42 References to this strategic question abound in studies of ECOMOG. See, for example, Adeleke, 'The Politics and Diplomacy of Peacekeeping in West Africa', pp. 577-8 and Gershoni, 'From ECOWAS to ECOMOG'.

43 Aning, 'Managing Regional Security in West Africa', p. 15

44 The 'Ibrahim Babangida School of Political Science and Strategic Studies'. Adeleke, 'The Politics and Diplomacy of Peacekeeping in West Africa', p. 578; Aning, 'Managing Regional Security in West Africa', p. 15; and Ellis, 'Liberia's Warlord Insurgency', pp. 15-16. Adibe ('The Liberian conflict and the ECOWAS-UN partnership', p. 473) argues that through ECOMOG Nigeria wanted to divert attention from domestic problems, but does not give details on this.

45 Interview with Amos Sawyer, Saly, Senegal, 16 October 1998 and C. Clapham, 'Liberia', in Shaw and Okolo, *Political Economy of Foreign Policy in ECOWAS*, p. 81.

been encouraged by the Guineans, as noted above, but also by the Ghanaians⁴⁶ and diplomatic contacts in the OAU.⁴⁷ Spurred on by the United States, this led to the decision to field ECOMOG, which was thus the result of a complex of forces and interests in West Africa and, to a lesser extent, from beyond the region.

Secondly, the Nigerians decided to intervene not just to contain and solve the conflict, but also to come to the rescue of Samuel Doe *and* stop especially one specific faction, Taylor and his NPFL, in its tracks. Although by the time of the SMC decision establishing ECOMOG Nigeria had also lost faith in Doe's rapidly disintegrating regime, it remained squarely opposed to the NPFL.⁴⁸ There is therefore clear evidence that at the very outset the Nigerians intended ECOMOG (also) as an instrument with which to thwart Taylor's rise to power, at any rate by the barrel of a gun.⁴⁹

Moreover, Nigeria was not alone in its stance against Taylor. As mentioned above, the latter's growing influence was especially resented by Guinea, which under Sékou Touré had helped Samuel Doe to normalize relations with countries hostile over his violent accession to power in 1980.⁵⁰ This soft spot for Doe continued under Touré's successor, Lansana Conté, who flatly refused to give Taylor a base on Guinean territory.⁵¹

At the time of ECOMOG's deployment Ghana had an anti-Taylor posture as well. Thus, the Ghanaian foreign minister wondered publicly whether West African countries were supposed to continue carrying the burden of refugees '*because one particular faction in Liberia [wanted] to carry out its ambition?*'.⁵² This stand had actually originated from a reversal of alliances some three years before. Ever since the early 1980s the government of Jerry Rawlings had had strained relations with Samuel Doe. Initially, it had therefore welcomed Taylor to Ghana, where the latter recruited dissidents for his planned insurrection. The Ghanaians, who at the time had good relations with Libya, even put Taylor in touch with Tripoli.⁵³ Yet for a number of reasons, after the mid 1980s Rawlings fell out with both Libya and Burkina Faso. With Taylor forging ties with both of them, recruiting Ghanaians and Burkinabès in his force and facing a request for his extradition to the United States, the NPFL leader quickly developed into a liability for the Rawlings regime. It even had him incarcerated for some time. It appears that the nature of Taylor's later insurgency, pitting a force of civilians from various countries – including Ghana – against a military dictator, was sufficient to convince Ghana's military leader to oppose the NPFL.⁵⁴

Moreover, by siding with Nigeria Rawlings reinforced his position in a region where it had cool relations with its immediate neighbours, Burkina Faso and Ivory Coast. The fact that thousands of its nationals were stuck in the Liberian morass may have been a mere *post facto* rationalization of Ghana's

46 Oral intervention by Amos Sawyer in the course of the CODESRIA-Clingendael conference cited in note 30, 15 October 1998. This seems in line with the contention by E.K. Aning ('Ghana, ECOWAS and the Liberian Crisis – An Analysis of Ghana's Role in Liberia', in *Liberian Studies Journal*, 1996, no. 2, p. 261) that it was Ghana that convinced Nigeria to intervene through ECOWAS.

47 See for this Adibe, 'The Liberian conflict and the ECOWAS-UN partnership', p. 473 and *Africa Confidential*, 17/5/91.

48 See Inegbedion, 'ECOMOG in Comparative Perspective', pp. 225 and 229. In October 1990 Babangida expressed himself in a negative way about warring factions in general. *West Africa*, 1-7/10/90. See for Doe's developing hostility to ECOMOG in late August 1990 Adibe, 'The Liberian conflict and the ECOWAS-UN partnership', p. 475.

49 Interview with Counsellor Alexander Zoe of the Justice and Peace Commission, National Catholic Secretariat, Monrovia (during Liberia's former Interim Government Second Judge of Criminal Court B); Saly, Senegal, 14 October 1998. See also Van Walraven, 'Privatization of Violence in Africa', p. 9.

50 Clapham, 'Liberia', p. 80.

51 Interview with Amos Sawyer, Saly, Senegal, 16 October 1998.

52 Quoted in Adibe, 'The Liberian conflict and the ECOWAS-UN partnership', p. 474. Emphasis KVV.

53 Aning, 'Managing Regional Security in West Africa', p. 13.

54 Aning, 'Ghana, ECOWAS and the Liberian Crisis'.

involvement in ECOMOG, the more so as the fate of its citizens would have necessitated an evacuation exercise only and not the broader mandate that ECOMOG was provided with.⁵⁵

Of the smaller countries Gambia and Sierra Leone, too, seemed to target ECOMOG specifically at Taylor. While President Jawara was rumoured to have economic and personal ties with Liberia and the embattled Doe, it appears that the regional security implications of Taylor's insurgency were crucial in getting the Gambians to turn against Taylor.⁵⁶ Neighbouring Sierra Leone, which was confronted with a flood of refugees and which had also refused Taylor a base on its territory, was similarly pitted against the NPFL.⁵⁷ More generally, some countries may have adopted a pro-ECOMOG – if not anti-Taylor – posture to please the Nigerians, who had shown considerable financial generosity to them during the preceding decade and were now providing economic incentives in the form of concessionary oil to entice them to participation.⁵⁸ However, as shown above, Togo – another Doe ally⁵⁹ – and Mali vacillated in their support in the face of other pressures.

These emanated mainly from the Ivory Coast which, as mentioned above, together with Burkina Faso stood firmly behind Taylor's uprising. In this they were motivated by a variety of reasons – personal, strategic, as well as economic. In fact, considerations of a personal nature were crucial in forming the Ivorian and Burkinabè postures on Liberia. This need not come as a surprise, as personal interests and relationships are usually important in shaping the foreign affairs of African states. Bilateral relations are often built on and cemented by personal contacts, such as marriage or business ties. Thus, a niece of President Houphouët-Boigny of Ivory Coast was married to the son of the President of Liberia preceding Samuel Doe, William R. Tolbert. When in 1980 Doe came to power and had both the President and his son, A.B. Tolbert, put to death, friendly ties between Liberia and Ivory Coast were destroyed and the Ivorian President became an implacable enemy of the Doe regime. Moreover, upon being widowed Houphouët's niece married Blaise Compaoré, who in 1987 became President of Burkina Faso. With Charles Taylor later becoming Compaoré's private security officer the ground-work was laid for an anti-Doe alliance made up of Burkina, Ivory Coast and the NPFL.⁶⁰

The Ivorians also had strategic and economic reasons to support Taylor's insurgency. Always opposed to Nigerian influence in the region, they resented the close ties between Samuel Doe and Lagos, which together with Anglo-American business interests was suspected to be responsible for many of the difficulties which beset Ivory Coast's economy during the 1980s, among others on the world cocoa market. In this strategic contest it proved worthwhile for the Ivorians to try and get back at the Nigerians and at the same time gain access, through Charles Taylor, to Liberia's iron ore deposits and tropical timber.⁶¹

The result was that the NPFL obtained every conceivable form of assistance it needed for its subversive enterprise: besides soldiers recruited among the Mano and Gio in north-eastern Liberia, it had at its disposal arms, money and oil from the Libyans; military bases, training facilities and hundreds of men from Burkina Faso; and a sanctuary and conduit of arms and reinforcements in the Ivory Coast, which also provided diplomatic support. The actions of the Ivorian and Burkinabè leadership were, of course, based on

55 See for extensive details *ibid*.

56 Inegbedion, 'ECOMOG in Comparative Perspective', pp. 225 + n. 24 and 229.

57 Sierra Leone, like Ghana, as well as Guinea, had Taylor also imprisoned for some time during the 1980s. Interview with Amos Sawyer, Saly, Senegal, 16 October 1998 and Ellis, 'Liberia 1989-1994', p. 181 + n. 48.

58 Sesay, 'Civil War and Collective in Intervention in Liberia', p. 45 and Howe, 'Lessons of Liberia', p. 153.

59 Clapham, 'Liberia', p. 81.

60 See Adeleke, 'The Politics and Diplomacy of Peacekeeping in West Africa', pp. 578-579. Also Ellis, 'Liberia 1989-1994', pp. 180-181.

61 Ellis, 'Liberia's Warlord Insurgency'.

the expectation that the NPFL invasion would lead to a quick, clean sweep of the Doe regime and deliver the Liberian state into the hands of their client. While these calculations were to prove misguided, the upshot was that Burkina and Ivory Coast were both firmly lined up against ECOMOG's plan to intervene.⁶²

The Duality of the Intervention Initiative: Political Carrots and Military Sticks

Initially, the decision to intervene in the Liberian conflict was based on a dual strategy embedded in the ECOWAS Peace Plan. Firstly, through ECOMOG the protagonists of intervention planned to take military action to affect the actual situation on the ground. This would involve a variety of military or military-related activities, such as the monitoring of a cease-fire, the creation of reception centres for arms and ammunition to be laid down by the belligerents and, if necessary, the taking of offensive action to force refractory parties to submit to the procedures stipulated for a non-violent way out of the conflict. To this end, the intervening powers intended, secondly, to influence the politics of the conflict by employing the following political techniques: holding a national conference of political parties and interest groups; forming an interim administration; organizing and supervising parliamentary and presidential elections to effect a peaceful end to the conflict; and – what in practice would become most crucial – engaging in mediation efforts between the warring groups.

The employment of military and political means to end the civil war could, of course, be portrayed as a classical and necessary form of carrot-and-stick strategy, namely the provision to the parties involved of an attractive, peaceful alternative to the violent pursuit of their objectives, as well as the creation of negative incentives to persuade any group to refrain from recalcitrant, *i.e.* violent, behaviour. However, viewed against the background of Liberia's military situation and its politico-military ramifications in the West African region this strategy represented a square, but not very effective, denial of certain hard facts.

Firstly, by the time that ECOMOG disembarked in Monrovia there was, indeed, a military stalemate in the city between the forces of the NPFL, the remnants of Doe's regime and a splinter group that had recently broken ranks with Taylor's force, the 'Independent National Patriotic Front of Liberia' (INPFL) led by Prince Johnson. Since effective third party intervention requires leverage over belligerents and stalemate is the main source of such leverage,⁶³ one could argue that ECOMOG did stand a chance in trying to influence the situation on the ground. Yet on closer inspection its leverage was extremely limited, since Taylor's NPFL controlled more than ninety per cent of Liberian territory and therefore held the key to Liberia's future.⁶⁴ Secondly, ECOMOG's leverage was further reduced by the fact of the NPFL's implacable hostility to the intervention force which, in turn, was related to ECOMOG's unspoken objective of thwarting Taylor's (violent) rise to the Presidency. Thirdly, the effectiveness of ECOMOG was not enhanced by the fact that it did not enjoy the backing of all West African countries. Worse, in trying to reach its objective it was likely to be consciously obstructed by Burkina and Ivory Coast. Fourthly, in (ostensibly) supporting a peaceful transition by way of a national conference and the formation of an interim administration not open to any of the warring groups, it favoured groupings

62 Inegbedion, 'ECOMOG in Comparative Perspective', p. 225 and Sesay, 'Civil War and Collective in Intervention in Liberia', p. 38.

63 See for this power political approach to mediation S. Touval and I.W. Zartman (eds), *International Mediation in Theory and Practice* (Boulder and London, 1985).

64 It has to be admitted, however, that hundreds of thousands of Liberians had fled to other countries while large numbers of people had taken refuge in ECOMOG controlled zones – thus detracting somewhat from the political significance of 'Taylorland'. This point was made clear to the author in a conversation with Samuel Ajavon of the Centre for Democratic Empowerment in Monrovia; Saly, Senegal, 14 October 1998.

which did *not* control Liberia – *i.e.* political parties, NGOs and other interest groups generally referred to as ‘civil society’ – to the detriment of groups that *did*, or were at any rate capable of creating serious trouble, namely the warring factions. It is in this respect not surprising that the essentials of the ECOWAS Peace Plan were formulated by one such civilian group, the Christian-Muslim Inter-Faith Mediation Committee (IFMC).⁶⁵ An IFMC member was even present at the SMC meeting which decided on ECOMOG’s deployment.⁶⁶ In thus reserving its carrots for unarmed civilian groups and targeting its sticks at the warring factions – or, rather, the NPFL –, ECOMOG ran the risk of embarking on a difficult, if not protracted, course of intervention.

ECOMOG, Civil Society and the Liberian Crisis

The first step in influencing the politics of the conflict and outmanoeuvring the (major) warring faction(s) involved the holding of a national conference. A few days after ECOMOG forces had landed in Monrovia, the Standing Mediation Committee convened a meeting of seventeen Liberian political parties, NGOs and other interest groups in the Gambian capital Banjul. This satisfied a desire of various civilian groups, which had called for such a peace conference in the months preceding ECOMOG’s deployment.⁶⁷ One of these groups, the IFMC, had even tried to broker a deal between the NPFL and Doe. However, this mediation attempt, which took place in Freetown, Sierra Leone, in June, had come to naught and the NPFL subsequently refused to participate in the IFMC’s efforts to negotiate an end to the slaughter.⁶⁸ Going their own way, the civilian groups then convened in Banjul with the blessing of the SMC, despite the fact that Taylor’s faction refused to attend the conference.⁶⁹

The national conference, which was chaired by the IFMC, resolved to establish what it called the ‘Interim Government of National Unity’ (IGNU), to be headed by Dr Amos Sawyer as Interim President. Sawyer, a well respected scholar, politician and one time opponent of Doe’s regime,⁷⁰ was to be seconded by an Interim Vice-President and would work together with an ‘Interim Legislative Assembly’ (ILA) until the holding of legislative and presidential elections in 1991. The ILA would consist of 35 members, some of whom would represent two of the warring factions – the NPFL and INPFL –, besides a majority of representatives of the Liberian counties and existing political parties. Indeed, Charles Taylor and Prince Johnson would become Speaker and Deputy Speaker of the Assembly respectively. IGNU, the Interim Government, would assume full governmental powers: with the support of ECOMOG it would adopt measures to demilitarize all combatants; facilitate the repatriation of refugees; create an independent electoral commission; and establish a ‘National Commission on Resettlement,

65 S. Ajavon, ‘The Role of Civil Society in the Promotion of Democratic Governance in Liberia’; paper for the Conference on Nature of Conflicts and Policy of Containment of Conflicts in West Africa [CODESRIA-Clingendael conference on the causes of conflict and practices of conflict prevention in West Africa], Saly, Senegal, October 14-18, 1998, p. 1. Further details in Biaya, ‘Acteurs et médiations dans la résolution et la prévention des conflits en Afrique de l’Ouest’.

66 See *The Liberian Crisis*, pp. 56-57.

67 See, for example, Position Statement Issued by Women of Liberia, May 24, 1990 and Statement of Appeal for Peace Presented to the Government of Liberia and the National Patriotic Front of Liberia by Religious Leaders of Liberia in the Wake of the Social Unrest and/or Crisis in Liberia, June 5, 1990. Text of both in *The Liberian Crisis*, pp. 94-96 and 88-91 respectively.

68 In July the SMC gave it another try, again to no avail, by initiating peace talks between Doe and the NPFL, also in Freetown. *Ibid.*, pp. 55-56.

69 See S.K. Woods, ‘Civic Initiatives in the Peace Process’, in *Accord: An International Review of Peace Initiatives*, issue 1, 1996, p. 29.

70 For some personal details *Accord: An International Review of Peace Initiatives*, issue 1, 1996, p. 86.

Rehabilitation and Reconstruction'. The President and Vice-President would not be eligible in the prospective elections, whilst the NPFL was called upon to lay down its arms immediately.⁷¹

Since the dominant military group – Taylor's NPFL – rejected the outcome of the conference, the significance of its decisions was extremely limited. They would only stand a chance if ECOMOG, as third party actor, would step in militarily to implement and enforce them. Thus, while Johnson's INPFL had participated in the conference, Taylor responded by appointing, in October 1990, his own 'national' government – the 'National Patriotic Reconstruction Assembly' (NPRA),⁷² which then could boast control of most of Liberia. When on 29 August the national conference announced the outcome of its deliberations even Doe refused to hand over what was left of his regime to the IGNU.⁷³ A second conference, held in Liberia itself in March-April 1991 in an attempt to involve Taylor in the Interim Government, suffered a similar fate. Although this time the NPFL did participate, its delegation walked out. Delegates responded by endorsing Sawyer as IGNU's President, inaugurating the Interim Legislative Assembly and establishing an Interim Elections Commission.⁷⁴

These decisions were, however, equally symbolic. Adibe argues that IGNU lacked any basis of local support and that it was widely ridiculed as a puppet of ECOWAS.⁷⁵ Yet IGNU and civilian groups generally did constitute a political factor in the civil war and subsequent attempts to put a peaceful end to it, although not as crucial, let alone decisive, actors. It is true that IGNU's formation had no immediate effect on the military situation, as it did not abate the fighting. The warring factions ignored and boycotted IGNU to the extent that, according to Adibe, it even united them in their bid to gain power by military means.⁷⁶ However, in the longer term the significance of IGNU, or rather, of civilian groups such as the IFMC, lay in their ability to insert a moral voice in a merciless struggle for wealth and power, which had laid waste to much of the country and spread death and destruction among its people. Thus, in chapter 5 we will at times come back to the role played by Liberian civil society, especially to its reactions to ECOMOG's actions and mediation efforts.

The Vicissitudes of Military Action

Clearly, if ECOWAS wished to affect the politics of the conflict it needed to take concrete military steps. Unfortunately, throughout their stay in Liberia the performance of ECOMOG's contingents was limited in effectiveness and, in the long run, even self-defeating and counter-productive.

Thus, although ECOMOG landed in Monrovia with the object to thwart the violent rise to power of the warring factions, and especially of the NPFL, it had not elaborated a specific strategy and tactics, nor even made proper military and logistical preparations. In the words of Amos Sawyer, a close observer, ECOMOG had not worked out anything: it constituted an *ad hoc* arrangement which was propelled by a variety of motivations and which made up its strategy 'as it went along'.⁷⁷

71 See Final Communiqué of the National Conference of All Liberian Political Parties, Patriotic Fronts, Interest Groups and Concerned Citizens; Banjul, The Gambia, August 27 – September 1, 1990 (text in *Official Journal of the Economic Community of West African States (ECOWAS)*, November 1992).

72 *The Liberian Crisis*, p. 58.

73 Adeleke, 'The Politics and Diplomacy of Peacekeeping in West Africa', p. 579.

74 *The Liberian Crisis*, p. 60 and Woods, 'Civic Initiatives in the Peace Process', p. 29. Also see the text of the Final Communiqué of the All-Liberia National Conference, Virginia, Liberia (in *Official Journal of the Economic Community of West African States [ECOWAS]*, November 1992).

75 Adibe, 'The Liberian conflict and the ECOWAS-UN partnership', p. 477.

76 *Ibid.*

77 Interview with Amos Sawyer, Saly, Senegal, 16 October 1998.

Moreover, the first Force Commander, Arnold Quainoo, considered ECOMOG's role to be one as peacekeeper, rather than as enforcer of the cease-fire. It was thought that the NPFL would quickly lay down its arms once ECOMOG, whose aim should be to intimidate the warring factions to the benefit of the civilian actors, would establish a bridgehead in Monrovia. As shown below, this proved to be a serious miscalculation.⁷⁸

Logistically, too, much was wrong with ECOMOG and what had been officially named 'Operation Liberty'. In a damning military analysis of its first six years of operations Howe has pointed to a lack of proper intelligence, equipment and communications. Thus, ECOMOG did not have detailed maps of Liberia and was hindered throughout the operation by a lack of radios, needed, for example, to warn for impending attacks by warring factions. The use of different frequencies regularly compounded ECOMOG's problems further. Many troops arrived in Liberia without personal weaponry and some were made up of paramilitary forces instead of proper military units. Especially in the beginning contingents were hindered by the use of incompatible equipment, which was a mixture of Western and Eastern bloc hardware. Due to poor maintenance much equipment was not battle-ready. Because of this, (Nigerian) fighter aircraft saw little action, although this was partly the result of tragic incidents in which the wrong targets were hit, such as relief convoys and medical facilities. ECOMOG's equipment was ill-suited for Liberia's difficult terrain, which is forested and mountainous, marshy in the coastal areas and subject to a long rainy season – in other words, ideal ambush country for the hit-and-run tactics of irregular militias. The complete lack of transport helicopters, in particular, proved a serious obstacle to counter-insurgency operations. Finally, manpower was insufficient for effective peacekeeping, let alone enforcement action. In practice ECOMOG had some six to ten thousand troops at its disposal, thus falling far short of the twenty thousand that it was estimated to need for its operations. The result was that, for example, checkpoints were often too far apart for effective control of the cease-fire. In fact, the force was large enough to stop the warring factions from fighting in Monrovia but not big enough to impose a permanent truce for the entire country.⁷⁹

Under these circumstances ECOMOG ran into trouble almost immediately. Its belief that the warring factions would lay down their arms as soon as it arrived was rudely shattered by artillery fire from NPFL militias. After it had nevertheless established a beachhead it failed to move against the NPFL, whose forces staged a surprise attack and nearly overran ECOMOG's headquarters. Early September, despite an ECOMOG-negotiated temporary cease-fire⁸⁰ between NPFL, INPFL and the remnants of Doe's army – the 'Armed Forces of Liberia' (AFL) –, forces of the INPFL entered ECOMOG's headquarters, in the process murdering dozens of Doe's bodyguards and abducting the President himself. Doe was subsequently tortured, mutilated and murdered in the video-taped presence of Prince Johnson. AFL forces accused ECOMOG of complicity and retaliated by burning down parts of Monrovia. INPFL militias then captured a Nigerian platoon, which was only liberated when ECOMOG provided Johnson's militias with two 105mm howitzers.⁸¹

Doe's abduction from ECOMOG headquarters and his subsequent demise constituted a serious embarrassment for the intervention force which, under a new – Nigerian – commander, temporarily switched to enforcement action. With an additional three thousand men from Nigeria and Ghana, more

78 Howe, 'Lessons of Liberia', p. 154 and C.Y. Iweze, 'Nigeria in Liberia: The Military Operations of ECOMOG', in M.A. Vogt and E.E. Ekolo (eds), *Nigeria in International Peace-Keeping 1960-1992* (Lagos, 1993), p. 220. Iweze was a Nigerian officer who participated in the ECOMOG operation.

79 Howe, 'Lessons of Liberia', pp. 160-173. Further details in Iweze, 'Nigeria in Liberia'.

80 Wippman, 'Enforcing the Peace', p. 168.

81 See Howe, 'Lessons of Liberia', pp. 154-155 and an insider's (somewhat coloured) account in Iweze, 'Nigeria in Liberia', pp. 227-232.

offensive weapons and some aerial bombardments of NPFL positions, ECOMOG gained control of central Monrovia, pushing Taylor's militias back to the eastern outskirts of the capital.⁸²

Significantly, ECOMOG moved against the NPFL, rather than the INPFL, which had been responsible for Doe's abduction and murder. However, both the INPFL and the AFL agreed to collaborate with the intervention force⁸³ as they were not strong enough to move against it and hoped to weaken the position of Taylor. In fact, ECOMOG had already accepted help from the INPFL, which had assisted the ill-prepared intervention force with combat and intelligence to guide it through the swamps of Monrovia during the first weeks of operations. This gave the INPFL special privileges, such as armed access to ECOMOG headquarters which was to cost Doe his life. Moreover, together with the AFL it benefited from the provision of ammunition by the intervention force. ECOMOG, or especially the Nigerian and largest contingent in the force, acted in this way in the belief that these factions could cut down on its casualties and financial costs and offset the effects of its own limited capabilities. This first enforcement campaign nevertheless saved the lives of thousands of Monrovia and forced the NPFL to sign a cease-fire in Bamako, Mali, in November 1990, leaving ECOMOG in control of Monrovia and Taylor dominant in most of the rest of the country.⁸⁴

A new round of peacekeeping ensued, with the cease-fire holding for some two years, albeit at the expense of an increasing rate of incidents. This period enabled the warring factions to replenish their resources, with especially Taylor extracting economic resources from the hinterland he controlled⁸⁵ and restocking military supplies with the aid of Burkina Faso. In an effort to force Sierra Leone to withdraw from ECOMOG Taylor in 1991 tried to spread the war into that country by establishing and arming a rebel group made up of dissident Sierra Leoneans, the 'Revolutionary United Front' (RUF). Sierra Leone retaliated by assisting in the formation of a new Liberian faction, the 'United Liberation Movement for Democracy' (ULIMO). ULIMO was made up of members of the Krahn and Mandingo ethnic groups, many of whom had been in the AFL and some of whom had served as minister in Doe's regime. Guinea-Conakry was also involved in supporting the formation and operations of ULIMO, especially of its Mandingo elements, which two years later formed 'ULIMO-K' (so called after its leader, Alhaji Kromah). Nigeria, too, first aided ULIMO-K, but later switched to the other ULIMO faction, the Krahn dominated 'ULIMO-J' (named after its leader Roosevelt Johnson).⁸⁶ Thus, at one time or another ECOMOG contingents provided both ULIMO factions, as well as another warring faction – the 'Liberian Peace Council' (LPC) – with ammunition, arms, intelligence, free passage, transport and even uniforms, in an effort to increase the pressure on Taylor. Moreover, it was rumoured that at unit level ECOMOG provided transport and protection to the militias and the goods they looted to finance their operations.⁸⁷

ECOMOG itself began to spread out across Liberia in 1992, although Senegalese troops, which had joined ECOMOG the year before, were withdrawn to Monrovia after six of their men were killed in a clash

82 Howe, 'Lessons of Liberia', p. 155 and *The Liberian Crisis*, p. 57.

83 They signed a cease-fire accord between themselves in Banjul on 24 October 1998. *The Liberian Crisis*, p. 58.

84 Howe, 'Lessons fom Liberia', pp. 154-7.

85 See on this especially F. Prkic, 'The Economy of the Liberian Conflict'; paper presented at the Conference on Defence Economics and Security in Mediterranean and Sub-Saharan Countries', CESA/IDN, Lisbon, 5-6 June 1998. Also Reno, 'Foreign Firms and the Financing of Charles Taylor's NPFL'

86 Howe, 'Lessons of Liberia', pp. 156-7; Ellis, 'Liberia 1989-1994', p. 170; interviews with Counsellor Alexander Zoe and Amos Sawyer, Saly, Senegal, 14 and 16 October 1998 respectively; and *Accord: An International Review of Peace Initiatives*, issue 1, 1996, p. 99.

87 *Accord: An International Review of Peace Initiatives*, issue 1, 1996, p. 97; Howe, 'Lessons of Liberia', pp. 156-7; and 'Liberia: Human Rights Abuses by the Liberian Peace Council and the Need for International Oversight', in *Human Rights Watch/Africa*, May 17, 1994, vol. 6, no. 3, p. 5.

with the NPFL.⁸⁸ Additional ECOMOG troops were deployed, especially along the border with Guinea and Sierra Leone.⁸⁹ However, ECOMOG's obsession with Taylor – and especially the fixation of Nigeria, Guinea and Sierra Leone on Liberia's principal warlord – led the intervention force to overlook the consequences of the growing influence of ULIMO. Armed by ECOMOG, ULIMO forces captured areas of north-western Liberia which had been under the control of the NPFL. This incited Taylor, rather than limiting himself to sporadic engagements with ULIMO, to harass ECOMOG itself. ECOMOG soldiers, as well as some Nigerian journalists, were killed by NPFL militias and at one time Taylor's troops held an entire contingent (some 500 men) hostage for several days, before allowing it to return to Monrovia. Some Nigerians were subjected to humiliating treatment, as the NPFL stripped them from their uniforms, arms and personal belongings. This outraged the Nigerians.⁹⁰

Then on 15 October 1992 Taylor definitively broke the cease-fire by launching an all-out assault on Monrovia. With the reported involvement of soldiers from Burkina Faso,⁹¹ NPFL militias took ECOMOG by surprise, overrunning the INPFL – whose involvement in the war thereby came to an end – and laying a two months siege to Monrovia. This 'Operation Octopus' was accompanied by heavy shelling of the centre of the city, where fierce fighting ensued with ECOMOG. The NPFL's advance was marked by widespread looting, rape, murder and the abduction of thousands of civilians to NPFL strongholds.⁹² ECOMOG responded by rearming the AFL and aerial bombardments of Monrovia and the port of Buchanan, ninety miles east of the capital. With the help of the AFL and ULIMO the NPFL was pushed inland and early 1993 ECOMOG managed to increase its parameter to a 45 mile radius around Monrovia, taking control of several towns, the international airport and an important rubber plantation.⁹³ By the middle of the year its second enforcement campaign had made Taylor withdraw from many areas in the country and had considerably encroached upon his economic base. After another NPFL attack on ECOMOG, 'Operation SUGOMO',⁹⁴ and a horrendous massacre of civilians by AFL or Taylor's forces east of Monrovia, ECOWAS member states managed to force the NPFL and ULIMO – but no other factions – to sign a new cease-fire agreement with IGNU at Cotonou, Benin (July 1993).⁹⁶

However, Octopus and ECOMOG's response to it had led to a multiplication and reinforcement of warring factions.⁹⁷ Although this had the desired effect of weakening Taylor, the long-term consequences were disastrous. In contravention of the Cotonou accord, which stipulated that they should disarm and demobilize, most warring groups now turned against ECOMOG and continued fighting. The Cotonou accord may even have exacerbated this by encouraging factions to fight each other through proxies.⁹⁸ Thus,

88 In January 1993 Senegal withdrew all its soldiers from the country. See on this especially Mortimer, 'Senegal's Rôle in ECOMOG', p. 300 ff.

89 Howe, 'Lessons of Liberia', p. 157 and Wippman, 'Enforcing the Peace', p. 171.

90 Interview with Roger Laloupo, Abuja, Nigeria, 22 September 1998; 'Liberia: Human Rights Abuses by the Liberian Peace Council', p. 6; Wippman, 'Enforcing the Peace', pp. 171-2; and Howe, 'Lessons of Liberia', p. 158 + n. 28.

91 Howe, 'Lessons of Liberia', p. 158 + n. 158.

92 See for details on Octopus *The Liberian Crisis*, ch. 4.

93 Ellis, 'Liberia 1989-1994', pp. 170-1; interview with Amos Sawyer, Saly, Senegal, 16 October 1998; and *Accord: An International Review of Peace Initiatives*, issue 1, 1996, pp. 97-8.

94 'Surgical Guerrilla Military Operations'. See *The Liberian Crisis*, p. 72.

95 This 'Harbel massacre' was attributed by an enquiry to the AFL, but some claimed the NPFL was a more likely culprit. Ellis, 'Liberia 1989-1994', pp. 171-2 + n. 18.

96 *Accord: An International Review of Peace Initiatives*, issue 1, 1996, p. 98 and Howe, 'Lessons of Liberia', pp. 158-9.

97 'Everyone could come in. Let it all flow', was more or less the strategy of ECOMOG and its armed Liberian allies. Interview with Amos Sawyer, Saly, Senegal, 16 October 1998.

98 Ellis, 'Liberia 1989-1994', p. 173.

the AFL-sponsored LPC began engaging the NPFL in the south-east; the NPFL fielded the 'Lofa Defence Force' (LDF) in the west to fight ULIMO; and by the spring of 1994 ULIMO had succumbed to internecine fighting and split into the above-mentioned ULIMO-J and ULIMO-K. ECOMOG assisted in this split in an attempt to cut Alhaji Kromah, whose K-section worked increasingly against the intervention force, down to size. In contrast, Roosevelt Johnson's ULIMO-J and the other Krahn dominated groups, the AFL and LPC, enjoyed the sympathy of Nigerian officers in ECOMOG. These factions were thus able to occupy the remaining parts of the country and, with ECOMOG's blessing, temporarily captured Taylor's headquarters at Gbarnga in July 1994.⁹⁹

In September 1994 ECOWAS hammered out another cease-fire accord to which the AFL now acceded as well, besides NPFL and ULIMO-K (Akosombo, Ghana). Yet, the other factions did not sign and most began, moreover, to experience growing problems in controlling their rank and file. Although the other factions – LDF, LPC, ULIMO-J and CRC-NPFL¹⁰⁰ – acceded to the Akosombo accord at the end of the year, sporadic fighting continued into 1995. There was still no progress on the issue of disarmament and in October, despite a new accord drawn up in Abuja in August, new cease-fire violations took place.¹⁰¹ Worse still, in December 1995 serious fighting broke out between ULIMO-J and ECOMOG. This occurred when ECOMOG attempted to separate the two ULIMO factions, which were fighting each other over control of the diamond area in the north-west of the country. When Nigerian troops tried to disarm fighters of ULIMO-J, Johnson staged an onslaught on ECOMOG, which was unprepared for this, as well as on Kromah's faction. ECOMOG personnel was kidnapped and wounded, military hardware was seized and as many as fifty ECOMOG men, some claim even one hundred, were left dead. This incident gravely shocked ECOMOG, both in its command structure and morale.¹⁰²

Fighting between the two ULIMO factions, between ULIMO-J and ECOMOG and between the LPC and NPFL continued into the new year. In April 1996 ULIMO-K and the NPFL tried to arrest Roosevelt Johnson and warned ECOMOG not to intervene. In the subsequent violent exchanges between NPFL and ULIMO-K on the one hand and ULIMO-J, LPC and AFL on the other over one thousand Monroviaans got killed.¹⁰³ The capital was once more subjected to a fresh round of looting by militias from all sides, who tried to make up for their lack of pay by staging, what they called, 'Operation Pay Yourself'.¹⁰⁴ As ECOMOG had lost its sympathy for Johnson and even helped the NPFL and ULIMO-K to get at him (on which more in the next chapter), ULIMO-J's position deteriorated substantially. However, Taylor and Kromah failed to eliminate the Krahn factor as the Krahn factions continued to fight back and ECOMOG was still licking its wounds over the debacle of December 1995.¹⁰⁵

In the summer of 1996 NPFL and ULIMO-K undertook cross-border raids into Ivory Coast and Guinea. Despite ECOMOG's inability to stop these attacks,¹⁰⁶ certain changes began to take shape both in Liberia and in the West African, as well as international, context, which set the country on a course towards the settlement of 1997. These developments will be analysed in chapter 5. Here it must be noted that Taylor was able, during 1996-97, to improve his military position and reassert his dominance over the other factions, which suffered from internal divisions and were seriously weakened.

99 *Ibid.*, pp. 172-174; Howe, 'Lessons of Liberia', pp. 159-160; *The Liberian Crisis*, p. 74; and *Accord: An International Review of Peace Initiatives*, issue 1, 1996, pp. 98-99.

100 The Central Revolutionary Council, which broke ranks with the NPFL.

101 *Accord: An International Review of Peace Initiatives*, issue 1, 1996, pp. 99-101.

102 Interview with Amos Sawyer, Saly, Senegal, 16 October 1998.

103 *Accord: An International Review of Peace Initiatives*, issue 1, 1996, pp. 101-2 and interview with Counsellor Alexander Zoe, Saly, Senegal, 14 October 1998.

104 Ellis, 'Liberia's Warlord Insurgency', p. 10.

105 Interview with Amos Sawyer, Saly, Senegal, 16 October 1998.

106 *Accord: An International Review of Peace Initiatives*, issue 1, 1996, p. 102.

Nevertheless, ECOMOG's prolonged involvement in the conflict had by then cost the lives of over 700 men, of whom some 600 were Nigerian. To Nigeria alone, the intervention had cost over one billion dollars, excluding normal operating costs.¹⁰⁷ Moreover, as was observed in the first chapter, the end of the civil war and the coming to power of Taylor through internationally supervised elections did not end the presence of ECOMOG in Liberia, although its size was substantially reduced.

Military Party to the Conflict: Nigerian Domination, Impaired Neutrality, Flawed Strategy

It is mainly the warring factions themselves that were to blame for the protracted nature of the Liberian conflict, the ferociousness of the violence, the innumerable violations of the cease-fire and the virulent dynamics of factionalism. The proliferation of warring groups had much to do with the ethno-political factionalism and underlying patronage systems that had already been a feature of Liberian politics well before the outbreak of war.¹⁰⁸ In addition, in the course of the fighting it became clear that most factions were badly prepared, poorly trained and lacking in discipline. Loose in structure, most warlords found it impossible to control their rank and file or stop the splintering of their quickly swollen armies. Feuding among themselves and ruthlessly pursuing their personal gain the leaders set an example which spread downwards until reaching the soldiery.¹⁰⁹

Moreover, the latter often consisted of adolescents or children. Factions had taken care to recruit unemployed rural youths, many of them enraged by years of economic decline and incumbent elites blocking all social advance. Many were orphans who had seen their loved ones murdered in previous rounds of fighting or by the Doe regime. These youths were willing or keen to join up in order to take revenge or make their way in a world which had destroyed their families and denied them any social mobility. Many who were not willing to join were simply press-ganged. They were also frequently forced or encouraged to commit acts of unimaginable cruelty, with promotion being dependent on committing atrocities. As such violence was closely bound up with ritualized acts of violence in Liberia's traditional religious cults – *Poros*, now manipulated for the purpose of modern militia warfare –, it had the effect of not only spreading terror among the population but also mentally strengthening the fighters.¹¹⁰ In this way factions had at their disposal soldiers who were controlled and transformed into fearless warriors by the abuse of cultic practices, the provision of alcohol and drugs and the subjection to physical abuse and torture.¹¹¹

In contrast, ECOMOG did make some serious attempts to save Monrovia, and to some extent other Liberians, from the horrors that Taylor and his rivals poured over their people. Yet, ECOMOG's preparations for intervention, as well as its military capabilities, were grossly insufficient. Moreover, its strategy was seriously flawed and its tactics were shortsighted. Thus, it was ill-prepared when it landed in Monrovia, while later it had difficulty in engaging factions if these were determined to violently resist its

107 Howe, 'Lessons of Liberia', pp. 146 and 165.

108 See, for example, K.O. Uche, *Ebony Kinship: Americo-Liberians, Sierra Leone Creoles and the Indigenous African Populations, 1820-1900: A Comparative Analysis* (Ph. thesis Howard Un.: Washington, 1974), esp. ch. VII; J.G. Liebenow, *Liberia: The Evolution of Privilege* (Ithaca, NY, and London, 1969); and G.S. Hlophe, *Class, Ethnicity and Politics in Liberia: A Class Analysis of Power Struggles in the Tubman and Tolbert Administrations from 1944-1975* (Washington, 1979).

109 See also Ellis, 'Liberia 1989-1994'.

110 See for an extensive discussion of this cultic aspect of violence in Liberia *ibid.*, pp. 193-194.

111 Fleischman and Whitman, *Easy Prey*. See for the different motivations of children to join militias also K. Peters and P. Richards, "'Why We Fight': Voices of Youth Combatants in Sierra Leone", in *Africa*, 1998, no. 2, pp. 183-210.

presence or advance. Even the less demanding task of keeping the peace sometimes proved too challenging. The fundamental flaw in ECOMOG's strategy was that it tried to oppose precisely that actor over which it had the least influence. While the structure of Taylor's faction, too, was not strong enough to prevent splintering, the NPFL was for long in control of much of Liberia. Moreover, Taylor's force enjoyed considerable resilience and was thus able to keep much of its command structure intact, right up to the end of the war.¹¹² ECOMOG also underestimated Taylor's determination to settle for nothing less than the Liberian Presidency – at least until Operation Octopus.¹¹³ Its obsession with the NPFL leader made it overlook other potential solutions to the crisis, while it neglected the threat posed by other warlords. Furthermore, by encouraging, arming and using rival factions, even if temporarily, ECOMOG and its participating countries had opened Pandora's box: it reinforced a dynamic of factionalism from which Liberia would find it hard to free itself. For some time this could halt Taylor in his tracks, but it was also quite clear that it would make it harder to restore peace to the country. Worse, by aiding rival warlords who were equally guilty of human rights abuses¹¹⁴ ECOMOG tainted its record by association. These tactics also failed to prevent Taylor's ultimate accession to power. Thus, while it is by definition impossible to prove what would have happened if ECOMOG had pursued another strategy, it seems safe to conclude that in its approach ECOMOG helped to prolong, rather than shorten, the Liberian crisis.¹¹⁵

It would be difficult, whether from a moral, political or security perspective, to portray Charles Taylor as a blessing for Liberia and the region. Yet, by opposing him member states had made ECOMOG into – if not designed it as – an openly partisan actor in the conflict, rather than a mediator with at least some degree of impartiality vis-à-vis all belligerents. Fed by the hostility to Taylor of Nigeria, Guinea and others, this lack of neutrality became even more glaring as a result of ECOMOG's collaboration with other factions, and its readiness to engage in enforcement action against the NPFL. Taylor therefore frequently criticized ECOMOG for its lack of neutrality, a sentiment that was not only shared by some of his West African supporters, but also by outsiders. For example, when Jimmy Carter began mediating in the deadlocked conflict he stressed that

ECOWAS and ECOMOG should be considered as non-aligned and neutral organizations, dedicated to peace for all Liberians and not just serving to protect the interim government in Monrovia.¹¹⁶

The partisan role Carter alluded to was an important part of the reason why ECOMOG's intervention failed to settle the Liberian crisis more quickly. It is therefore worth looking at this aspect a little bit further. Especially Nigeria's influence over ECOMOG goes some way to explain the latter's lack of neutrality and the counter-productive effect of its intervention. This influence betrayed itself in various ways. Firstly, although it received the encouragement of other countries in the region and from beyond, Lagos took the lead in the deployment of troops and commencing actual military operations. Secondly, while the United States and other countries provided, directly and through the UN, financial assistance and logistical

112 See for the NPFL's ability to organize itself in a state-like manner especially F. Prkic, 'Privatisation du pouvoir et guerre civile: l'émergence de l'Etat-phénix au Liberia dans les années 1990 (paper CEAN, Institut d'études politiques de Bordeaux, n.d.).

113 Thus in 1992 the Nigerians began thinking of unleashing a blitz on Taylor's headquarters in Gbarnga. However, under pressure of Ghana and Guinea they decided to drop the idea. *Africa Confidential*, 21/11/97.

114 See, for example, 'Liberia: Human Rights Abuses by the Liberian Peace Council'.

115 This sentiment is shared by numerous observers of ECOMOG. See, for example, Howe, 'Lessons of Liberia' and Ellis, 'Liberia's Warlord Insurgency'.

116 Hand-written letter from Jimmy Carter to Heads of State, ECOWAS and ECOMOG nations, Hon. Amos Sawyer and Hon. Charles Taylor, 26 October 1991. Copy in possession of author. Even the US Assistant Secretary of State condemned ECOMOG's lack of neutrality. *Accord: An International Review of Peace Initiatives*, issue 1, 1996, p. 97.

support, Nigeria furnished by far the largest part of the bill – up to seventy per cent of the total. Thirdly, the Nigerian contingent in ECOMOG constituted the largest section of the force, usually making up some seventy per cent of the rank and file and over half of the officer corps.¹¹⁷

Politically and institutionally, too, it was clear that Nigeria was in command of the intervention force. Thus, Lagos used the abduction from ECOMOG headquarters and murder of Samuel Doe as an excuse to have General Arnold Quainoo, the Ghanaian Force Commander, replaced by one of its own citizens. For this it leaned on the chairman of the SMC and ECOWAS Authority, the Gambian President Jawara, to appoint a Nigerian officer – Major-General Joshua Dogonyaro.¹¹⁸ As shown in chapters 2 and 3, technically it was the SMC which had to appoint the commander, who fell officially under the president of the ECOWAS Authority, with the Executive Secretary and the latter's Special Representative serving in an intermediary capacity. However, in practice the chairman of the Authority was 'merely the titular head' of ECOMOG.¹¹⁹ Moreover, the fact that some of the subsequent chairmen of the Authority, like Senegal and Benin, had few or no troops at all serving in ECOMOG, nor even a personal representative in Liberia, did not enhance the potential influence of the Authority.¹²⁰ The establishment, in 1991-1992, of the Committees of Five and Nine merely reinforced this situation.

The institutional void could not be filled by the Executive Secretary either. His Special Representative, who was supposed to transmit the Authority's political directives to ECOMOG's commanding officer, was called back in 1992 and the Executive Secretariat declined to send a replacement. According to the Director of its Department of Legal Affairs, Roger Laloupo, this was done because of financial constraints.¹²¹ In any case, it meant that the Executive Secretariat was not always aware of what was going on in Liberia. While this was somewhat ameliorated when President Rawlings, during his presidency of the ECOWAS Authority (1994-1995), sent a personal representative to Monrovia who also liaised with the Secretariat, the absence of an ECOWAS official meant that the Secretariat was no longer involved in the Liberian operation. ECOMOG became, in the words of Laloupo, 'more or less a Nigerian affair' and a 'purely military' one at that.¹²² There was little coordination with the political authorities of ECOWAS member states. While the Nigerian Field Commander reported to the Executive Secretary and the chairman of the ECOWAS Authority, he also reported to his home government.¹²³ In practice, he took his orders from the Nigerian Ministry of Defence, more specifically its 'Committee on ECOMOG'.¹²⁴

This state of affairs did nothing to diminish ECOMOG's built-in bias against Taylor, the more so as other important troop contributing countries were, with the exception of Ghana, equally partisan on this point. However, what is important to note here is that, because ECOMOG operated as a party to the conflict, it failed not only to act as an effective mediator but also to present itself as an institution sufficiently trustworthy to monitor the cease-fire and guide the process of disarmament and demobilization.

117 See for example M.A. Sesay, 'Bringing Peace to Liberia', in *Accord: An International Review of Peace Initiatives*, issue 1, 1996, p. 19 with figures for 1993 and 1994.

118 After Quainoo all ECOMOG commanders have been Nigerian, with the rank of two – instead of three – star general, holding the title of 'Field Commander'. Howe, 'Lessons of Liberia', p. 154 + n. 21 and p. 155. See for background information on Quainoo's replacement by the first Nigerian Field Commander, N. Agetua, *Operation Liberty: The Story of Major General Joshua Nimyel Dogonyaro* (Lagos, 1992), chs. 5-6.

119 Interview with Amos Sawyer, Saly, Senegal, 16 October 1998.

120 *Ibid.* and interview with Roger Laloupo, Abuja, Nigeria, 22 September 1998.

121 Interview with Roger Laloupo, Abuja, Nigeria, 22 September 1998. This was also argued by Amos Sawyer, in interview with author, Saly, Senegal, 16 October 1998.

122 Interview with Roger Laloupo, Abuja, Nigeria, 22 September 1998.

123 Interview with Amos Sawyer, Saly, Senegal, 16 October 1998.

124 According to F. Prkic ('Le Ghana dans la gestion de la crise libérienne'; paper presented at the Colloque sur le Ghana, CEAN, Bordeaux, 29-30 May 1998, pp. 9-10 + n. 21) this was also true for the contingents of other countries.

Thus, in order to entice Taylor to commit himself to the Cotonou accord, the United Nations agreed to send an observer mission – the United Nations Observer Mission in Liberia (UNOMIL) – to help in the supervision and monitoring of the peace agreement’s implementation. While falling outside the scope of this study,¹²⁵ the UN’s small token presence in Liberia underlined ECOMOG’s inability to steer the country out of its tragic predicament.

‘Every Car or Moving Object Gone’: ECOMOG and the Meaning of Malpractices

Before the protracted process of negotiations, which led to the 1997 peace agreement, is analysed it is necessary to discuss one other aspect of ECOMOG’s presence in Liberia that was part of the context in which West African mediation efforts unfolded. Throughout its stay the intervention force – some of its contingents, individual officers, as well as men from the rank and file – were accused of various malpractices. These ranged from bullying and other forms of heavy-handed behaviour vis-à-vis the civilian population to corruption, profiteering, extortion and outright looting.

The allegations were uttered against the background of an important dimension of the Liberian crisis, *i.e.* the development of a war economy in which the various factions, but predominantly the NPFL, managed to sustain themselves by exploiting some of the country’s economic resources. In fact, the economic dimension of the war became so prevalent that to a certain extent warfare as such became the primary objective in the fighting: war was needed to reap economic benefits, which in turn were necessary for perpetuating the war. The exploitation of Liberia’s resources thereby became an end in itself – at least for some time –, rather than a means with which to gain political power. War having become the essence of the various factions, most of the actors involved looked for ways to continue the fighting.¹²⁶ Moreover, since this war economy materialized through informal trade linkages with neighbouring countries – besides private Western companies and political interests outside Africa –, various member states of ECOWAS also developed economic interests which, once the civil war got bogged down, were furthered by the *perpetuation* of the crisis.¹²⁷

Thus, of the lesser of Liberia’s factions ULIMO developed a huge stake in the extraction and trade of diamonds from the north-western part of Liberia and neighbouring Sierra Leone. For its part the LPC managed to finance the war effort by selling timber to customers in Portugal and France and rubber to companies in the United States, Britain, Malaysia and Singapore.¹²⁸

Taylor’s NPFL developed an even broader range of economic activities. In the autumn of 1990 it took control of the ‘Liberia Mining Corporation’ (LIMINCO), which managed to continue its operations with the help of grants and credits from British mining interests and banks in France and Switzerland. To the benefit of the NPFL LIMINCO sold millions of tons of iron ore to companies in France, Italy, Spain, Portugal and Germany. For the exploitation of timber Taylor established a ‘Forestry Development Agency’ (FDA). While part of its produce was exported through NPFL controlled ports, some was shipped from ports in the Ivory Coast as Ivorian timber. To this purpose some logging companies with interests in Liberia moved their offices from Liberian territory across the border into Ivory Coast. In this way millions of dollars worth of tropical timber was sold, to the benefit of the NPFL and later the LPC, to companies in

125 See for details, among others, Adibe, ‘The Liberian conflict and the ECOWAS-UN partnership’.

126 Prkic, ‘Economy of the Liberian Conflict’, ch. 3. See also P. Atkinson, *The War Economy in Liberia* (paper; London, 1996) and generally F. Jean and J.C. Rufin (eds), *Economie des guerres civiles* (Paris, 1996).

127 Ellis, ‘Liberia’s Warlord Insurgency’, p. 13.

128 Prkic, ‘Economy of the Liberian Conflict’. See on the role of diamonds in African conflicts F. Misser and O. Vallée, *Les gemmocraties: L’économie politique du diamant africain* (Paris, 1997).

several European countries. These included Germany, Portugal, Italy, Turkey and especially France, which in 1991 took nearly 70% of Liberia's timber. Proceeds were deposited in bank accounts in Burkina Faso.¹²⁹ Rubber, too, was quickly added to Taylor's commercial empire. A large part was sold through the Ivory Coast as Ivorian produce, with buyers in various Western and Asian countries. With regard to coffee and cocoa Taylor simply bought up the entire crop from farmers at prices imposed by the NPFL. The produce was transported to Ivory Coast and sold to Ivorian or other buyers by businessmen appointed by Taylor, with the proceeds deposited in bank accounts in Abidjan.¹³⁰

In all cases where Western or other companies were involved in extraction and shipping of Liberian produce the warring factions benefited by the levying of production and export taxes. In addition to paying faction taxes companies had to make payments in kind. These ranged from the supply of fuel, food, transport vehicles and electricity to the repair of roads, ports and the runway of the international airport.¹³¹ Especially the NPFL managed to develop an efficient organization for the exploitation of Liberia's resources which, in fact, transformed 'Taylorland' into a rival Liberian economy and *de facto* state. With this Taylor could amass enough wealth to pay his lieutenants, withstand ECOMOG, recover from the military onslaught on his position in 1992-1993 and survive the economic-military embargo of ECOWAS and the UN – on which more below.

The international network which Taylor needed for this included not only Western and other companies but also government officials from neighbouring countries and beyond. Outside the region this involved, it was alleged, mafia connections in southern Europe and, through Burkina Faso, contacts with highly placed politicians in France. In West Africa itself Ivorian officials, sometimes propitiated with gifts of gold, played a key role in facilitating and reaping profits from the NPFL's economic dealings. They included local administrators, but also highly placed officials, some of whom were closely associated with the circles of power around the President himself, both under Houphouët-Boigny and his successor, Konian Bédié. Some of these officials were themselves reported to own rubber plantations in Liberia. It was also rumoured that senior officials from Guinea-Conakry developed economic stakes in the Liberian crisis, in this case with militia men from ULIMO. These were said to sell diamonds to Guinean officials in exchange for arms which the Ukraine traded for Guinean bauxite. The diamonds were subsequently sold on the diamond market in Antwerp.¹³²

It was in this context that ECOMOG became the target of systematic accusations of profiteering, corruption and other malpractices. Only some contingents, such as the Ghanaian troops, were regarded by Liberians with favour.¹³³ While Monrovia were very grateful for the fact that the intervention force saved them from the carnage that took place in their capital,¹³⁴ they strongly resented the conduct of, especially, the Nigerian contingent. Nigerian soldiers and officers quickly earned a bad reputation for heavy-handed behaviour and corruption – so much so that cynical Liberians claimed that ECOMOG stood for 'every car

129 Reno, 'Foreign Firms and the Financing of Charles Taylor's NPFL', p. 180. These revenues were directly used for the purchase of arms, fuel and ammunition, while the LPC was helped by logging companies and a French bank in the purchase of weapons from a French arms producer. Prkic, 'Economy of the Liberian Conflict', pp. 9-10. Also Prkic, 'Privatisation du pouvoir et guerre civile', pp. 9-10.

130 Prkic, 'Economy of the Liberian Conflict'.

131 *Ibid.*

132 This information was derived in a conversation with Stephen Ellis, March 1998. See also *ibid.*, 'Liberia's Warlord Insurgency', pp. 13-14; *West Africa*, 26/10-1/11/92; Prkic, 'Economy of the Liberian Conflict', pp. 12-15; and W. Reno, 'Reinvention of an African Patrimonial State: Charles Taylor's Liberia', in *Third World Quarterly*, 1995, pp. 109-120.

133 Outside observers were also positively impressed by the professional competence of the Guinean and Senegalese contingents. Howe, 'Lessons of Liberia', p. 171.

134 See for an endearing, if naive, literary example of this G.I. Kerry, *His Brother's Keeper: The Travails of an ECOMOG Soldier* (Lagos, 1993), p. 27.

or moving object gone'.¹³⁵ With the Sierra Leonean and Nigerian contingents hampered by poor payroll administration or outright fraud, their soldiers and junior officers often went unpaid for several months. In order to compensate for their lack of income these men took bribes, extorted money from civilians, stole humanitarian relief supplies and sold goods on the black market. As noted above, the Nigerian contingent helped Liberian factions to transport stolen materials and supplied them with arms and other war equipment. In exchange, senior officers got their hands on looted goods or part of Liberia's natural resources. Thus, in 1995 diplomats reported on a Nigerian colonel who traded timber rights for a monthly payment of five hundred dollars.¹³⁶ Some members of ECOMOG were reportedly involved in diamond deals with ULIMO-J.¹³⁷

Many individual Nigerians, possibly up to the level of ministers,¹³⁸ tried to enrich themselves. Among the small movable goods which were stolen by Nigerian officers were videos, motor-cycles and air-conditioners. More serious incidents occurred as well. Expensive equipment was stolen from a hospital in Buchanan, while LIMINCO's iron ore refinery in the same city was stripped bare for an amount estimated at fifty million dollars. This happened in a restricted zone under the exclusive control of ECOMOG and must have required the logistical involvement of an entire military unit. Similarly, underground cables were dug up and exported as scrap metal. In Nigerian ports observers reported the importation of various goods from Liberia, such as cars, electrical equipment, refrigerators and other household items. Upon completing their ECOMOG duty some Nigerians later returned to Liberia as civilian businessmen.¹³⁹

For the purpose of evaluating the intervention of ECOWAS it is important to know what meaning should be attributed to these economic practices, both of troop contributing countries and of opponents of ECOMOG. As noted in a previous paragraph Nigeria and Ivory Coast may also have had economic motives when they decided to intervene in the Liberian crisis. Yet the above-mentioned economic interests probably began to play a role only when the civil war and ECOMOG's intervention had reached stalemate.¹⁴⁰ They were not the prime motive to intervene, nor the principal reason to stay put.

However, while the Ivorians had miscalculated when deciding to support the NPFL's invasion and became, indeed, increasingly worried about the proliferation of arms on their territory from Liberia,¹⁴¹ they did not hesitate to capitalize on the war economy which Taylor and his rivals developed. For the Nigerians the pursuit of material gain has to be viewed in the context of the difficulties they encountered when they confronted Taylor. There is clear evidence that these led to frustration and wavering tactics on the part of ECOMOG. In the context of Liberia's war economy its lack of success and prolonged presence then stimulated the pursuit of more mundane goals among the rank and file. ECOMOG thus failed to stay immune to the war economy and became, in fact, a minor player in its plundering activities, serving private interests under the guise of multilateralism.¹⁴² Whether this economic dimension had any effect on the course of intervention is difficult to estimate. However, it seems likely that, if it had any effect, it contributed to the protracted nature of the conflict. This matter will be pursued in the next chapters.

135 See S. Ellis, 'Liberators or Looters?', in *Focus on Africa*, October-December 1994, p. 14.

136 Howe, 'Lessons of Liberia', pp. 169-175 and Ellis, 'Liberia's Warlord Insurgency', p. 13.

137 Interview with Amos Sawyer, Saly, Senegal, 16 October 1998.

138 Interview with Counsellor Alexander Zoe, Saly, Senegal, 14 October 1998.

139 J. Arinze, 'They Looted My Country', in *Tell*, 3/7/95 and Ellis, 'Liberators or Looters?'. Also J.B. Bayart, S. Ellis and B. Hibou, 'De l'Etat kleptocrate à l'Etat Malfaiteur?', in *ibid.*, *La criminalisation de l'Etat en Afrique* (Paris, 1997), p. 36.

140 See also Ellis, 'Liberia's Warlord Insurgency', p. 13.

141 Prkic, 'Economy of the Liberian Conflict', p. 21.

142 See for this aspect Van Walraven, 'Privatization of Violence in Africa'.

5 The Intervention in Liberia: Actual Practice (II)

The Vicissitudes of Mediation

Bamako

As ECOMOG's application of harder military sticks began to hurt and Taylor's diplomatic position began to deteriorate the NPFL was slowly pushed to the negotiating table. Taylor's comfortable position as the most powerful warlord had received its first military blow as his forces were pushed out of Monrovia. From a diplomatic perspective, too, his position weakened somewhat as IGNU moved to Monrovia when ECOMOG took full control of the capital. Doe's demise had also freed ECOMOG from the charge that it was merely sent to prop up a defeated President and made it diplomatically harder for Burkina Faso and Ivory Coast to provide open support to Taylor.¹

However, both Taylor and his Francophone backers were not prepared to give in easily. The NPFL had called for talks with other factions and declared a unilateral cease-fire a few weeks after Doe's murder and ECOMOG's military response. Yet it refused to attend a meeting in Banjul in late October where the AFL and INPFL agreed on a cessation of hostilities.² Ivory Coast and Burkina were also determined to try and salvage their client's position. In mid October the Ivorians tried to organize an ECOWAS summit in Yamoussoukro, Ivory Coast, but several Anglophone countries refused to attend. Another attempt, undertaken on the initiative of Burkina Faso,³ had more success. In November the ECOWAS Authority convened in extraordinary session for the first time in its history. Member states and invited representatives of the warring factions gathered in the Malian capital Bamako, where heated discussions took place between protagonists and opponents of ECOMOG. Ivory Coast and Burkina were furious that ECOMOG had prevented Taylor from capturing the Liberian Presidency, yet the military shift on the ground had to be given some form of diplomatic recognition. Thus, the ECOWAS Authority unanimously approved the August decision of the SMC to establish and deploy ECOMOG, the contents of the ECOWAS Peace Plan and, in the near future, the formation of an interim administration.⁴ Taylor was pressed into signing an immediate cease-fire accord with the AFL and INPFL and had to agree to monitoring by ECOMOG. The modalities for implementation of the cease-fire would be worked out later and the factions agreed to resolve their differences regarding the interim administration.⁵

1 Adeleke, 'The Politics and Diplomacy of Peacekeeping in West Africa', p. 580.

2 See Weller, *Regional Peace-Keeping and International Enforcement*, pp. 101 and 104-105 (note 23, ch. 2). Text of the agreement in *Official Journal of the Economic Community of West African States (ECOWAS)*, November 1992.

3 Inegbedion, 'ECOMOG in Comparative Perspective', p. 233. Other Francophone countries, as well as Guinea-Bissau, backed Burkina's effort. See the BBC Monitoring Reports in Weller, *Regional Peace-Keeping and International Enforcement*, pp. 100 and 103.

4 Decision A/DEC. 1/11/90 and A/DEC. 2/11/90.

5 Joint declaration on Cessation of Hostilities and Peaceful Settlement of Conflict. Text in *Official Journal of the Economic Community of West African States (ECOWAS)*, November 1992. Also Wippman, 'Enforcing the Peace', p. 169.

However, the consensus hammered out at Bamako was more apparent than real. Although pressed in December 1990 to agree to an 'All-Liberia Conference' for the formation of an interim government,⁶ this conference failed in its objective as Taylor's faction walked out (March-April 1991). As shown in the previous chapter IGNU was subsequently formally endorsed as Liberia's interim administration, but the NPFL refused to recognize this arrangement.⁷ With his forces in control of most of Liberia Taylor's military position was still very comfortable.

Thus, a conference held the previous month in Lomé with the object to work out the modalities of the cease-fire came to naught. Formally a meeting of the SMC it was also attended by Guinea-Conakry and Sierra Leone, as well as Burkina, Ivory Coast, IGNU and the three warring factions. The meeting noted that, despite a commitment by the warring parties in December 1990 to work out the cease-fire modalities within thirty days, a technical sub-committee had held a meeting in Monrovia in January but ran into difficulties. The Lomé conference therefore pressed the AFL, NPFL and INPFL into signing a new cease-fire agreement.⁸

In the agreement⁹ the warlords explicitly accepted that the SMC constituted an appropriate mechanism for conducting the peace negotiations. They also had to acknowledge the existence of ECOMOG and agreed to fully cooperate with the intervention force and the committee. They reiterated to cease all hostilities of a military or paramilitary nature and to refrain from the importation and acquisition of arms or other war materials. Significantly, the warlords also agreed to confine their troops to positions to be determined by ECOMOG in consultation with the factions and to engage in joint inspections with ECOMOG and the other factions of ships, vehicles and aircraft to check on the observation of the cease-fire. They would also assist ECOMOG in drawing up a buffer zone to separate the warring factions. The warlords agreed that the interim government would, together with ECOMOG, start disarming the militias and promised to abstain from any action likely to impede the mediation process.

The accepted cease-fire modalities included, among others, a reporting procedure of cease-fire violations; the operation of ECOMOG troops in areas held by the factions; the concentration of all Liberian fighters in designated assembly points; a disarmament programme including a time-table; and the handing over of all weapons to ECOMOG and, to this purpose, the creation of ECOMOG reception centres near the assembly points for the registration and classification of troops and weaponry. Supervision and maintenance of the cease-fire by ECOMOG would, upon formation of the interim government, involve the immediate take-over of the international airport, the port of Buchanan and progressively all other ports and airfields; the establishment of road blocks and checkpoints; extensive patrolling of the countryside to ensure the free flow of traffic; the provision of ECOMOG security escort and transport to displaced persons; security escorts to humanitarian organizations; and occasional air reconnaissance. Pending the formation of the interim government ECOMOG would maintain and monitor the cease-fire across Liberia in cooperation with a 'Technical Committee' composed of the ECOMOG Field Commander, or his representative, and a representative of each of the three warring parties.

6 See Joint Statement of the Warring Parties on Liberia, Banjul, The Gambia, 21 December 1990. Text in *The Liberian Crisis*, pp. 115-116.

7 Wippman, 'Enforcing the Peace', p. 169.

8 See Final Communiqué 13 February 1991. Text in *Official Journal of the Economic Community of West African States (ECOWAS)*, November 1992.

9 See the Agreement on Cessation of Hostilities and Peaceful Settlement of Conflict, Lomé, 13 February 1991. Text in *ibid.*

These were so many dead letters. As the factions possessed considerable destructive power they preferred to pursue their goals by military means. Handing over to an interim government they were forbidden to lead did not constitute an attractive alternative. Moreover, Taylor used the cease-fire to replenish his resources with the help of his Burkina allies and tried to push Sierra Leone out of ECOMOG by taking the war into that country. The retaliatory response of Sierra Leone, Guinea-Conakry and Nigeria by assisting in the formation of ULIMO received the eager support of the AFL. Doe's former army considered that together with ULIMO it might still be able to defeat the NPFL on the battlefield.¹⁰ In other words, the warring factions did not perceive an alternative which would enable them to amass the same degree of influence and wealth by non-violent means, while negative incentives were insufficient to dissuade them from continuing the war. To a certain extent ECOMOG even encouraged this military option.

The Yamoussoukro Process

As Taylor refused to recognize IGNU as Liberia's interim government and had established his own administration in Gbarnga in the Liberian hinterland, the country had become partitioned.¹¹ Faced with a deadlocked situation, a cease-fire regularly alternating with hostilities and ECOMOG's inability to restore peace or eliminate the Taylor factor, there was some room for diplomatic manoeuvres by countries that opposed the intervention force. Ivory Coast took the opportunity and was encouraged in this by the United States.¹²

It was thought by outside observers that it was important to involve other countries, both in the mediation process and in the intervention force itself – more particularly countries which until then had worked against ECOMOG's objectives and were held in trust, or were at least not objected to, by Liberia's major military group. After all, Taylor objected to hand over his guns to an intervention force which was biased against him and the cleavage between the predominantly English-speaking participants in ECOMOG and its Francophone opponents seriously impaired ECOMOG's effectiveness. Other, less anti-Taylor oriented countries could possibly act as a broker between the NPFL and ECOMOG or even mediate between the various Liberian parties. If troops from other, especially Francophone, countries would be added to ECOMOG the intervention force could transform its role into that of an impartial third party and thus neutralize NPFL and Francophone objections to its intervention.

On the eve of the annual ECOWAS summit Houphouët-Boigny invited the Presidents of Nigeria, Gambia (at the time Authority chairman), Togo and Burkina Faso, as well as Charles Taylor and Amos Sawyer, President of IGNU, for an *ad hoc* meeting in the Ivorian city of Yamoussoukro. The meeting attempted to reconcile Taylor and Sawyer who, indeed, 'pledged their reconciliation ... by a long and warm embrace'.¹³ It also decided to involve the International Negotiation Network of Jimmy Carter in the monitoring of the cease-fire. The INN would have to cooperate with a new committee made up of Gambia, Togo, Guinea-Bissau, Senegal and Ivory Coast – the Committee of Five. The involvement of the INN was meant to enhance the acceptability of ECOMOG among the Liberian parties.¹⁴

10 Sesay, 'Bringing Peace to Liberia', p. 22.

11 Wippman, 'Enforcing the Peace', p. 170.

12 Mortimer, 'Senegal's Rôle in ECOMOG', pp. 296-297 and interview with Amos Sawyer, Saly, Senegal, 16 October 1998. According to Roger Laloupo, Director of the Department of Legal Affairs of the ECOWAS Secretariat, the Ivorians were involved on the initiative of Executive Secretary Abass Bundu. Interview with author, Abuja, Nigeria, 22 September 1998.

13 See the communiqué of the meeting held in Yamoussoukro, 29-30 June 1991. Text in *Official Journal of the Economic Community of West African States (ECOWAS)*, November 1992.

14 *Ibid.*

Although the Nigerians were not represented in the Committee of Five and the Ivorian move constituted a major Francophone inroad in the diplomatic game surrounding the Liberian crisis, the Nigerian government did not object.¹⁵ It was not in a position to do so as it was confronted with a military impasse, while its command over ECOMOG gave it sufficient influence to prevent any unwelcome political shift in the Liberian theatre. Thus, the ECOWAS summit in Abuja applauded the formation of the Committee of Five and indirectly acknowledged Houphouët's chairmanship of the new organ. However, it also considered that the Committee was 'an adjunct' of the SMC and would work within the framework of the ECOWAS Peace Plan, which stipulated a key role for ECOMOG and the SMC. The ECOWAS summit also suggested that the Committee of Five copy SMC practice by inviting the countries neighbouring Liberia to its meetings – which included the anti-Taylor governments of Sierra Leone and Guinea-Conakry. Apart from co-monitoring the cease-fire the Committee of Five was provided with a general mediation mandate and asked to do everything possible to create the conditions for the holding of free and fair elections within a period of six months.¹⁶

The Abuja summit also appealed to ECOWAS member states not part of ECOMOG to contribute a contingent in order to strengthen the capacity of the intervention force. This was a reference to plans for a Senegalese contingent to be added to the troops already in Liberia. The United States managed to persuade the Senegalese to send a contingent in return for a substantial American contribution in money and equipment.¹⁷ Mali had already agreed at the Lomé conference in February 1991 to send a contingent, whose size, however, only gave it token value.¹⁸ These measures were taken in the hope that they could placate Taylor and his allies in Ivory Coast and Burkina.

While the Committee of Five was supposed to function as an adjunct of the SMC,¹⁹ it effectively supplanted the latter.²⁰ The intrusion of the Committee of Five was obviously to the advantage of Charles Taylor, yet it also committed the Ivorians to the mediation process and to getting a peace agreement. Under pressure from the United States Abidjan was expected to bring parity and confidence to the diplomatic process; it could therefore not simply stand behind the NPFL.²¹

The Committee of Five thus held a series of meetings in Yamoussoukro between July and October 1991, which became later known as 'Yamoussoukro II, III and IV'. The Yamoussoukro II meeting²² decided to hold consultations with the various (Liberian) parties to the conflict and this resulted, at the third meeting in the Ivorian city (September), in an agreement among the Liberian parties to implement the encampment of their troops, under ECOMOG supervision, in designated locations. Their disarmament would take place 'also under the supervision of ECOMOG', which would work out the relevant modalities together with the parties concerned. However, since only one Liberian warlord –

15 Interview with Roger Laloupo, Abuja, Nigeria, 22 September 1998.

16 Final Communiqué of the Authority of Heads of State and Government, Abuja, Nigeria, 6 July 1991. Text in *Official Journal of the Economic Community of West African States (ECOWAS)*, November 1992.

17 Mortimer, 'Senegal's Rôle in ECOMOG', pp. 296-297.

18 [SMC] Final Communiqué, Lomé, 13 February 1991.

19 Indeed, Amos Sawyer referred to the Committee of Five as a sub-committee of the SMC, which to him constituted the 'parent committee'. Interview with author, Saly, Senegal, 16 October 1998.

20 Mortimer, 'Senegal's Rôle in ECOMOG', p. 296.

21 *Ibid.*, p. 298; Wippman, 'Enforcing the Peace', p. 171; and interview with Amos Sawyer, Saly, Senegal, 16 October 1998. This counted much less for Burkina Faso, while Ivory Coast's diplomatic involvement did not much to lessen the economic profits it reaped from the Liberian crisis.

22 This meeting was attended by all Committee members, as well as Sawyer, Taylor and a representative of the INN, but not by delegates from Sierra Leone and Guinea-Conakry. See its Final Communiqué, Yamoussoukro, 29 July 1991. Text in *Official Journal of the Economic Community of West African States (ECOWAS)*, November 1992.

Taylor – was present at the meeting,²³ this agreement had no value. The remnants of the AFL and the recently established ULIMO were not bound to this accord. The same was true for the agreement to set up a five-member ‘Elections Commission’ for the organization and supervision of the prospective elections and the decision to establish a five member ‘Ad Hoc Supreme Court’ to adjudicate any disputes arising from the electoral process. The Yamoussoukro III session also welcomed Senegal’s announcement that it would send a contingent and resolved to send a mission to Guinea-Conakry and Sierra Leone in an attempt to enlist their cooperation in the implementation of the agreement. This was vital since, as was noted in the session’s communiqué, the security situation in the border areas was rapidly deteriorating – a reference to the activities of ULIMO and the NPFL-backed RUF.²⁴

Almost immediately after Yamoussoukro III, the NPFL began to air its own interpretation of the disarmament modalities which, according to Taylor’s group, would involve the deposition of arms in armouries under joint ECOMOG-NPFL control. Sawyer’s IGNU, however, disputed this and claimed they were to be under the exclusive control of the intervention force. Moreover, Prince Johnson’s INPFL issued a statement saying he would refuse to disarm his force. The NPFL subsequently announced that it would only disarm if the Nigerian contingent in ECOMOG would be reduced and a little later its leader declared that he would disarm his troops but not surrender the arms to the intervention force.²⁵

Thus, little progress could be recorded. The Yamoussoukro IV meeting²⁶ (October 1991) nevertheless welcomed the deployment of Senegalese troops²⁷ and the nomination of an Ad Hoc Supreme Court for the adjudication of disputes arising from future elections. It also discussed the report of the mission sent to Sierra Leone and Guinea-Conakry and agreed that all hostile foreign forces should be withdrawn from the territory of Sierra Leone – a reference to the NPFL-backed RUF. The meeting stated that a buffer zone should be created between the two countries, to be monitored by ECOMOG. For Liberia as a whole the meeting drew up a ‘Programme of Implementation’ stipulating implementation within 60 days of modalities for the establishment of the necessary conditions for peace and security, with the object to create confidence among the parties and a proper atmosphere for elections, to be held not later than six months after the meeting.²⁸

The Programme stated that ECOMOG would cover the whole of Liberia and monitor all entry points into the country. It would enjoy freedom of movement throughout the country and its neutrality would be respected by all parties concerned. ECOMOG would supervise encampment and disarmament of all the warring factions, which would move into designated camps. Among the other tasks that were stipulated were the elimination of ‘external threats’ and the monitoring of all avenues of approach into Liberia by patrols and static guards – possibly an allusion to ULIMO and its potential threat to Taylor; the provision of security to all ‘VIPs’, an obvious reference to the warlords; the provision of static guards for strategic installations; the clearing of minefields; and the search and recovery of hidden or lost weapons. The

23 The only other Liberian present was Sawyer. Apart from the Committee members the meeting was attended by Ghana, Nigeria, Mali, Burkina and an INN representative. Guinea-Conakry and Sierra Leone were absent. See the Committee’s Final Communiqué, Yamoussoukro, 17 September 1991. Text in *Official Journal of the Economic Community of West African States (ECOWAS)*, November 1992.

24 The mission sent to both countries was led by Senegal and included Ivory Coast, Gambia, Guinea-Bissau and Nigeria. *Ibid.*

25 See the press reports in Weller, *Regional Peace-Keeping and International Enforcement*, pp. 172-174.

26 It was attended by the members of the Committee of Five besides Nigeria, Burkina, Mali, Ghana, Sierra Leone, Guinea-Conakry, Charles Taylor, Amos Sawyer, the Secretary-General of the OAU and a representative of the INN. See Final Communiqué, Yamoussoukro, 30 October 1991. Text in *Official Journal of the Economic Community of West African States (ECOWAS)*, November 1992.

27 It also thanked Guinea-Bissau, which had announced that it would contribute troops. *Ibid.*

28 *Ibid.*

Programme included a two months time-table and would commence on 15 November 1991, which was named 'D Day'.²⁹

However, the Yamoussoukro IV accord, its greater detail notwithstanding, suffered from the same defect as the previous one: neither the remnants of the AFL, nor ULIMO or the INPFL had been present at the relevant meeting and had therefore not acceded to the agreement.³⁰ In its final communiqué the Committee of Five appealed to all parties to cooperate with ECOMOG and even 'renewed its mandate' to the intervention force to ensure the accord's implementation. While this meant, in effect, that the Committee placed itself above ECOMOG,³¹ it was unable to make much headway on the ground. ECOMOG did, indeed, begin deployment of additional troops along Liberia's borders with Sierra Leone and Guinea. Yet not much else changed in the military status quo. Sawyer even claimed that the *de facto* partition of the country was legitimized by the Yamoussoukro process.³² The ECOWAS summit in Abuja had agreed that IGNU and the NPFL should maintain security under their control until the elections.³³ Without any movement on the issue of the disarmament and encampment modalities agreed at Yamoussoukro III and IV, the impasse was as great as ever.

After Yamoussoukro IV the two months projected in the agreement passed by without progress. On the contrary, 1992 saw new arms purchases by the warring factions and new cease-fire violations involving violent exchanges between NPFL, ULIMO and ECOMOG. Taylor could not be lured by an offer of Sawyer of several IGNU cabinet posts to the NPFL³⁴ and, like ULIMO, openly obstructed the mediation process of the Committee of Five. Thus Houphouët-Boigny called a meeting of an 'Informal Consultative Group' of his Committee in Geneva (April 1992), attended by Burkina, Nigeria, Senegal, Sawyer and Taylor. It observed the lack of progress on encampment, disarmament and the establishment of a buffer zone along the Sierra Leone – Liberia border; reaffirmed the validity of Yamoussoukro IV; and called on all parties to trust and cooperate with ECOMOG. It appealed to the parties to refrain from acts or omissions prejudicial to implementation of the Yamoussoukro accord and agreed on a few clarifications concerning the agreement: the NPFL would be allowed to send unarmed observers to the ECOMOG-manned buffer zone near Sierra Leone, as well as to all entry points, to be monitored by ECOMOG, situated in NPFL held territory. Moreover, Taylor was granted the right to maintain a personal security of company strength equipped with small arms. The Geneva meeting, whose communiqué was co-signed by Taylor, also set a new two months time-table for implementation of the Yamoussoukro accord.³⁵

Despite these concessions Taylor remained intransigent. In May Senegalese contingents were withdrawn to Monrovia after some of their men were killed in a clash with the NPFL.³⁶ The ECOWAS summit held in Dakar (July 1992) strongly condemned their murder and explicitly complained of 'the

29 INN representatives would visit Liberia during this period in order to reinforce the confidence of the parties in the process. *Ibid.*

30 It is even unclear whether Taylor himself, who was present, signed it. Below the Programme of Implementation annexed to the Final Communiqué of 30 October there are thirteen illegible signatures, followed by twelve signatures accompanied by their typed names. Taylor's name is not among these twelve signatures. The meeting was attended by fifteen delegates.

31 It could be argued that the Committee thereby violated its mandate as it was supposed to function as an adjunct of the SMC. However, all members of the SMC were present at Yamoussoukro IV.

32 Interview with Amos Sawyer, Saly, Senegal, 16 October 1998.

33 Final Communiqué of the Authority of Heads of State and Government, Abuja, Nigeria, 6 July 1991, paragraph 24.

34 See the radio report in Weller, *Regional Peace-Keeping and International Enforcement*, p. 186.

35 Final Communiqué, 7 April 1992. Text in *Official Journal of the Economic Community of West African States (ECOWAS)*, November 1992.

36 Mortimer, 'Senegal's Rôle in ECOMOG', p. 300.

uncooperative conduct of the NPFL'. It threatened that, unless Taylor would comply fully with the Yamoussoukro accords, the Authority would impose comprehensive sanctions on the NPFL and the areas it controlled or, for that matter, on any other faction guilty of non-compliance.³⁷

Indeed, ULIMO was also declining to cooperate as it refused to let NPFL men into the buffer zone with Sierra Leone – precisely the area of its operations.³⁸ However, it was Taylor's intransigence which, at least in the mind of those countries with troops in ECOMOG, was considered to be the major obstacle to the Yamoussoukro process. The NPFL leader had always distrusted ECOMOG and the Nigerians and, according to Sawyer, thought the Senegalese were 'no different'.³⁹ Much of this had to do with his unwillingness to forgo the benefits of his military dominance and his obsession to gain Presidential power. The inflow of people into Monrovia fleeing NPFL-held zones also made him realize that he was not yet ready for elections.⁴⁰ Moreover, his distrust of ECOMOG was reinforced when, in mid 1992, ULIMO swept through areas in the north-west of the country that were formerly under NPFL control. ULIMO received considerable help from ECOMOG, at least at the level of individual officers and troop contributing countries like Nigeria, Sierra Leone and Guinea.⁴¹ Fighting, which until then had been sporadic, began to escalate. Taylor took Nigerian troops hostage and enraged the Nigerians. In October the NPFL launched Operation Octopus, which constituted the definitive breakdown of the cease-fire and the truce with ECOMOG.

There were several reasons why Yamoussoukro failed. While Taylor received a severe blow in the course of ULIMO's offensive, his military position was still comfortable until well into 1992. There were no sanctions yet against the importation of arms and ammunition and no economic embargo that could dry up his sources of wealth. There was thus little reason for the NPFL leader to take a more accommodating line on the implementation of the accords, the more so as he had legitimate reasons to question ECOMOG's neutrality and its commitment to the Ivorian led negotiations. For its part, ECOMOG was simply not neutral, so it could not act as an effective broker between the various parties to the conflict. As witnessed by ULIMO's obstruction ECOMOG's support to rival factions had created forces it did not totally control and which could lead to unpredictable outcomes. To some extent a part of the crisis, itself it lacked sufficient credibility to muster support for the Yamoussoukro process and its own role as executor. ECOMOG's support to other factions showed, moreover, that its commitment to the Ivorian inspired process was not unlimited.

Conversely, Ivory Coast's role in the Yamoussoukro process did not automatically entail support for the role of ECOMOG,⁴² nor even commitment to the realization of all of Yamoussoukro's provisions. Just like Taylor the Ivorians preferred involvement of the United Nations to that of ECOWAS. They were not prepared to put Taylor under further pressure to conform to the agreement, while Octopus showed that they, too, did not completely control their client.⁴³ Although other ECOWAS members threatened Taylor with sanctions, it was unlikely that Abidjan would be prepared to punish the NPFL in this way. On the contrary, many Ivorians, among whom highly placed officials, were quite willing to take a share in the profits of Taylor's empire.

37 Decision A.DEC. 8/7/92. Text in Weller, *Regional Peace-Keeping and International Enforcement*, pp. 204-206.

38 See the press report in Weller, *Regional Peace-Keeping and International Enforcement*, p. 192.

39 Interview with Amos Sawyer, Saly, Senegal, 16 October 1998.

40 *Ibid.*

41 At the time it was speculated that Sawyer, too, supported ULIMO to mount pressure on Taylor after the latter had declined to join IGNU. Interview with Counsellor Alexander Zoe, Saly, Senegal, 14 October 1998.

42 Mortimer, 'Senegal's Rôle in ECOMOG', p. 300.

43 See on the reciprocal manipulation and conflictual dimensions in patron-client ties also R. Lemarchand, 'On Comparing Regional Hegemons: Libya and South Africa', in *ibid.*, *The Green and the Black*, p 176.

The Cotonou Accord

The Yamoussoukro process had collapsed amid duplicity. Operation Octopus exposed Houphouët's inability to control his client and signalled the failure of his efforts to wrest the management of the Liberian crisis from the Nigerians. The outcome of Yamoussoukro weakened the diplomatic position of Ivory Coast and the Francophone backers of the NPFL, while it enabled the anti-Taylor countries to commence and plead for a harder line. Thus, in response to Octopus a joint meeting was called of the Committee of Five and the SMC.⁴⁴ The meeting, which took place in Cotonou (October 1992) was marked by heated discussions and mutual recriminations. Benin, which held the chair of the ECOWAS Authority, expressed bitterness about the recent developments. ULIMO, which was not allowed to participate but had sent a delegation to Cotonou, was throwing accusations at Burkina Faso and Ivory Coast and even threatened to extend hostilities to Ivorian territory. Compaoré blamed ULIMO rather than the NPFL and the Ivorian foreign minister responded with indignation to the ULIMO threat. In their turn, Nigeria and Guinea-Conakry, which were represented by their Vice-President and minister of internal affairs respectively, expressed their anger about Taylor.⁴⁵

The ECOMOG countries managed to insert some sharp words about the NPFL in the meeting's final communiqué. It spoke, not without sanctimony, of 'the unprovoked and premeditated armed attack by [the] NPFL against ECOMOG forces' and feigned to attach credence to ULIMO's declared intention to abide by the Yamoussoukro accords. In even more significant language it reaffirmed the 'trust' of the member states in ECOMOG and reiterated 'their confidence in its absolute neutrality in the performance of its functions in Liberia'. Both ULIMO and the NPFL were ordered to declare a cease-fire as of 21 October. Within ten days of the cease-fire the warring parties would have to implement the Yamoussoukro accords, failing which the sanctions threatened at the ECOWAS summit in Dakar would automatically apply. The UN's Security Council would then be asked to endorse this by making the ECOWAS sanctions mandatory for the entire international community.⁴⁶

The sanctions decision annexed to the communiqué stipulated sanctions against 'any party to the Liberian conflict' but 'in particular against the National Patriotic Front of Liberia'. They would involve prohibition of the export of weapons and other military equipment to territory under NPFL control; of import of 'all commodities and products' from the same; and of any activities of ECOWAS nationals assisting in such export and import. Member states would also not be allowed to provide areas under NPFL control with financial or economic resources with the exception of payments for 'medical or humanitarian purposes'. No action would be taken by them that could be construed as recognition of the NPFL's authority and control, and access to and from NPFL-held areas would be forbidden. The sanctions decision would also be applied to other warring parties if they would fail to comply with the Yamoussoukro accord. The Cotonou communiqué also asked Guinea-Conakry, Sierra Leone and Ivory Coast, as bordering countries, to cooperate so as to ensure the 'strictest application of the sanctions decision'.⁴⁷

The communiqué and attached decision represented a clear victory for the protagonists of ECOMOG. Another victory for them was the decision to establish a 'Monitoring Committee' that would supervise

44 It was attended by the following countries: Benin, Ivory Coast, Guinea-Bissau, Togo, Nigeria, Ghana, Gambia, Mali, Senegal, Burkina, Guinea-Conakry, IGNU and observers of the OAU, UN and UNHCR.

45 Sierra Leone boycotted the meeting altogether. See the radio reports in Weller, *Regional Peace-Keeping and International Enforcement*, pp. 223-225.

46 Final Communiqué, Cotonou, 20 October 1992. Text in *Liberian Studies Journal*, 1992, no. 2, pp. 265-269.

47 *Ibid.* The sanctions decision (text in Weller, *Regional Peace-Keeping and International Enforcement*, pp. 226-228) also allowed for the suspension of sanctions against warring parties if these began to comply with the Yamoussoukro accord.

implementation of the Yamoussoukro accord and plead with the Security Council to impose mandatory sanctions in case of non-compliance. This committee became known as the Committee of Nine and constituted essentially a merger of the SMC and the Committee of Five.⁴⁸ With Nigeria, Guinea-Conakry and other ECOMOG states in its midst, the new organ signified the end of the pro-Taylor, Francophone diplomatic lead through the Committee of Five.⁴⁹

Thus, as of 5 November the ECOWAS sanctions were officially applied against the NPFL. A few weeks later the Security Council followed suit with resolution 788, which instituted a binding, full military embargo on Liberia. The resolution, which was unanimously approved, did not include economic sanctions and excepted arms deliveries to ECOMOG from the embargo.⁵⁰ At the beginning of November the Committee of Nine held its first official meeting in Abuja, where ECOMOG's Field Commander reported on the hostilities of the NPFL. The meeting reaffirmed both the Yamoussoukro accord and the decisions of Cotonou the previous month; repeated its condemnation of Operation Octopus and expressed support for ECOMOG's 'defensive action', portrayed as legitimate self-defence by a peace-keeping force under attack. The Abuja communiqué referred to the appalling atrocities being committed by the NPFL's forces in the wake of their attack on Monrovia and paid tribute to the victims of 'the senseless war being waged by Charles Taylor'. Amid the battles raging between ECOMOG and NPFL it appealed again to the Liberian factions to declare a cease-fire and commence encampment and disarmament.⁵¹

Although the meeting had still referred to the Yamoussoukro process, its decisions were not at all what Ivory Coast had had in mind with its diplomatic initiative. Houphouët, who was openly insulted by Lansana Conté at the Abuja meeting,⁵² felt that he had lost his grip on the situation and realized that his role had come to an end. Sawyer, who met him after the Abuja session, was confronted with a 'very disappointed man'.⁵³ On a more general level, the formation of the Committee of Nine signified a development that was typical throughout the Liberian crisis. Each time the negotiations reached an impasse other countries took the lead and the circle of actors widened further.⁵⁴ Thus in the deadlock following on Bamako and Lomé the SMC had to give way to the Committee of Five, while later on SMC members and other ECOWAS states joined in meetings of that Committee. In its turn, the Committee of Nine remained seized with the Liberian crisis from 1992 until the concluding elections of 1997, its leadership, however, changing at regular intervals.

Although Operation Octopus was followed by a more forceful attitude of ECOMOG to Taylor, it also led to greater involvement of the United Nations. ECOMOG's enforcement action after Octopus would make Taylor sign, by mid 1993, a new cease-fire accord. Yet in view of its inability, during the preceding

48 Only Mali, SMC member, and Guinea-Bissau, member of the Committee of Five, were not represented on the Committee of Nine, which also included Guinea-Conakry, Burkina and Benin. See Final Communiqué, Cotonou, 20 October 1992.

49 Although the sanctions decision stipulated a continuing role for the Committee of Five as regards the sanctions regime, in practice it was the enlarged committee which from now on took the lead in the management of the Liberian crisis. Interview with Roger Laloupo, Abuja, Nigeria, 22 September 1998.

50 The resolution was not solely and explicitly targeted at the NPFL. Text in Weller, *Regional Peace-Keeping and International Enforcement*, pp. 273-275. Also Wippman, 'Enforcing the Peace', pp. 173-174.

51 It also appealed to countries trusted by the NPFL to contribute troops and invited the UN and OAU to appoint representatives to cooperate in the implementation of the ECOWAS Peace Plan. Final Communiqué, Abuja, 7 November 1992 (see n. 23, ch. 2).

52 *Africa Confidential*, 20/11/92.

53 Interview with Amos Sawyer, Saly, Senegal, 16 October 1998. The ailing Ivorian President died in December 1993.

54 In the words of Amos Sawyer, there was cooptation every time there was a meeting. The SMC was always the parent committee. The Committee of Five became a sub-committee of it and it became larger and larger. Interview with author, Saly, Senegal, 16 October 1998.

two years, to coerce the NPFL into submission there was not much reason to assume that ECOMOG could end the civil war on its own. Thus Benin, as chairman of the ECOWAS Authority, worked towards a larger involvement of the UN, which appointed Trevor Gordon-Somers as Special Representative of the Secretary-General to Liberia. This shift to the UN also occurred at a time that Nigeria was distracted by a political crisis at home, with presidential elections being annulled at the eleventh hour and Babangida evicted from power by hardliners in the military (June-November 1993).⁵⁵

While ECOMOG continued its offensive against Taylor, Trevor Gordon commenced talks with West African leaders.⁵⁶ In July 1993 the UN, the ECOWAS chairman and the OAU invited all the warring parties to a conference in Geneva, which prepared a new cease-fire agreement. The conference enabled Liberia's warlords, besides IGNU, to exert influence on the formulation and contents of the accord.⁵⁷ This met their complaint that all the previous accords had been decided by the member states and not by the belligerents themselves⁵⁸ – a departure from ECOMOG's earlier strategy of preferential treatment of civilian groups to the detriment of the militias. IGNU, ULIMO and the NPFL, but not the AFL, signed the agreement at the ECOWAS summit in Cotonou (25 July 1993).

The Cotonou accord⁵⁹ was the most comprehensive agreement so far and all later accords would merely supplement this key agreement. The accord stipulated in great detail how Liberia should walk out of the quagmire. The belligerents would observe a new cease-fire to be monitored by ECOMOG and the United Nations Observer Mission in Liberia (UNOMIL), mentioned in the previous chapter. The belligerents affirmed that they recognized the neutrality of both ECOMOG and UNOMIL, whose observers would enjoy complete freedom of movement throughout Liberia. ECOMOG would be expanded to include troops from 'outside the West African region', in practice contingents from Tanzania and Uganda sent under auspices of the OAU. This was decided in an effort to increase ECOMOG's acceptability in the eyes of, especially, the NPFL. Until ECOMOG and UNOMIL would be on full strength the cease-fire would be monitored by a 'Joint Cease-fire Monitoring Committee' made up of ECOMOG, UNOMIL and representatives of the belligerents. The parties agreed not to import weapons and war-like material, use the cease-fire for a military build-up – as had happened so often before – or engage in other activities that would violate the cease-fire. They also recognized that the ECOWAS-UN arms embargo would stay in place.⁶⁰

ECOMOG would create buffer zones and seal the borders with Ivory Coast, Guinea and Sierra Leone to prevent cross-border attacks and importation of arms. All points of entry into Liberia would be monitored by ECOMOG in conjunction with UNOMIL, which was essentially to serve as a watchdog for ECOMOG so as to placate Taylor. The warring parties also promised to freeze their military positions as of the date of the cease-fire. The accord stipulated in detail what kind of activities would be considered cease-fire violations, such as the importation of arms, ammunition and incendiary devices; the alteration or fortification of military positions; attacks on, or firing at an individual of, another faction by order of the respective faction leader; recruitment and training of combatants; incitement to resume hostilities; planting of mines after the cease-fire and refusal to disclose information on their location; and, naturally, harassment of ECOMOG and UNOMIL personnel.⁶¹

55 *Ibid.*

56 *Accord: An International Review of Peace Initiatives*, issue 1, 1996, p. 97.

57 Yet Amos Sawyer claims that the new accord was largely Trevor Gordon's formulation. Interview with author, Saly, Senegal, 16 October 1998.

58 Interview with Roger Laloupo, Abuja, Nigeria, 22 September 1998.

59 Text in *Liberian Studies Journal*, 1993, no. 2, pp. 329-341.

60 Cotonou accord, articles 1-4.

61 *Ibid.*, article 4.3 – article 5.

All weapons and related material of the warring factions would be stored by ECOMOG in armouries designated and secured by ECOMOG and monitored and verified by UNOMIL. Combatants of the factions, as well as non-combatants carrying arms, would report and hand over their weapons to ECOMOG, which would be allowed to disarm any (ex-)combatant or non-combatant in case of non-compliance, as well as search for and recover hidden weapons. However, in all these cases UNOMIL would have to observe ECOMOG activities. All belligerents agreed to encampment in centres established by ECOMOG and monitored by UNOMIL, for the purpose of disarmament, demobilization and rehabilitation of combatants. They would submit complete lists of combatants and their weaponry to effect this process. Encampment would commence upon full deployment of ECOMOG and UNOMIL, with the former responsible for security of the camps and the latter for monitoring. Violations of the cease-fire would, in the first instance, be handled by UNOMIL and, if this would fail, by a 'Violation Committee', successor to the temporary committee mentioned above and made up of one representative of each belligerent, ECOMOG and UNOMIL. In the last resort ECOMOG would step in, if necessary by way of 'the use of its peace enforcement powers'. More detailed schedules of disarmament, encampment and demobilization would be drawn up by ECOMOG and UNOMIL.⁶²

Cotonou also stipulated some political arrangements. Firstly, the civilian Interim Government of National Unity (IGNU), as well as Taylor's rival NPRA government in Gbarnga, would be replaced by the 'Liberia National Transitional Government' (LNTG), which would provide essential government services during a transitional period. The executive branch of the LNTG would consist of a 5 member 'Council of State' made up of representatives of the NPFL, ULIMO and IGNU, with two remaining members selected from nine candidates, nominated by the signatory parties, on the basis of a detailed selection procedure. The Council would select its chairman and two vice-chairmen from among its members, take decisions on the basis of consensus and be responsible for the day-to-day operation of government. Allocation of cabinet posts would be determined by consultation between the parties. ULIMO would be entitled to nominate a fifth member to the Supreme Court and have nine representatives in a 'Transitional Legislative Assembly' (TLA), with NPFL and IGNU both having thirteen.⁶³ The LNTG would be installed 'approximately' thirty days after signature of the Cotonou accord and have a life span of seven months. Significantly, anyone holding positions in the LNTG, whether in the Council of State, the TLA, the Elections Commission or the Supreme Court, would be ineligible to contest the prospective legislative and presidential elections.⁶⁴ The accord's final provision concerned a general amnesty to be given for any acts committed by the parties or their forces while in actual combat, or on authority of any of the parties in the course of actual combat.⁶⁵

With Cotonou the mediation process began to focus firmly on the interests of the warlords. According to Alao, ECOMOG's efforts to establish a power-sharing arrangement between the various factions went so far as to risk the elimination of the civil state.⁶⁶ Liberian civil society reacted predictably negative to Cotonou, as well as to the later agreements adding to the accord. The agreements were seen as a political reward for armed violence, a 'power for guns policy'⁶⁷ which was to lead to various protests from civilian

62 *Ibid.*, Articles 6-8 and 12.

63 ULIMO would be allowed to nominate the TLA's Speaker from among its representatives and two members to the Elections Commission agreed on at Yamoussoukro III. *Ibid.*, articles 14-15.

64 *Ibid.*, article 16.

65 Significantly, business transactions entered into by the warlords were also to remain untouched by the present agreement. *Ibid.*, article 19. The modalities for the election and repatriation of refugees in articles 15 and 18.

66 C.A. Alao, 'Commentary on the Accords', in *Accord: An International Review of Peace Initiatives*, issue 1, 1996, p. 70.

67 Woods, 'Civic Initiatives in the Peace Process', p. 29.

groups. By 1994 the Inter-Faith Mediation Committee expressed sharp disagreement with the direction that the negotiations took. The IFMC convened a series of national consultations, followed in 1995 by a one day 'sit home' strike as an appeal to the international community to put pressure on the militias. A second 'sit home' strike in 1996 led to the formation of the 'Civic Disarmament Campaign' (CDC), which was to mobilize civilian pressure for disarmament.⁶⁸

Nevertheless, Cotonou's peace formula – 'disarmament, resettlement, elections'⁶⁹ – still saw disarmament as a prerequisite for elections. Trevor Gordon wanted UNOMIL observers to act as forerunners, after which ECOMOG, expanded with Tanzanian and Ugandan contingents,⁷⁰ would 'sneak in'.⁷¹

The plan failed, however, as UNOMIL was too small to constitute more than a token force,⁷² while some observers were, according to Sawyer, unsuitable for their job.⁷³ Moreover, due to logistical difficulties there were considerable delays in getting the additional ECOMOG contingents in place – they would arrive only in January 1994. This completely derailed the time-table for the implementation of the accord, which fuelled suspicion and led to new inertia.⁷⁴

Furthermore, Cotonou, while very detailed, still contained various flaws and omissions. First of all, the accord did not cater for a mechanism for resolving disputes in the Council of State, which stalled the beginning of disarmament and, concomitantly, the formation of the LNTG. While the Council of State was formed in August 1993 it took until March 1994 before the LNTG as a whole was formally inaugurated, at the expense of an informal agreement that disarmament would follow later.⁷⁵ Quarrels, in which the civilian IGNU fully participated, centred on the allocation of remaining cabinet posts, as well as of posts in public corporations and autonomous agencies.⁷⁶ It was also unclear whether those appointed to the LNTG would represent the government as a whole or merely the factional interest of those who had nominated them.⁷⁷ The faction leaders sent representatives to the Council of State, as they would not be able to contest the future elections if they would sit on the Council themselves. However, once appointed several of these representatives broke ties with the faction that had sent them, with the result that some factions, such as the NPFL, lost several crucial ministries.⁷⁸ This obviously diminished the significance of the LNTG and the influence of the mediators over the factions.

The disputes over the allocation of posts contributed to intra-factional strife in both the NPFL and ULIMO, which was soon to split in its J and K sections. Moreover, while ULIMO was now a signatory to the cease-fire, the AFL was still outside any agreement⁷⁹ and growing in strength. The NPFL had signed

68 *Ibid.*, pp 29-30 and Sesay, 'Bringing Peace to Liberia', p. 25. Also Biaya, 'Acteurs et médiations dans la résolution et la prévention des conflits en Afrique de l'Ouest', pp. 10-11.

69 Alao, 'Commentary on the Accords', p. 70.

70 Zambia was also invited to send troops but declined as it vainly asked for the same financial compensation that Senegal had obtained. *Ibid.*

71 Interview with Amos Sawyer, Saly, Senegal, 16 October 1998.

72 By January 1994 some 360 personnel. S/1994/463: Third Progress Report of the Secretary-General on the United Nations Observer Mission in Liberia, 18 April 1994, p. 4.

73 Interview with Amos Sawyer, Saly, Senegal, 16 October 1998.

74 *Ibid.* and Alao, 'Commentary on the Accords', p. 70.

75 The civilian IGNU finally agreed to this. Other civilians groups reacted furiously to this development. F. Prkic, 'Libéria: de Cotonou à Akosombo, espoirs et déceptions sur le long chemin de la paix', in *L'Afrique politique*, 1995, pp. 165-171. In a rather symbolic exercise, the NPFL, as well as the non-signatory AFL, handed over guns and ammunition to ECOMOG. See *The Liberian Crisis*, pp. 76-77.

76 Third Progress Report of the Secretary-General on the United Nations Observer Mission in Liberia, p. 2.

77 Alao, 'Commentary on the Accords', p. 71.

78 Prkic, 'Libéria: de Cotonou à Akosombo', pp. 171-172.

79 Although it could be said that, as the former national army, it was tied to the accord by way of IGNU's signature. Prkic, 'Libéria: de Cotonou à Akosombo', p. 167.

Cotonou but continued fighting, partly by way of a new proxy force, the LDF, as a way to circumvent the agreement. The Cotonou accord not only failed to stop the proliferation of militias but was also unable to prevent a resumption of hostilities, in which Taylor's NPFL was considerably weakened by splits and a coalition of forces turning against it.

ECOMOG did not interfere in the fighting or prevent the emergence of new factions. It not only encouraged some of these forces but also remained passive in the face of their efforts to dislodge Taylor from his headquarters. This attitude may have been influenced by the fact that the fighting took place far from ECOMOG controlled zones, while its intervention would have alienated other factions⁸⁰ and the weakening of the NPFL was not against its strategic interests. However, by this time the intervention force began to face financial constraints and some of its participant countries, including Ghana and Nigeria, began to show some political fatigue with regard to continuing the intervention and finding a mediated solution. On the other hand Nigeria was not really keen on implementing the UN/Benin brokered accord in the first place, especially as Taylor was becoming desperate about his military situation.⁸¹

For their part, the NPFL and ULIMO refused to provide ECOMOG access to their zones. With distrust still running high, both between the factions and between some militias and ECOMOG, the warring parties refused to commence disarmament, the more so as the loss of ministerial posts to defected representatives seemed to underline the importance of arms as the ultimate guarantee of political power. The LNTG, in its turn, was paralysed and did not control more territory than IGNU had done, while ECOMOG's expansion across Liberia was halted.

The Akosombo and Accra Agreements

With ECOMOG unable and unwilling to respond to these glaring cease-fire violations Cotonou became inoperative. If anything, the political and military situation had become even murkier, with different factions trying to build an alliance with ECOMOG and with various UNOMIL staff.⁸² However, on the regional level there was an important change when the Ghanaian President took over the chairmanship of the ECOWAS Authority in August 1994. Although the Ghanaians had participated in ECOMOG from the start and, at least initially, were opposed to Taylor's violent rise to power, they had never shared Nigeria's and Guinea's obsession with the leader of the NPFL. Disagreements between Ghana and Nigeria over ECOMOG's strategy had already surfaced in 1992.⁸³ The Ghanaians, both in the military and the government, were of the opinion that Liberia required a political, negotiated solution with the consent of the factions and a strictly neutral role for the intervention force. Partly at the insistence of the Nigerians, who still faced many internal problems, Ghana was persuaded to accept the presidency of the ECOWAS Authority, thus preparing the ground for a new initiative that might stand a better chance of acceptance.⁸⁴

Ghana worked on the premise that a solution to the Liberian crisis had to come from the warring factions themselves, especially Taylor's NPFL. In a way, Cotonou had already set the first step in this direction, although it had not followed this through to its logical conclusion as it had forbidden those appointed to the LNTG to stand in the future elections. ECOMOG had, moreover, not intervened when LNTG delegates, once appointed, defected from the factions, a development which distanced the LNTG

80 *Ibid.*, p. 168.

81 Adibe, 'The Liberian conflict and the ECOWAS-UN partnership', p. 479 and letter by Stephen Ellis to author, 5 February 1999.

82 Interview with Amos Sawyer, Saly, Senegal, 16 October 1998.

83 Aning, 'Ghana, ECOWAS and the Liberian Crisis', pp. 282-283.

84 Prkic, 'Le Ghana dans la gestion de la crise libérienne' (see n. 124, ch. 4), pp. 8-13.

from the militias, thus transforming the LNTG into another toothless, merely complicating, factor. The Ghanaians argued that the factions had not disarmed as this had not been in their interest and that they therefore had to be lured with a political prize to give up their guns. The LNTG thus had to be transformed into a more powerful interim administration in order to constitute a more attractive, non-violent channel through which the armed groups could pursue their objectives.⁸⁵

More immediately, the post Cotonou events had made clear that other factions had to be drawn into the agreement, factions which had not signed the accord or had just been established or appeared on the scene as a result of splits. Rawlings' government therefore organized a conference in the Ghanaian city of Akosombo (September 1994) to which all factions were invited. While the LPC and LDF declined the invitation, the other factions attended the meeting and participated in the debates. The LNTG also sent a delegate, namely a member appointed by the defunct IGNU who represented, as an observer, the civilian political class of Monrovia. Contrary to Cotonou, Charles Taylor was present in person, just as his rivals from the AFL and ULIMO (actually only its K section), Hezekiah Bowen and Alhaji Kromah. In fact, this represented the essence of the Akosombo meeting, which sought to bring together the leaders of the most powerful factions in person.⁸⁶ In the Ghanaian perspective it was felt that, if these warlords could be enticed into a mutual consensus on a more powerful LNTG in which they exercised influence, the foundation would be laid for a more realistic and effective peace accord. Thus, the observer of the old LNTG did not become a party to the Akosombo agreement as he represented an unarmed group. However, the delegates of the other armed factions did not sign the agreement either. The explanation given was that Akosombo was meant as a 'light amendment' of Cotonou and that these factions were indirectly represented by their fellow Krahn Hezekiah Bowen of the AFL, with whom they shared the same military objective, *i.e.* preventing a military victory of the NPFL.⁸⁷

In the Akosombo agreement⁸⁸ Taylor, Bowen and Kromah agreed to declare a new cease-fire and reaffirmed most elements of Cotonou. However, implementation would now become the joint responsibility of ECOMOG, UNOMIL and the transformed LNTG. The new LNTG would help to ensure monitoring and supervision of all points of entry into Liberia and enter into a 'Status of Forces Agreement' with ECOWAS on the role of ECOMOG. Enforcement of compliance with the cease-fire would, in the last resort, be undertaken by ECOMOG *and* the LNTG. It was also agreed that the seizure or abduction of property or individuals would constitute a cease-fire violation just like, significantly, the 'facilitation or creation of new or splinter groups'. These would not be recognized under the Cotonou accord, be disarmed and disbanded by ECOMOG in collaboration with LNTG and verified by UNOMIL and thereafter be 'persecuted [sic] under the laws of Liberia'. Disarmament of the militias would now take place in cooperation between ECOMOG and the LNTG – in actual fact the factions themselves through a reformed national army. Disarmament would also involve a prohibition on the carrying of weapons in the capital, although the agreement ominously referred to the Status of Forces Agreement with ECOMOG in which 'the personal security of the leaders of the warring parties [should] be reflected'. Akosombo also gave up the pretence that the AFL represented Liberia's national armed forces, by explicitly putting it on a par with the other factions and calling on the LNTG to commence the formation of 'appropriate national security structures' – in practice the inclusion of NPFL, ULIMO(-K) and AFL militias in a new national army.⁸⁹

85 *Ibid.*, pp. 13-15.

86 According to Sawyer, Akosombo involved the streamlining of the Council of State around these three leaders. Interview with author, Saly, Senegal, 16 October 1998.

87 Prkic, 'Le Ghana dans la gestion de la crise libérienne' and *ibid.*, 'Libéria: de Cotonou à Akosombo'.

88 Text in *Liberian Studies Journal*, 1995, no. 1, pp. 148-155.

89 See Akosombo agreement, Part I, Sections A-E and G. This was decided at the behest of the NPFL and ULIMO-K. Woods, 'Civic Initiatives in the Peace Process', p. 30.

Further amendments of Cotonou centred on the provisions concerning the Council of State. The five-member Council would now be made up of one representative each from the NPFL, AFL and ULIMO (-K actually), with the remaining two representing unarmed Liberians chosen from among prominent Liberians – one by the ‘Liberian National Conference’ (LNC – a recently established civilian initiative) and one jointly by ULIMO (-K) and the NPFL. The chairman and two vice chairmen would be chosen within seven days of the signing of Akosombo. The Council would decide on the basis of simple majorities rather than consensus, in an effort to prevent interminable discussions and deadlock between the factions.⁹⁰ Most important, however, was the scrapping of the ineligibility clause in Cotonou, which lifted the prohibition on those serving in the LNTG to contest the legislative and presidential elections to be held at a later date.⁹¹ Furthermore, the agreement confirmed the allocation of ministries, public corporations and autonomous agencies as agreed under Cotonou, adding however, that existing factions would be taken into account when deciding on vacancies. In order to reach a better balance between faction interests Akosombo also stipulated that, if any executive post in such ministry, corporation or agency would be allocated to one party, two deputy posts would have to be given to the two other parties. Factions would, through the Council of State, also have the right to change appointees to the posts allocated to them. The Transitional Legislative Assembly would be expanded to 48 by the addition of thirteen citizens from each of the thirteen Liberian counties. Akosombo unashamedly added that the TLA would have to give consideration to providing ‘appropriate benefits for the heads of the warring parties’.⁹²

In allowing the factions to encroach further into the key elements of implementation – such as disarmament –, the removal of the ineligibility clause, and the blatant stipulations on the distribution of political spoils Akosombo considerably reinforced the position of the factions, in particular of the NPFL and ULIMO-K. These factions also tried to have an aging traditional chief, Chief Tamba Taylor,⁹³ replace the first chairman of the LNTG. This move was widely seen as an attempt to consolidate the NPFL/ULIMO-K hold over the Council of State.⁹⁴

Liberian citizens were outraged and generally interpreted Akosombo as an attempt to install a military ‘junta’.⁹⁵ Resentment of Monrovia’s political class was partly fuelled by the fact that the defunct IGNU would lose one of its two members on the Council of State, which it had managed to have appointed by joint intrigue with ULIMO.⁹⁶ It also lost the Presidency. In response the first LNTG, or rather, its chairman, refused to step down in favour of LNTG as revised in Akosombo. The chairman of the old LNTG sacked the Chief of Staff of the AFL, Hezekiah Bowen, who as *de facto* leader of AFL-the-armed-faction refused to leave his post. The UN added to the confusion of a bicephalous government by inviting the chairman of the first LNTG to speak, as head of state of Liberia, to the General Assembly.⁹⁷ The governments of Ghana, Nigeria and Togo then tried to persuade the first LNTG to leave the political

90 Akosombo agreement, Part II, Section A. Also Prkic, ‘Libéria: de Cotonou à Akosombo’, p. 175.

91 See Akosombo agreement, Part II, Section A.

92 *Ibid.*

93 No relative of the NPFL leader. Some personal details in *Accord: An International Review of Peace Initiatives*, issue 1, 1996, p. 86.

94 Woods, ‘Civic Initiatives in the Peace Process’, p. 30.

95 Interviews with Counsellor Alexander Zoe and Amos Sawyer, Saly, Senegal, 14 and 16 October 1998 respectively. Also Prkic, ‘Libéria: de Cotonou à Akosombo’, p. 175. According to Alexander Zoe many feared that Taylor would be able to get to power by rotation of the Presidency and subsequent elimination of his rivals. Interview with author, Saly, Senegal, 14 October 1998.

96 Under Cotonou it was only entitled to one post. See Article 14.7.i. of the Cotonou accord.

97 Prkic, ‘Libéria: de Cotonou à Akosombo’, pp. 171 and 174-175.

arena.⁹⁸ This, they found, was far from easy, despite the fact that civil society was too divided and too weak to have much impact on the turn of events.⁹⁹

Yet it was not only sections of Monrovia's political class which were opposed to Akosombo. Nigeria reacted negatively too. It appears that Ghana had overstepped its room for diplomatic manoeuvre and failed to consult the Nigerians sufficiently over the contents of the agreement. The latter resented what they saw as the political elevation of Charles Taylor. They condemned the plan to make him vice-chairman of the Council of State in charge of foreign affairs and security¹⁰⁰ and, more generally, considered that the agreement provided undue favours to the NPFL and ULIMO-K, *i.e.* two powerful factions over which Nigeria had no control.¹⁰¹ Nigeria suspected the Ghanaians from colluding with the NPFL to the extent that it threatened to be sidelined in the diplomatic process and deprived of success, despite all its diplomatic and military efforts in the past. It did not seek open confrontation with Ghana but tried to wreck the Ghanaian initiative by way of the factions under Nigerian influence. The result was that, on the ground in Liberia, tensions developed between the Nigerian and Ghanaian contingents in ECOMOG, particularly in the city of Buchanan.¹⁰²

The factions themselves were not appeased by the agreement either. Some had been left outside Akosombo, so were opposed to it. As the role of the Council of State had grown the stakes were raised substantially, with the result that the factions were unable to cooperate and command structures weakened, fuelling splits and realignments. The Accra accord of December 1994,¹⁰³ which was drafted to amend Akosombo and include all the factions that had been left out so far, did nothing to break the impasse. The agreement attempted to install a new cease-fire and introduce several safe havens and buffer zones in accordance with the Cotonou and Akosombo accords. The police, immigration and other security agencies would now also be reorganized so as to include combatants from the various factions, as had been stipulated for the armed forces by Akosombo. The Council of State would still be made up of five members – one each for the NPFL, ULIMO(-K) and the civilian LNC, with one post shared by the 'AFL/Coalition', a shaky alliance of AFL, LPC, ULIMO-J, LDF and NPFL-CRC. The fifth member would, indeed, be the aging traditional leader, Chief Tamba Tailor, nominated by NPFL and ULIMO-K.

Hostilities, however, continued and both ECOMOG and UNOMIL began to show signs of despair. UNOMIL troops had already been withdrawn to Monrovia and were scaled down to a mere 85 men. The Nigerian contingent in ECOMOG was also reduced with some 3.000 troops. In 1995 the Tanzanian and Ugandan contingents, which had been sent under Cotonou but remained largely inactive, were withdrawn altogether. By then ECOMOG had some 9.000 men at its disposal – well short of what was needed to start implementation of the peace accord.¹⁰⁴

The Abuja Accords

With hostilities continuing unabated and having antagonized substantial sections of Monrovia's political class and civil society, the Ghanaians had to back off. Like Houphouët-Boigny before him Rawlings had

98 *Ibid.*, p. 175.

99 Interview with Alexander Zoe, Saly, Senegal, 14 October 1998.

100 This would have entitled Taylor to determine the status of ECOMOG troops in Liberia. See S. Riley and M. Sesay, 'Liberia: After Abuja', in *Review of African Political Economy*, 1996, p. 431.

101 Prkic, 'Le Ghana dans la gestion de la crise libérienne', p. 16.

102 *Ibid.* and Sesay, 'Bringing Peace to Liberia', p. 23.

103 Text in *Liberian Studies Journal*, 1995, no. 1, pp. 156-161.

104 It was estimated that ECOMOG needed 12.000 troops for this. Prkic, 'Le Ghana dans la gestion de la crise libérienne', p. 18. Also Alao, 'Commentary on the Accords', p. 72.

played all his cards and was forced to admit defeat.¹⁰⁵ With the Akosombo agreement he had, however, pointed the way forward in the sense that the only way out of the Liberian morass was by giving due recognition, however morally reprehensible, to the fact of the military stranglehold that the warring parties, especially the NPFL, had on the country. Akosombo thus began the process by which Liberia would return, some three years later and with ups and downs, to a limited degree of 'normality'.¹⁰⁶ Moreover, before ceding the diplomatic lead the Ghanaian President took the crucial step of encouraging a rapprochement between Charles Taylor and the Nigerian government, now in the hands of the dictatorial Sani Abacha. The United States and various international NGOs sponsored this initiative.¹⁰⁷ Abacha had already been pointed out to Taylor at the Akosombo meeting as 'not a man of many words' but certainly one to watch.¹⁰⁸ The NPFL leader was encouraged to pay a visit to Nigeria – in June 1995, his first visit ever. Before he came to Abuja Taylor saw his friend Compaore and sought the advice of the Ivorian government, which gave the green light and reassured him that he had nothing to fear. Indeed, Taylor was pleasantly surprised by the welcome he received from the Nigerians.¹⁰⁹ He and the Nigerian leader exchanged apologies for past errors and misunderstandings and were officially reconciled.¹¹⁰

Nigeria's U-turn depended primarily on the judgment of Sani Abacha. An end to the protracted intervention in Liberia could help consolidate the precarious position of the Nigerian leader, who was internationally isolated and stood condemned for his brutality and the wrecking of the country's democratic experiment. As five years of determined opposition to Taylor had not led to the latter's undoing it seemed to Abacha that the risk of getting permanently stuck in the Liberian quagmire was less acceptable than being confronted by the possible accession to power of the NPFL.¹¹¹ Moreover, while Abacha was ostracized by the international community over the hanging of Ken Saro Wiwa, the French government held on to the closer commercial and political ties it had been developing with the Nigerians in previous years.¹¹² This French-Nigerian rapport led, in turn, to a closer convergence of views between Nigeria and its two most implacable West African opponents over the Liberian issue, Ivory Coast and Burkina Faso.¹¹³

While this fundamental change in West African alliance patterns was to prove crucial for reaching a way out of the Liberian crisis, by itself this was not enough. After five years of partisan intervention, colluding with factions, encouraging splits and profiteering on all sides it was not easy to put the lid back on Pandora's box. Thus, the Abuja accord which was hammered out between Nigeria and the various Liberian factions at a meeting in August 1995 did not bring peace at once.¹¹⁴ Abuja declared a new cease-fire and confirmed an agreement reached between the factions in January to expand the Council of State from five to six. This had been done in an attempt to give the AFL on the one hand and the Coalition of LPC, ULIMO-J,

105 Interview with Amos Sawyer, Saly, Senegal, 16 October 1998.

106 Prkic, 'Le Ghana dans la gestion de la crise libérienne', p. 14.

107 Riley and Sesay, 'Liberia: After Abuja', pp. 431-432. and *Accord: An International Review of Peace Initiatives*, issue 1, 1996, p. 100.

108 Interview with Amos Sawyer, Saly, Senegal, 16 October 1998.

109 Interview with Roger Laloupo, Abuja, Nigeria, 22 September 1998.

110 Prkic, 'Le Ghana dans la gestion de la crise libérienne', p. 19.

111 *Ibid.*, who spoke with a special assistant of Abacha.

112 Thus, Abacha was invited to attend the Franco-African summit of Ougadougou in December 1996. Martin, 'Continuité et changements dans les relations franco-africaines' (n. 41, ch. 4), pp. 10-11. See also *Africa Confidential*, 5/12/97.

113 Interview with Amos Sawyer, Saly, Senegal, 16 October 1998 and oral intervention of delegate at the CODESRIA-Clingendael conference (note 30, ch. 4), 15 October 1998. Thus, in April 1997 a Burkinabè contingent would arrive to strengthen ECOMOG in the run-up to the elections that would end the war. *Africa Research Bulletin* (PSC), 1997, p. 12655.

114 Text in *Liberian Studies Journal*, 1995, no. 2, pp. 273-276.

LDF and NPFL-CRC on the other, separate representation.¹¹⁵ However, only one Council seat was now allocated, namely to the Coalition. The Council of State would thus be made up of the NPFL; ULIMO-K; Coalition; the civilian LNC; the aging Chief Tamba Tailor – though not as chairman; and Mr. Wilton Sankawulo, a writer and academic.¹¹⁶ The accord stipulated that Sankawulo would be chairman and all others vice chairmen. It also tried to end government by faction ‘surrogates’,¹¹⁷ by explicitly stipulating that the warlords themselves, and not their representatives, would sit on the Council. Thus besides Sankawulo, Tamba Tailor and the LNC’s Oscar Quiah, the accord seated Charles Taylor for the NPFL, Alhaji Kromah for ULIMO-K and the LPC leader George Boley for the Coalition. The Coalition would also get the posts in ministries and other public agencies which had earlier been allocated to IGNU. In order to compensate for its lack of direct representation on the Council ULIMO-J would obtain control over four ministries, a range of public corporations, four deputy ministers and several deputy directors of public agencies. Hezekiah Bowen of the AFL was similarly promised a ministerial or other senior government position, as were leaders of some of the other factions without Council seats. However, all holders of positions in the renewed LNTG who would wish to contest the elections would have to vacate their office three months before the date of the plebiscite. They would be replaced by their nominees or persons nominated by the parties represented on the Council. The chairman of the Council, the civilian Sankawulo, would be ineligible to contest the first legislative and presidential elections. All unamended provisions of the Cotonou, Akosombo and Accra accords would remain in force.

The biggest flaw of the Abuja accord was the lack of direct Council representation for Roosevelt Johnson. The argument given for this was that the Krahn, to which Johnson belonged, only constituted four per cent of the Liberian population and should therefore not have more than two seats on the Council of State. As his fellow Krahn George Boley (LPC-Coalition) and Oscar Quiah (LNC) had been allocated a seat, Johnson lost out. Although like all other faction leaders he had signed the agreement it did not go down well with his supporters, especially as the compensatory post of minister for rural development was considered grossly inadequate. Moreover, as ULIMO-J constituted an important faction in its own right it was doubtful whether George Boley, as LPC leader and member on the Council for the Coalition to which ULIMO-J technically belonged, could adequately represent Johnson’s interests.¹¹⁸

Abuja also allowed the faction leaders to enter the capital with their militias intact. As shown above, the Akosombo agreement had prohibited the carrying of arms in Monrovia but made an exception for, what was termed, ‘the personal security of the leaders’. Taylor’s triumphant entrance of the capital in August 1995 – his first visit since the beginning of the war – marked the beginning of Monrovia’s militarization, with large numbers of militias taking up positions as ‘armed protection’ for their superiors.¹¹⁹ Thus, there was no progress on disarmament and encampment. As mutual suspicions between faction leaders were still running high and all accords had, until now, been broken, the warlords went so far as to execute, or threaten the execution of, war-weary fighters intent on laying down their arms. Moreover, Taylor began recruiting hundreds of fighters for his NPFL-controlled ‘national police’, a move that was seen as an effort to circumvent the disarmament provisions of the cease-fire accords.¹²⁰

Not surprisingly, within three weeks of the signing of Abuja fighting erupted, reportedly between the two factions of ULIMO in the diamond areas of western Liberia. New cease-fire violations, involving other

115 *Accord: An International Review of Peace Initiatives*, issue 1, 1996, p. 100.

116 Some personal details in *Accord: An International Review of Peace Initiatives*, issue 1, 1996, p. 86.

117 Interview with Amos Sawyer, Saly, Senegal, 16 October 1998.

118 Riley and Sesay, ‘Liberia: After Abuja’, p. 434 and Sesay, ‘Bringing Peace to Liberia’, pp. 23-24.

119 *Ibid.* and *Accord: An International Review of Peace Initiatives*, issue 1, 1996, p. 101.

120 Sesay, ‘Bringing Peace to Liberia’, pp. 77-78.

factions as well, took place in October.¹²¹ Most of the fighting was linked to the marginalization of Johnson and ULIMO-J. Factional rivalry also paralysed the Council of State as its civilian chairman, a nominee of Taylor, was powerless to call the faction leaders to order. In fact, power lay very much in the hands of Taylor, Kromah and Boley, with the first progressively strengthening his position, behaving as *de facto* government leader and usurping the powers of the Council Presidency.¹²²

As shown in the previous chapter, more serious outbreaks of violence followed in December. ECOMOG troops, deployed in the north-west to separate and disarm the ULIMO factions but known to engage in smuggling, tried to get ULIMO-J fighters out of certain diamond areas. In retaliation, Johnson's men inflicted heavy casualties on the Nigerians, who suspended disarmament indefinitely.¹²³

In April 1996 an LNTG inquiry into the December incidents led to fresh violence, when the commission of inquiry concluded that Johnson had tried to derail the peace process. In an attempt to bolster their position Taylor and Kromah used the commission report to demand Johnson's dismissal from his ministerial post. Against all (foreign) advice they even tried to arrest him, a move that stunned Liberians as 'foolhardy'.¹²⁴ It was interpreted as an attempt to monopolize the Presidency and Vice-Presidency for Taylor and Kromah respectively or, alternatively, as Taylor's first step in eliminating his rivals.¹²⁵

ECOMOG was told by ULIMO-K and NPFL not to interfere with their attempt to get at Johnson. In actual fact, the intervention force encouraged them to attack ULIMO-J and actively connived by allowing thousands of NPFL militias into the capital and providing them with arms, notably artillery pieces.¹²⁶ Nigeria's belated realization that an end to its intervention depended on Taylor had led to a more accommodating, if not sympathetic, attitude to the NPFL,¹²⁷ while since December little love was lost between ECOMOG and ULIMO-J.¹²⁸ Johnson, however, decided to fight back. He was helped by his fellow Krahn George Boley (LPC-Coalition), who broke with his colleagues on the Council and, like the Krahn-dominated AFL, joined forces with ULIMO-J to engage ULIMO-K and the NPFL.¹²⁹ The attempt to arrest Johnson failed and the operation spiralled completely out of control. As mentioned in the previous chapter over one thousand civilians, many of whom were used as human shields, got killed in what developed into the worst fighting since Operation Octopus. Although faction leaders of the LDF and the NPFL-CRC were saved by Guinean ECOMOG troops from an attempted assassination by the NPFL, civilians received little or no support from the intervention force.¹³⁰ Indeed, while some ECOMOG soldiers were taken hostage, others participated in Operation Pay Yourself, the accompanying and worst spree of looting that Liberia had seen since the civil war began.¹³¹

121 M.A. Sesay, 'Politics and Society in Post-War Liberia', in *Journal of Modern African Studies*, 1996, p. 402 and *Accord: An International Review of Peace Initiatives*, issue 1, 1996, p. 101.

122 Sesay, 'Bringing Peace to Liberia', p. 76; *ibid.*, 'Politics and Society in Post-War Liberia', pp. 402-403; and Riley and Sesay, 'Liberia: After Abuja', pp. 433-434.

123 Riley and Sesay, 'Liberia: After Abuja', pp. 434-435 and Sesay, 'Politics and Society in Post-War Liberia', p. 402.

124 Interview with Counsellor Alexander Zoe, Saly, Senegal, 14 October 1998. Both the Nigerians, Ghanaians and Americans, as well as the OAU, warned against this move. Sesay, 'Politics and Society in Post-War Liberia', p. 403. However, there was clearly some degree of duplicity on the part of the Nigerians and Ghanaians. See below and 'Liberia: Out of Control', in *Africa Confidential*, 10/5/96.

125 Sesay, 'Politics and Society in Post-War Liberia', p. 403.

126 Prkic, 'Le Ghana dans la gestion de la crise libérienne', p. 19.

127 See for clear signs of collusion 'Liberia: Out of Control'.

128 Interview with Amos Sawyer, Saly, Senegal, 16 October 1998.

129 Riley and Sesay, 'Liberia: After Abuja', p. 435.

130 'Liberia: Out of Control'.

131 Sesay, 'Politics and Society in Post-War Liberia', p. 404 and Riley and Sesay, 'Liberia: After Abuja', pp. 435-436.

ECOWAS tried to save the Abuja accord with an emergency meeting, which Taylor and Kromah refused to attend.¹³² However, West African governments, as well as the international community, were getting increasingly fed up with the Liberian crisis. Diplomatic attitudes began to harden.¹³³ In August 1996, with Abacha as the new chairman of the ECOWAS Authority, the Committee of Nine convened in Abuja and revised the cease-fire accord. The weak chairman of Liberia's Council of State was replaced by the new and tougher Ruth Perry and the time-table for disarmament, encampment and elections was extended.¹³⁴ Disarmament and demobilization would have to be completed by 31 January 1997, factions dissolved by 28 February and elections held somewhere in May.¹³⁵

More significantly, threats were now issued to the warlords that their assets might be frozen and a ban imposed on travel to, and expulsion ordered from, ECOWAS member states. Aid missions and embassies in Liberia would close. The possibility of a war crimes tribunal was mentioned as well.¹³⁶ While before the April incidents Taylor had publicly opposed full disarmament and said, in contravention of the Abuja accord, that this should follow rather than precede elections,¹³⁷ he now committed himself to partial disarmament in order to avoid censure by his rivals, ECOMOG and Liberian citizens.¹³⁸ Moreover, the territorial losses that Taylor had suffered in 1993-1994 had made him realize that he would never win by force of arms.¹³⁹ While he had grown substantially stronger by 1996, the April incidents merely underlined, to Taylor and all factions, the impossibility of getting a definite upper hand by violence. The militias withdrew from central Monrovia, though were believed to have arranged secret arms caches, as well as stationed militia personnel, inside the city limits for possible use in the future.¹⁴⁰ With the new ECOMOG Field Commander embarking on the process of disarmament, in part to restore ECOMOG's credibility in the eyes of the citizenry, all warlords were now eager to show a degree of compliance through acts of partial or symbolic disarmament.¹⁴¹

Whether or not ECOMOG itself was committed to completely disarming Liberia's factions,¹⁴² in any case it was hardly in the position to effect the process across the country's territory. By November it still did not have more than a token presence outside Monrovia. Thus most factions were jockeying for position for the prospective elections by trying to gain control of people and territory. Naturally, fighting erupted.¹⁴³ As ULIMO-K had handed over substantial amounts of weaponry to ECOMOG it lost territory to ULIMO-J. The NPFL, however, gained more than any other factions, pushing them back and regaining much

132 Riley and Sesay, 'Liberia: After Abuja', p. 436.

133 Interview with Amos Sawyer, Saly, Senegal, 16 October 1998 and 'Liberia: Out of Control'.

134 The revised Abuja accord was signed by all the parties to the first agreement. Text in *Accord: An International Review of Peace Initiatives*, issue 1, 1996, pp. 68-69.

135 Sesay, 'Politics and Society in Post-War Liberia', p. 405.

136 Riley and Sesay, 'Liberia: After Abuja', p. 436; interview with Roger Laloupo, Abuja, 22 September 1998; and 'Liberia: Out of Control'. The Security Council also issued veiled threats of UN withdrawal. See S/RES/1059, 31/5/96 and S/RES/1071, 30/8/96.

137 In an apparent show of self-confidence he had even gone so far as to suggest that ECOMOG should be brought under Council control and its presence in Liberia subject to the latter's approval. Riley and Sesay, 'Liberia: After Abuja', p. 434.

138 Sesay, 'Bringing Peace to Liberia', p. 78.

139 Riley and Sesay, 'Liberia: After Abuja', p. 430.

140 *Accord: An International Review of Peace Initiatives*, issue 1, 1996, p. 102.

141 Interview with Amos Sawyer, Saly, Senegal, 16 October 1998.

142 According to Sawyer this commitment was half-hearted. To him the revised Abuja accord amounted to a 'washing of hands' as it spoke of 'safe havens' rather than disarmament, suggesting that elections could be held without complete disarmament, ECOMOG's victory declared and its contingents withdrawn. Interview with author, Saly, Senegal, 16 October 1998.

143 As shown in the previous chapter, during the summer it had even spilled over into Ivory Coast and Guinea.

territory lost before ('Operation Grasshopper'¹⁴⁴): the LPC, in particular, lost much ground in the south-east to the advantage of Taylor's forces.¹⁴⁵ Several of these cease-fire violations were, moreover, accompanied by serious human rights abuses.¹⁴⁶

A meeting of the Committee of Nine in Monrovia noted, not without hypocrisy, the need to restructure the armed forces and to defactionalize the police, some of whose infamous units were now under NPFL control.¹⁴⁷ The interim administration, as whole, however, was made up of factional representatives, including the elections commission.¹⁴⁸ The warring groups were therefore determined to get ready for the polls, in the process transforming their factions into 'political parties'. Although the United States wanted postponement of the elections, it did not push the issue.¹⁴⁹ With West African governments wishing to end their Liberian involvement, the process continued. While the militias gave up most of their weaponry to ECOMOG, compliance with and checks of disarmament became less onerous.¹⁵⁰ By the spring of 1997 political observers noted that both Nigeria and Ghana, the principal powers in ECOMOG, would not feel uncomfortable with a Taylor victory.¹⁵¹ Thus in July 1997, with a delay of two months, presidential and legislative elections went ahead, though not with complete disarmament and a demobilization rate of only forty per cent.¹⁵²

'He killed my Ma, he killed my Pa, but I will vote for him': Elections, Aftermath and the Durability of the Peace

On 19 July 1997 Charles Taylor scored a resounding victory when he was elected President by over 75% of the Liberian electorate, of which more than eighty per cent had turned out to vote. Also with over 75% of the votes, Taylor's new party, the 'National Patriotic Party' (NPP), obtained 49 of the 64 seats in the lower house and 21 of the 26 seats in the senate.¹⁵³ The conduct of the polls took place in the presence of ECOMOG personnel, as well as of representatives of all the new political parties. International observers involving, among others, the ECOWAS Observer Group established some years before, UNOMIL, the

144 C.E. Zamba Liberty, 'Butuo: A Lilliputian Testament to a Struggle – The NPFL Journey to State Power: How Charles Taylor Upset the Bowl of Rice and Took Home the Whole Hog', in *Liberian Studies Journal*, 1998, no. 1, pp. 169 and 194.

145 Perhaps this caused the shooting incidents inside the Presidential Mansion in Monrovia on 31 October, involving bodyguards of the NPFL, LPC and possibly others. See 'Liberia: Shooting in the mansion', in *Africa Confidential*, 15/11/96 and Briefing Paper on Developments in the Liberian Peace Process; August-November, 1996 (Information Department of the Justice and Peace Commission, National Catholic Secretariat: Monrovia, 14 November 1996).

146 See a Justice and Peace Commission's paper by S.K. Woods, dated 7 November 1996.

147 Briefing Paper on Developments in the Liberian Peace Process.

148 *Ibid.* However, 3 of the 9 members of the Independent Elections Commission were international representatives of ECOWAS, the OAU and the UN. *Le Bulletin de l'Ouest Africain* (note 20, chapter 3), no. 5, November 1997, p. 25.

149 Interview with Amos Sawyer, Saly, Senegal, 16 October 1998. See for US indifference to the planned elections *Africa Confidential*, 20/6/97.

150 *Africa Confidential*, 28/3/97 and 21/11/97.

151 *Africa Confidential*, 28/3/97.

152 Interview with Amos Sawyer, Saly, Senegal, 16 October 1998. The ECOMOG Field Commander confirmed the figure of demobilization in an interview with the Director of Information of the ECOWAS Executive Secretariat, Adrienne Diop. See *Le Bulletin de l'Ouest Africain*, no. 5, November 1997, p. 18.

153 Figures in *New African*, December 1997, pp. 10-11 (source: Independent Elections Commission, Monrovia) and *Le Bulletin de l'Ouest Africain*, no. 5, November 1997, p. 16.

OAU and the Carter Center, judged the plebiscite to have been free and fair, thus confirming the claim of the Liberian Elections Commission.¹⁵⁴

The outcome shocked many. Among the reasons for Taylor's victory many observers cited fear. Taylor had openly campaigned with the slogan that he had started the war and was the only one who could end it. Most Liberians were desperately tired and scared of a largely unmobilized NPFL. Ever since the December 1995 incidents – but especially since Operation Pay Yourself in April 1996 – they had only limited confidence in ECOMOG's ability and willingness to guarantee their security.¹⁵⁵ People realized that if they did not vote for the NPP Taylor would, like a West African Savimbi,¹⁵⁶ resume his struggle for the Presidency by force of arms. Being war weary, the electorate wished to prevent this at all costs – including voting into power the man who more than anyone had been responsible for the horrors poured over the Liberian people.¹⁵⁷

Yet one could also point to the fact that the NPFL/NPP still had most of its command structures in place and could use its abundant resources – far greater than those of other parties/factions – to *buy* votes. One should realize that Taylor, who spread around his largesse during the election campaign, could draw on the support of angry, disaffected youths, especially Manos and Gios from the rural areas whose social frustrations had formed the backbone of Taylor's insurgency.¹⁵⁸ Members of the Elections Commission also argued that, while the people of the NPFL 'were no saints', some of the other factions had been even worse.¹⁵⁹ Indeed, some observers argue that the professional way in which the NPFL had been running Taylorland's economy and infrastructure in the preceding years could be interpreted as an attempt to develop future electoral support.¹⁶⁰ Thus 'he killed my Ma, he killed my Pa, but I will vote for him' constituted the graphically worded reflection of voters to let the NPFL leader realize his political ambition.¹⁶¹

However, while the Elections Commission emphatically denied that there had been intimidation, pointing out that no one had filed complaints or contested the election results,¹⁶² there were definitely reports of coercion on the part of Taylor's men. To this purpose the NPFL leader had the benefit of command structures which reached right into the community.¹⁶³ In contrast, other factions had progressively weakened and splintered. ECOMOG, for that matter, was neither willing nor able to prevent a Taylor

154 *Ibid.* and *Jeune Afrique*, 30/7-5/8/97.

155 Interview with Amos Sawyer, Saly, Senegal, 16 October 1998.

156 See for the comparison Sesay, 'Politics and Society in Post-War Liberia', p. 411.

157 Interview with Counsellor Alexander Zoe, Saly, Senegal, 14 October 1998. For the factor of war weariness also *Le Bulletin de l'Ouest Africain*, no. 5, November 1997, p. 18, which quotes an old woman interviewed at a polling booth.

158 Ironically though, the victory of Taylor, whose father was a black American, also signalled a relative comeback for the Americo-Liberians who had ruled Liberia until 1980. *Africa Confidential*, 1/8/97.

159 *New African*, December 1997, pp. 10-11.

160 Prkic, 'Privatisation du pouvoir et guerre civile', p. 18.

161 *New African*, December 1997, p. 11. According to Zamba Liberty ('Butuo: A Lilliputian Testament to a Struggle', pp. 175-176) this was a political refrain articulated by common Liberians at the time of the elections. He attributes a pro-Taylor and anti-establishment meaning to it. In his version the refrain commences as follows:

'They say, You killed my Ma
They say, You killed my Pa ...
But I will still vote for you!'

162 *New African*, December 1997, pp. 10-11.

163 Interviews with Counsellor Alexander Zoe and Amos Sawyer, Saly, Senegal, 14 and 16 October 1998 respectively.

victory. Thwarting his rise to power would have eliminated its exit strategy, while ECOMOG's presence across Liberia was limited and shallow,¹⁶⁴ among others because of a paucity of funds.¹⁶⁵

Thus, on 2 August 1997 Charles Taylor was installed as President of Liberia.¹⁶⁶ Hardly a month later the ECOWAS Authority lifted the economic and military sanctions imposed in 1992, adding the hollow phrase that democracy and peace had been restored.¹⁶⁷ At the same time, however, the ECOWAS summit decided that it was necessary to maintain an ECOMOG presence in Liberia in order to consolidate the peace. Its mandate would be prolonged 'at the request' of the Liberian government and in accordance with an agreement to be reached between the two parties.¹⁶⁸

While beyond the scope of this study, it is necessary to say a few words about the solidity of the Liberian peace as it puts into sharper relief the nature of the outcome effected by regional intervention. Despite the fact that ECOMOG was supposed to help restructure the armed forces and police,¹⁶⁹ by the end of 1998 not much headway had been made with this. On the contrary, during his first year in office President Taylor proceeded to rearm his loyalists and get his supporters into both the police and the army. The presence of NPP/NPFL men in the army and para-military forces is now overwhelming – in clear contravention of the Abuja accords.¹⁷⁰

The police and various other agencies with security duties were progressively militarized and equipped with heavy weapons such as high-powered rifles and rocket-propelled grenades.¹⁷¹ The capital was not only saturated with untrained former guerrillas who were given formal police duties but also had to cope with numerous ex fighters who had to fend for themselves, roaming the streets and engaging in criminal activities. In an effort to combat the increase in crime the infamous Director of Police, Joe Tate, introduced a shoot-to-kill campaign. These controversial tactics also served as a cover for government attempts to persecute Taylor's enemies. Both in 1997 and 1998 numerous incidents took place involving serious violations of human rights by the police, notably the Special Security Service (SSS). Journalists and human rights activists were frequently harassed, several of whom sought asylum abroad. Ordinary citizens have also been the victim of intimidation and extortion by poorly paid police. Political rivals of the President were specifically targeted by the government's security apparatus. Thus, in November 1997 a former Taylor loyalist and his family were arrested and murdered by the SSS, a move which did not go down well with the international community. In January 1998 a former ULIMO-J commander was killed by the police, who claimed he was one of a group of armed robbers resisting arrest. Later in the year several people associated with the leader of ULIMO-J were reported missing.¹⁷²

By his own admission, Taylor's first year in office was a failure. This was conveniently attributed to the refusal of the international community to come to the country's aid.¹⁷³ Amidst the many signs of instability

164 By the spring of 1997 it had some 10,000 troops at its disposal. Besides the old troop contributing countries, Burkina, Benin, Ivory Coast, Niger and Mali also sent contingents. *Africa Research Bulletin* (PSC), 1997, p. 12655.

165 Thus, the USA was reticent in following up on aid pledges. *Africa Confidential*, 10/5/96.

166 *Le Bulletin de l'Ouest Africain*, no. 5, November 1997, p. 9.

167 Decision A/Dec.11/8/97.

168 *Le Bulletin de l'Ouest Africain*, no. 5, November 1997, p. 12.

169 See interview with the ECOMOG Field Commander by the Director of Information of the ECOWAS Executive Secretariat, Adrienne Diop, in *Le Bulletin de l'Ouest Africain*, no. 5, November 1997, p. 19.

170 'Taylor's One Year in Review: All Promises, No Substance', in *The Perspective* (via Africa News Online), 6 October 1998.

171 A.W. Williams, 'A Crisis of National Security', in *The Perspective*, 6 October 1998 (via Africa News Online) and interview with Amos Sawyer, Saly, Senegal, 16 October 1998.

172 Williams, 'Crisis of National Security'.

173 'Taylor's One Year in Review: All Promises, No Substance'.

international financial institutions have, indeed, been reticent in providing funds.¹⁷⁴ Thus, by the end of 1998 the international airport was not yet operating and electricity and water supply were still in a state of disrepair. However, Taylor's regime spends considerable funds on security and its factionalized ranks are alleged to be involved in various corrupt practices. The wealth of the President himself is reported to run in the millions of dollars.¹⁷⁵

Viewed against the background of Liberia's predatory political economy¹⁷⁶ stability is still questionable, quite apart from the negative effects emanating from the continuing crisis in neighbouring Sierra Leone.¹⁷⁷ Taylor has surrounded himself with numerous (para-)military personnel responsible solely for Presidential security. His residential compounds were fortified and are guarded by the 240 strong 'Executive Mansion Special Security Unit' (EMSSU) of the SSS. Even a Presidential escape route was reportedly created to the ECOMOG base on Bushrod Island.¹⁷⁸ By the spring of 1998 Taylor began accusing his (former) rivals of plotting to overthrow his administration. In March fighting erupted between government forces and supporters of Roosevelt Johnson, probably as Taylor tried to provoke his rival to break the law as a pretext for his arrest. Troops of ECOMOG intervened to bring the situation under control.¹⁷⁹ In September this scenario repeated itself, although this time hostilities escalated. Three days of fighting led hundreds of Monrovia to flee the capital. More than fifty, some say three hundred, people died in the fighting, in the course of which Johnson took refuge in the compound of the American embassy. In the end Liberia and the United States reached an agreement which made it possible for Johnson to be airlifted out of the country,¹⁸⁰ *en route* to exile in Nigeria. The events were concluded with a trial in which the government had 32 persons, including Johnson and another exiled rival – Alhaji Kromah – indicted on charges of treason.¹⁸¹

ECOMOG troops were not involved in the violent exchanges. They should have left the country by February 1998 anyway, as their mandate expired six months after Taylor's inauguration. Yet, lack of progress on disarmament led ECOMOG, albeit at a reduced size, to continue manning checkpoints in Monrovia, together with Liberian police, and conducting arms searches. There were even plans, according to accusations from Taylor's defence ministry, to send in additional contingents from Guinea.¹⁸² Taylor first opposed the continued presence of ECOMOG but after the ECOWAS summit in October 1998 announced that he had requested the intervention force to stay on¹⁸³ – of his own accord or under pressure from his West African colleagues. However, most ECOMOG troops had meanwhile been relocated to Freetown. In an effort to cope with the escalating crisis in Sierra Leone, in which Taylor's regime is

174 *Africa Research Bulletin* (Economic, Financial and Technical Series), 1998, p. 13606 and interview with Amos Sawyer, Saly, Senegal, 16 October 1998.

175 'Taylor's One Year in Review: All Promises, No Substance' and 'In Taylor's Liberia, Thieves Are Thriving And So Is Corruption', in *The Perspective*, 6 October 1998 (via Africa News Online).

176 By the autumn of 1998 there were still reports coming in about continued practices of forced labour in the south-east of the country. *Ibid.*

177 See, for example, the report of Star Radio: Liberian Daily News Bulletin, 8/10/98.

178 Williams, 'Crisis of National Security'.

179 *Ibid.*

180 See *The Guardian* (Nigeria), 21, 23, 24 and 26/9/98. Also Star Radio: Liberian Daily News Bulletin 22/10/98 and Liberian Democratic Future, 20/10/98 (both via Africa News Online).

181 See the reports of the Pan-African News Agency, 9/10/98 and 29/10/98. According to another PANA report (10/12/98) the government also tried to get Prince Johnson of the former INPFL extradited from Nigeria to face treason charges. By the end of the year the trial had not yet been concluded. See Star Radio: Liberian Daily News Bulletin, 30/12/98.

182 See the report of Star Radio: Liberian Daily News Bulletin, 30/7/98; the report of the Pan-African News Agency of 31/7/98; and *Africa Research Bulletin* (PSC), 1998, p. 13209.

183 Star Radio: Liberian Daily News Bulletin, 2/11/98.

assisting the rebel/ex-junta side,¹⁸⁴ the intervention force there had grown, in January 1999, to a record seventeen thousand men.¹⁸⁵ In Liberia Taylor was, by that time, still on top.

184 See *Concord Times* (via Africa News Online), 14, 16 and 30/12/98.

185 Star Radio: Liberian Daily News Bulletin, 20/10/98 and 2/1/99.

6 Conclusions

Factors that Conditioned Success and Failure

An analysis of the strengths and weaknesses of ECOMOG's performance in Liberia would focus mainly on the limitations of the operation. On the positive side one may conclude that ECOMOG managed to keep some degree of peace and normality in the capital. In this respect it should be noted that many Monrovia residents were, in spite of the intervention force's many failings, grateful to ECOMOG for their salvation from the murderous militias.¹

Yet, the concept of 'success' was put under considerable pressure by the outcome of its intervention. Firstly, it led precisely to what the intervening countries had initially sought to prevent, the coming to power of Charles Taylor. The argument that ECOMOG only opposed his rise to the Presidency by the barrel of the gun, rather than as such, began to wear thin in the course of the war, when the intervention force did everything to oppose Taylor's ambitions, the provision of military assistance to other violent actors included. Moreover, in its bid to find a way out it acquiesced and connived in the militarization of the capital, as well as of the country's administration. In the run-up to the elections it did, but also could, not push the issue of disarmament and demobilization. The result was a thoroughly factionalized regime standing at the helm of a militarized state and society and a predatory economy which, though now more or less formalized, was left by and large intact. The West African 'solution' to the Liberian crisis thus amounted to an exit strategy leading to a shaky peace: a Pyrrhic victory for West Africa and Liberia, if not for its main political entrepreneur-millionaire.

While it is dangerous, and by definition impossible, to prove what would have happened if ECOMOG had *not* intervened, it is clear that its actions helped to protract, rather than end, the war. First of all, ECOMOG opposed the actor over which it had the least influence and which was the predominant military power in the country. Thus, from the outset it was obvious that military action against the NPFL would be difficult. Moreover, while the proliferation of militias was ingrained in the ethno-political factionalism of Liberian war and politics, the NPFL remained, despite some splintering, a resilient force. Even if this is a conclusion with the benefit of hindsight, the tendency of ECOMOG to aid rival factions amounted to shortsighted and counterproductive tactics. It could help to halt Taylor's politico-military advance, yet also reinforced the dynamics of factionalism and thus made it harder to restore peace. Most West African governments with client forces in the Liberian theatre were, at one time or another, confronted with activities of factions which went against the wishes of their patrons.

The preferential treatment of groups representing civil society delayed dealing with those Liberians who really mattered – the boys and men with guns. Moreover, the unarmed political class of Monrovia and civil society at large were progressively marginalized. They depended on ECOMOG to obtain a say in the

1 See for some positive remarks on ECOMOG, for example, 'Liberia: Out of Control' (n. 124, ch. 5). See also *West Africa*, 16-22/6/97 for a photo of a group of Liberians demonstrating for ECOMOG to stay on. One ironical result of ECOMOG's intervention was the fathering, by ECOMOG soldiers, of an estimated 25,000 children, half of them, it is believed, by the Nigerian contingent. See *The Guardian* (Nigeria), 22/9/98, citing the coordinator of the charity 'ECOMOG Children Project'.

settlement process, yet, paradoxically, ECOMOG's intervention also diminished their influence. Internal divisions further weakened their impact.

Against the background of Liberia's war economy it was a serious mistake that the embargo of ECOWAS came into force only by the end of 1992, *i.e.* after two full years of hostilities. Matters were not improved by the fact that the Security Council only imposed military, and no economic, sanctions. Moreover, it took some time before ECOMOG decided to occupy the port of Buchanan (May 1993), which was an important trade hub for the NPFL. Neither Western companies nor countries in the region, such as Ivory Coast and Guinea, were punished for their role in the extraction of Liberia's resources. Profiteering could thus continue unhindered and, as the life-line of the warring factions was left intact, the war could go on.

Furthermore, in a conflict marked by a war economy third party actors need considerable resources to acquire leverage over the belligerents. Taylor's ambition to become President could have given ECOMOG some influence over the NPFL, but as its leader was for long unsure whether he could win at the polls, this potential leverage eluded the intervening powers. That ECOMOG itself was not immune from the developing war economy and formed one of the actors in the conflict, rather than a neutral third party, practically eliminated its mediatory potential.

Naturally, the belated acknowledgement of the warlords generated a serious moral dilemma. While it is difficult to see how this could have been circumvented, the provisions and implementation of the Abuja accords went rather far in the concessions to the warring factions. If Akosombo and Abuja constituted a justifiable recognition of the military power of the warlords one may wonder, for example, whether the militarization of the capital could not have been prevented. Also, the way in which the intervening countries aided in the distribution of Liberia's political spoils has few parallels elsewhere in Africa, although under the circumstances this could, perhaps, not be avoided. Significantly, West African governments were prepared to help in the erection of a factionalized administration, but were sanctimonious about the consequences of the settlement. One of these consequences was the establishment of a regime whose political stability has so far been highly questionable.

ECOMOG was large enough to hold Monrovia and environs but not much else. In view of this, and in its defence, one could argue that appeasement of the factions was the best option available, especially as not all West African governments supported intervention. That countries like Burkina and Ivory Coast could work against ECOMOG's operation with impunity was a mistake. However, any attempt to make them pay would probably have gone beyond ECOWAS powers.

Incomplete funding also hindered ECOMOG. More generally, regional intervention constituted a symptom of marginalization, as the United States declined to intervene itself and restricted its role to the provision of military, diplomatic and some financial support. The UN never took an explicit stand on ECOMOG's appropriation of enforcement powers and limited itself to applauding (most of) its actions. UNOMIL was too small to make an independent impact and was, in practice, wholly dependent on ECOMOG.

There are several reasons why the Abuja accords, in contrast to the preceding cease-fires, finally led to an end to hostilities. By 1996-97 war weariness began to set in, not only among the population but also among the factions. These saw, especially after the April 1996 incidents, that they would never be able to win by military means. They were strong enough to deny each other a definitive victory but too weak to break the deadlock on the battlefield. Moreover, by 1997 the principal warlord, Taylor, had recovered from the military setbacks he had suffered between 1992 and 1994. As ECOMOG's shallow presence allowed him to further reinforce his position on the ground he could fight the elections from a position of strength.

In addition, West African countries and the international community at large threatened to abandon the country and let Liberians fend for themselves. To the factions the risk that they might follow the path of Somali warlords and be denied access to external aid and recognition constituted an incentive to try and

realize their political ambitions by non-violent means. Even in the context of Liberia's war economy continuation of hostilities would have meant unacceptable damage to the politico-economic assets they were pursuing.

The reversal of West Africa's strategic alliances was a *sine qua non* for the success of Abuja. Abacha's rise to power paved the way for a French-Nigerian rapprochement which, in turn, led to a closer convergence of views between the region's principal adversaries over the Liberian issue, Nigeria, Ivory Coast and Burkina. The fall and demise of Babangida and Houphouët-Boigny respectively, as well as the latter's and Rawling's inability to steer developments as they saw fit, allowed Abacha to try his hand. Yet, ECOMOG's intervention could only be concluded with a peace agreement once its participants were ready to shift their focus to the warlords and, indeed, negotiate with the country's *enfant terrible*: even though Taylor was considerably weakened in the middle years of the war, militarily both the war and regional intervention were deadlocked.

ECOMOG and Implications for Theory

Hegemony

Discussions about ECOMOG have often generated heated debate.² The intervention force has had critics and defenders and both negative and positive evaluations have seen the light of day.³ Sometimes it seems as if this is caused by a difference in mentality among the observers themselves, who can be characterized as optimists and pessimists. Yet on reflection, one of the key issues is not the mental properties of the observer but that some analysts argue that, as long as intervention leads to settlement or reduction of conflict, one should not dwell too much on its imperfections.⁴

The argument that the goal justifies the means sometimes figures in Western assessments of interventions. This cannot be seen in isolation from the greater acceptance in the political culture of Western international relations of hegemony. In African international politics claims to such hegemony are, however, often disputed, both at the continental and regional levels.⁵ While the rejection by several West African states of Nigeria's claim to regional leadership⁶ in part accounts for its failure to eliminate the NPFL, its own actions and behaviour through ECOMOG also threw doubt on the nature and effectiveness of its leadership.

On the positive side one could point to its decision, in 1990, to follow the advice of other countries not to intervene unilaterally but in the cadre of ECOWAS. Moreover, Nigeria also allowed Ghana, albeit for a short while, to provide the Force Commander and it persuaded the Ghanaians, in 1994, to accept the

2 The author of this study has himself been witness to this at numerous occasions, including a conference on conflict prevention in Africa in Helsinki, December 1998, and the joint CODESRIA-Clingendael conference on the causes of conflict and practices of conflict prevention in West Africa, Senegal, October 1998.

3 An example of a damning assessment is Howe, 'Lessons of Liberia'. A positive assessment is Adeleke, 'The Politics and Diplomacy of Peacekeeping in West Africa' (n. 13, ch. 3), pp. 507-509.

4 An example of this was provided by the Netherlands Ambassador to Nigeria, Mr Bastiaan Körner, in a conversation with author, Lagos, 25 September 1998.

5 Generally, Van Walraven, *Dreams of Power*.

6 Nigerian leadership is also discussed in E. Nwokedi, 'Le myth d'un leadership nigérian dans les relations inter-africains', in *Etudes internationales* (Quebec), 1991, pp. 357-368.

presidency of the ECOWAS Authority instead of claiming the chairmanship itself.⁷ In this way it enabled others to play a role in the intervention and it employed a more refined mix of instruments than mere coercion to affect the situation in Liberia.

This is in line with the theoretical prerequisites of hegemonic leadership which, in regional settings, require the creation of consensus around norms that legitimize the hegemon's dominance and interests. The hegemon is not supposed to resort to force if it can realize its objectives through other means.⁸ While prepared to violate the rights of others, it will not always disregard them.⁹ Regional hegemony is not a static form of interaction but allows for various forms of influence, for which the hegemon must have at its command economic, military and diplomatic capabilities, besides the crucial ingredient of legitimacy.¹⁰ It thus conforms to Gramsci's concept of hegemony, which revolves around the consensual basis of a political system in contrast to coercive domination.¹¹ In short, hegemony is about *subtlety* in the use of power.¹²

In this respect one must point out, on the negative side, that in 1994 Nigeria was hardly in the position to claim the ECOWAS presidency, both because of the situation in Liberia and domestic preoccupations. More importantly, when it faced a political and military impasse in Liberia, it could not prevent other states – Ivory Coast, Benin, Ghana – from taking diplomatic initiatives, even if these steps (like Ivory Coast's) went squarely against its interests. It could not even stop the openly obstructive activities of a minor regional actor as Burkina Faso. The posture of countries like Burkina and Ivory Coast graphically exposed the absence of a normative consensus about Nigeria's efforts to defend its strategic, economic and security interests in Liberia. In so far as Nigeria was incapable – or unwilling – to force a military breakthrough, one can even cast doubt on the efficacy of the more robust ingredients in its hegemonic position. Furthermore, as Nigeria was intent on thwarting a victory of one particular actor and to this purpose assisted rival factions and connived in the proliferation of warring groups, while members of the Nigerian contingent engaged in profiteering, it was hardly distinguishable from those state and factional actors that it was supposed to lead.

Thus, the nature of its intervention rationale and the instruments employed to implement it exposed that Nigerian leadership amounted, at best, to domination and not to hegemony. This detracted substantially from the effectiveness of the operation. Two conclusions can be drawn from this, one specifically for the situation in West Africa and one for interventions in conflicts generally. Firstly, more effective regional intervention in some of the region's conflicts depends ultimately, though not entirely, on the nature and

7 Also, Mortimer claims that in 1991-1992 Nigeria, rather than being forced by the circumstances to cede the diplomatic initiative to Ivory Coast and later Benin, 'allowed' these countries to develop their diplomatic manoeuvres, thereby allaying concerns about its dominant/hegemonic role in the intervention. See R.A. Mortimer, 'ECOMOG, Liberia, and Regional Security in West Africa', in E.J. Keller and D. Rothchild (eds), *Africa in the New International Order: Rethinking State Sovereignty and Regional Security* (Boulder, 1996), pp. 149-164.

8 For Nigeria in West Africa this was aptly underlined by M. Ben Arrous and S. Wade, *L'Afrique de l'Ouest en transaction géopolitique: espaces, acteurs, conflits*'; draft paper for the CODESRIA – OXFAM UK Conference on Geopolitics, Conflicts and Domestic Economies in West Africa, Dakar, 28-29 September 1998, p. 27: 'Etre le "gendarme" de la sous région doit donc signifier, se donner le droit d'intervenir ou de laisser pourrir des situations: le pouvoir de ne pas user de son pouvoir.'

9 Lemarchand, 'On Comparing Regional Hegemons' (n. 43, chapter 5), p. 169.

10 R. Iyob, 'Regional Hegemony: Domination and Resistance in the Horn of Africa', in *Journal of Modern African Studies*, 1993, pp. 257-276.

11 See W.L. Adamson, *Hegemony and Revolution: A Study of Antonio Gramsci's Political and Cultural Theory* (Berkeley, Los Angeles and London, 1980), ch. 6.

12 Even if the legitimacy of such leadership amounts to no more than acquiescence by the dominated in the inevitable. See on this Van Walraven, *Dreams of Power*, which borrows from J.C. Scott, *Domination and the Arts of Resistance: Hidden Transcripts* (New Haven and London, 1990), pp 70-76.

quality of the leadership and political system of the intervening state itself. One cannot isolate foreign operations from the domestic political order and its attendant weaknesses, since regional leadership without domestic legitimacy will quickly degenerate into ineffective bullying by a domineering, and not a hegemonic, state.¹³ Secondly, in all cases of intervention in conflicts one needs to evaluate the rationales and instruments of intervention, as these will impinge directly on the efficacy and outcome of the operation. Motives, means and ends are thus inseparable.

The Shadow State: An International Dimension?

The Liberian civil war, while internationalized from the start, also represented a West African crisis acting itself out in the Liberian venue.¹⁴ The degree to which ECOMOG, driven by motives and interests other than conflict resolution *per se*, was a party in the crisis and thereby complicated and prolonged the conflict, may serve as an important correction to the more classical analyses of crisis intervention dominant in the West. These often view forms of multilateral intervention solely from the problem-solving perspective. This in turn is related to, what might be called, the instrumental bias of international institutions. Stemming from the process of growing interdependence in the Western world international organizations were meant to improve communication, tackle common problems and achieve practical goals. This resulted in an analytical framework in which the role of international institutions is rarely analysed in terms of their capacity to *create* and *augment* problems, or as at the core of the conflict itself. In contrast, in the African context one looks at states, not as they function in the West but as entities which are at the core of many problems, and as structures that often represent narrow group interests at the expense of other strata in society. By the same token, Africa's inter-state institutions can be analysed in terms of the narrow, social – elite or even strictly personal – interests as these manifest themselves at the sub-state level.¹⁵ The existence of international organizations in Africa thus has reasons which may differ from those which were at the origins of such institutions in the West. Part of this is due to the effects of 'cognitive scripts', *i.e.* the tendency of organizations or regions to copy the behaviour of other institutions or countries as the accepted way of doing things. However, in disconnecting behaviour from norms and separating output from institutions,¹⁶ African international organizations may sometimes have another paradigm at heart and function in ways not immediately obvious to outside observers. Thus in order to understand such institutions and their activities, such as forms of multilateral intervention like ECOMOG, it is necessary to explore new theoretical frameworks.¹⁷

One might in this respect borrow from the theoretical approach underpinning the concept of 'shadow state'.¹⁸ This refers to a personalized or privatized form of governance in which state institutions function as a façade, which hides from view the real principles and sources of political power. The state does not function on the basis of generally accepted principles of legitimacy or governmental institutions but

13 G.M. Khadiagala, 'Prospects for a Division of Labour: African Regional Organizations in Conflict Prevention', in Van Walraven, *Early Warning and Conflict Prevention* (n. 14, chapter 3), p. 139.

14 Sawyer, 'Elements of an Institutional Approach to Conflict Prevention, Management and Resolution in Africa: Keynote Address' (n. 30, chapter 4).

15 Van Walraven, 'Privatization of Violence in Africa' (n. 10, chapter 4).

16 See K. van Walraven, 'Conclusions', in *ibid.*, *Early Warning and Conflict Prevention*, pp. 172-173, outlining ideas of S.J. Stedman.

17 This approach is followed in Van Walraven, *Dreams of Power*, in which political psychology forms a central part of the interpretative framework.

18 This concept was launched and elaborated by W. Reno, *Corruption and State Politics in Sierra Leone* (Cambridge, 1995), especially pp. 9-27. Also Bayart, Ellis and Hibou, 'De l'Etat kleptocrate à l'Etat Malfaitteur?' (n. 139, ch. 4), pp. 42-43.

through the control over informal economic activities that are marked by varying degrees of legality and illegality.¹⁹ Control of formal state authority is only an additional instrument or source of power as it affords the political leader or, rather, political entrepreneur, a semblance of legitimacy and international recognition and, thus, access to foreign aid. Yet the institutions of state may also represent a threat to the political leader as they are a potential source of political rivals. Since his political basis is derived mainly from the control over informal markets, this may induce the political entrepreneur to undermine, instead of strengthen, these state institutions. The weakening of the state, instead of a dysfunctional development, becomes the product of deliberate and conscious political decisions.

By extension one could argue that ECOMOG served, or also served, as an instrument for the defence of certain particular elite and personal interests – rather than as an institution for the neutral and impartial mediation of a savage civil war, for the greater good of Liberia and the region.

Thus, for Nigeria the deployment of ECOMOG was meant to defend its leadership interests, in which strictly personal considerations in the form of personal and business ties with the embattled Samuel Doe played an important role. After the demise of Doe ECOMOG continued to be driven by the Nigerian grudge against Taylor, whose regional alliance constituted a threat to Nigeria's economic and strategic interests. Moreover, once the war got bogged down, ECOMOG's dominant contingent itself engaged in the pursuit of personal economic interests while it allowed other state and factional actors to do the same. Personal grudges against the NPFL leader also considerably influenced Guinea-Conakry, while ECOMOG was also meant to target Taylor because his militias of disaffected youngsters posed a potential threat to the security of incumbent elites. Thus as a partisan actor in the conflict, ECOMOG engaged Taylor with force and attempted to halt or eliminate him by establishing, arming and aiding rival factions. Conversely, when it became clear to the Nigerians that they would not be able to rid Liberia of Taylor, ECOMOG began to accommodate his interests, allowing him to strengthen his position and even aiding the NPFL in its struggle against other factions. While the intervention had begun in a partisan way, it also ended as such. ECOMOG was never conceived by its prime mover as a neutral third party intervener.

In the vein of the shadow state approach one could therefore argue that conflict masqueraded as conflict resolution, as private or narrowly constituted group interests were pursued under the guise of multilateralism. These real objectives were hidden behind a façade of formality made up of official motivations laid down in SMC resolutions and the public pronouncements of the participant states. In order to pursue these objectives ECOMOG was deployed outside the constraints of existing protocols and the purview of multilateral institutions of control. It had to be, and actually was, grounded in *ad hoc* decisions and dominated and directed by the Nigerian military, equipped with a broadly phrased mandate allowing for all possible contingencies.²⁰

While this alternative interpretation may provide a better understanding of ECOMOG's intervention in Liberia, a caveat is nevertheless in order. Firstly, as was mentioned in chapter 4, third party or external interventions in (domestic) conflicts may take place for more reasons than one, especially if intervention is to some extent multilateralized. It would therefore be a simplification to argue that ECOMOG was *only* an instrument to pursue the private interests of small groups of military and political leaders. Secondly, the intervention force did save the lives of thousands of Monroviaans. It often, though not always, afforded its protection – however disfigured by bullying and extortion – to desperate civilians. Thirdly, the only regional actor more or less capable of leading and undertaking an intervention operation on the size of ECOMOG was Nigeria. Its leadership was therefore not perforce evidence of a more or less privatized objective.

19 See for this also S. Ellis and J. MacGaffey, 'Research on Sub-Saharan Africa's Unrecorded International Trade: Some Methodological and Conceptual Problems', in *African Studies Review*, 1996, no. 2, pp. 19-41.

20 See also Van Walraven, 'Privatization of Violence in Africa'.

Finally, in interpreting the intervention in Liberia one should deconstruct ECOWAS and its member states, as well as ECOMOG and its contingents, in terms of their component institutions, forces, persons and interest groups. Thus, while many of Nigeria's military are often guilty of less-than-professional conduct, it would go too far to portray all members of this institution as incompetent, corrupt and solely intent on personal enrichment at whatever public cost. In a country which during most of its independence has been ruled by the military, the armed forces also attract ambitious and intelligent people keen on professional careers. In that limited respect the intervention in Liberia does perhaps not differ from cases of intervention undertaken in other regions and contexts.

ECOMOG and Implications for Policy

In view of ECOMOG's controversial record it is easy to vilify this institution. However, this does not bring us very far, as the signs are that ECOMOG, for better or for worse, will continue to be part of West Africa's security landscape.²¹ Thus, by January 1999 ECOMOG's expanded forces in Sierra Leone were confronted with a rebel invasion of Freetown, while a smaller contingent had already taken up position in the capital of Guinea-Bissau as part of the implementation of a cease-fire agreement there between the government and rebel soldiers. Moreover, in October 1998 the ECOWAS Authority gave formal approval to a far-reaching proposal to reform the organization's mandate, structures and strategies in the field of conflict management.²² This would, among others, lead to the establishment of a Mediation and Security Council with responsibility for peace and security issues, and the formation, inside the Executive Secretariat, of departments for political affairs, security and peace-keeping operations. ECOWAS would also get information bureaus inside member states, with a mandate to collect data on potential conflicts in order to develop a more preventative approach to conflicts. ECOMOG would become the permanent military arm of the Community, based on a stand-by arrangement by which national contingents would be earmarked for deployment at short notice.²³

Nevertheless, all of this still lies in the realm of the future as the ECOWAS Authority, while approving the reform proposal, also instructed the Executive Secretariat to elaborate its contents in the form of protocols. Presumably, these will require formal approval by the Authority and member state ratification before they enter into force.²⁴ Moreover, history shows that, even if ECOWAS protocols enter into force, this is no guarantee that their contents will be implemented. Thus it is as yet uncertain whether the reform proposal amounts to more than the influence of cognitive scripts, *i.e.* the copying of institutions and related rhetoric from politics in other regions.

Still, these developments show that ECOMOG and the political and military mandates of ECOWAS are there to stay. It may therefore be useful to conclude this study with some remarks on the policy relevant implications of the intervention in Liberia.

One major issue that should be tackled in crisis situations as in Liberia is the economy of violence. If warfare is needed to reap economic benefits, which in turn are necessary for a perpetuation of war, violence

21 Indeed, if only in name ECOMOG has served as a source of inspiration to Africans, whether in the cultivated world of diplomatic policy-makers or the derelict environment of the urban disaffected. Thus in 1992-93 the OAU sent a small 'Neutral Military Observer Group' (NMOG) to Rwanda, while in 1991 youngsters in the streets of Lomé tried to defend Togo's new prime minister against military rebels and advertised themselves as 'Ekpemog' – 'ekpe' meaning 'stone' in the Mina language. Van Walraven, *Dreams of Power*, pp. 334-335 and *Jeune Afrique*, 16-22/10/91.

22 Decision A/Dec. 11/10/98.

23 Draft Mechanism (note 12, chapter 3), *passim*.

24 Decision A/Dec. 11/10/98.

becomes a primary objective itself and conflict gets a dynamic which is difficult to control. Indeed, in such a situation the very concept of *settlement* of conflict is put under pressure, as it is not in the interest of belligerents to end the fighting. Once the conflict has become dislodged from its original causes (which from the start, however, usually involve acquisitive aspirations of the actors concerned) the continuance of anarchy gains practical utility.²⁵

Warlords who are firmly rooted in an economy of violence thus challenge policy-makers to develop more effective instruments of control and influence. First and foremost, they need to tackle the controversial issue of economic linkages, which in Taylor's case stretched to all corners of the Western world. Negative experiences with international sanctions are no justification for inaction on this point. However difficult it may be to introduce and implement stringent sanctions regimes, their presence is a crucial element in more effective crisis management – especially in Africa. Short of massive military intervention, there are few alternatives available to Western policy-makers to contain situations of (intra-state) conflict. The recurrence of war in Angola, in 1998-99, should in this respect not surprise anyone, since in spite of a UN embargo UNITA could continue selling diamonds, earning an estimated 3,7 billion US dollars between 1992 and 1998 alone.²⁶

Only if (economic and military²⁷) supply lines are cut is it possible to gain some leverage over belligerents. In the Liberian case, for example, it would then have been easier to entice the factions with the power-sharing formula of the Council of State. Taylor's aspiration to the Liberian Presidency serves as a reminder that, even for political entrepreneurs operating in shadow state conditions, the formal reins of power still constitute a prized asset. The political organization of Taylorland and the management of its economy and infrastructure were, indeed, evidence that Taylor would not simply be content with leading a *de facto* state in the Liberian hinterland.²⁸ His war economy, rather than an end in itself, served a longer-term, political objective. Thus, if external linkages had been put under control, this asset could have been used to get the NPFL into line. In this respect one could also make recognition of militia forces shooting their way to power conditional on the absence of atrocities committed on their road to victory. In Liberia threats of the establishment of a war crimes tribunal were issued only at a late stage in the conflict. A tougher line in this regard would also be in line with current developments.

Naturally, this would not be easy in view of the nature of (sub- and inter-state) politics in the region. An improvement in West Africa's political relations is a *sine qua non* for better conflict management, yet this is also a dimension which is not easily reformed by way of policy interventions of third countries. The ability to introduce and uphold a regional consensus around a few fundamental minimum norms of political behaviour is nevertheless crucial if one wishes to rid the region of crisis situations that destroy societies and jeopardize regional stability. Two glaring deficiencies in this respect pertain to the use of subversion as an instrument in regional politics and the low quality of governance at the sub-state level – marked by poor democratic government, non-observance of human rights and the rule of law, and predatory behaviour of elites.

25 See more generally for the deliberate use of chaos in the political designs of African rulers P. Chabal and J.P. Daloz, *Africa Works: Disorder as Political Instrument* (Oxford and Bloomington, 1999).

26 De Beers and its Central Selling Organization (CSO), as well as the Belgian government, the European Union and countries like Zambia, are all involved in this. See the Global Witness report 'A Rough Trade – The Role of Companies and Governments in the Angolan Conflict' (London, 1998), excerpts of which were released on the Internet.

27 The importance of containing the flow of arms has, belatedly, been recognized by ECOWAS, whose Authority introduced a three year moratorium on the import, export and manufacture of small arms in the West African region in October 1998. See the PANA report of 1/11/98. One question, apart from the effectiveness of this moratorium, is, of course, to what extent the region has already become saturated with such weapons.

28 See Prkic, 'Privatisation du pouvoir et guerre civile'.

In this regard there is an urgent need to end the culture of impunity surrounding the conduct of foreign affairs in African international relations. Ivory Coast and, especially, Burkina Faso, which receives considerable Western development aid,²⁹ should be held accountable for their ill-considered support of Taylor's invasion of Liberia. If countries playing with fire are not made to pay for their actions, among others because third (Western) countries fear accusations of interference, scenarios such as unfolded in Liberia can easily recur. The worsening crisis in Sierra Leone is in this respect alarming: it contains elements which were also present in the Liberian conflict, such as Burkinabè opposition to ECOMOG's intervention and Ouagadougou's alleged support to the rebels of the RUF.³⁰

In the wake of Africa's post-Cold War marginalization there is, indeed, a lack of self-restraint in interstate relations that seems even greater than during preceding decades. The Great Lakes region, in particular, witnesses the effects of interventions by neighbouring regimes in the turbulent affairs of Congolese politics. While the Rwandan and Ugandan presence in the east of Congo could, perhaps, be justified as a form of self-defence against rebel forces or genocidal militias, their attempt in 1998 to overthrow the Kabila regime by airlifting troops to the west of the country overstepped the boundaries of self-restraint and were evidence of a typically disproportionate reliance on military means to realize certain objectives.³¹ More generally, in the wake of the progressive weakening of the state current developments point to considerable shifts in Africa's geo-political patterns and distributions of power which, besides rulers' inclination to conduct foreign and domestic affairs along lines of personalized governance and their continual straddling of the formal and informal spheres of politics, are likely to generate high levels of instability. If the Western world wishes to contribute to crisis management in Africa these developments call for an unequivocal response.

Naturally, one cannot say that these external factors are the prime cause of crisis in countries like Liberia, Sierra Leone and Congo. It is obvious that the causes of these conflicts lie much deeper, such as in the serious disaffection of youths,³² or the poor in general, and the eagerness of political entrepreneurs to transform social group deprivation into personal gain. Moreover, the Liberian polity did not degenerate to the state of the present criminal regime in a matter of years. This involved a process which can be traced back to the 1970s,³³ if not earlier. The concomitant increase in conflict potential had, by the time of Taylor's invasion, developed to such an extent that conflict resolution would have required a much more massive and multi-dimensional response. Peace-keeping or enforcement operations, even if sincerely motivated, would probably have been insufficient. Nevertheless, as the regional dimensions of the Liberian conflict certainly contributed to its escalation, the external dimensions of similar crisis situations should be targeted for policy interventions – without, however, illusions about their ability to resolve the conflicts as such.

Only when some of the basic norms for political conduct referred to above would be present in the domestic and regional contexts of West Africa – *i.e.* would be *observed* by the great majority of political

29 Among others from the Netherlands government. See Ministerie van Buitenlandse Zaken, *Afrika ten zuiden van de Sahara* (Directie Voorlichting Buitenlandse Zaken: The Hague, May 1998), p. 74.

30 *Concord Times*, 30/12/98 (via Africa News Online).

31 See, for example, *Africa Confidential*, 28/8/98 and 9/10/98. Burkina's subversive intervention in West African politics and reliance on Western development aid finds an interesting parallel in the combination of Uganda's pivotal role in the politico-military affairs of the Great Lakes and its donor dependence. *Ibid.*, 1/8/97 and 21/11/97.

32 See on this Richards, *Fighting for the Rain Forest* and *ibid.*, 'Sierra Leone and Liberia: a crisis of youth?' (n. 35, ch. 4).

33 Thus the regime of William Tolbert (1971-1980) recruited unemployed youths from the cities for the army, a kind of cooptation which was to lead to his fall when Samuel Doe took power in 1980. See Ellis, 'Liberia 1989-1994', p. 176.

actors concerned – would it be useful to focus on improving procedures and institutions for regional interaction. Regional decision-making should be embedded more firmly in such procedures and institutions, in order to prevent ‘policy’ being decided on the basis of conjunctural factors (such as personal ties and private interests), factors that lead so easily to abuse. However, for a more than marginal improvement in the efficacy of ECOWAS institutions one would have to overcome certain fundamental obstacles, such as the lack of West African consensus about Nigeria’s regional leadership and the absence of interlocking institutions which – along the lines of OSCE-NATO interaction³⁴ – could enhance the effectiveness of West African conflict management.

Simply shoring up ECOMOG’s logistical and financial capabilities will, under the present circumstances, do little to improve the prospects of peace. Contributing financially to ECOMOG’s new operation in Sierra Leone may thus not be the right answer:³⁵ it constitutes a very limited response to a complicated and protracted conflict and presumes not only that the regional structures of interaction are not conflictual but also that ECOMOG is more than a defender of elite-controlled capitals. Inhabitants of Freetown are naturally entitled to protection against the marauding gangs of the RUF, but this is not sufficient reason for considering ECOMOG as West Africa’s multilateral military instrument, employed to uphold the regional peace.

Perhaps two sobering thoughts should be expressed to conclude this study. Firstly, if multilateral intervention is itself an expression of conflict this may have devastating consequences for the reputation and future effectiveness of international organizations. One may, finally, also doubt whether military intervention should take place at all, once the international community is confronted with ugly *faits accomplis* as obtained in Liberia.³⁶

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34 See on this J. Cohen, ‘Conflict Prevention Instruments in the Organization for Security and Co-operation in Europe: An Assessment of Capacities’ (*Project Conflict Prevention in West Africa*: London, 1998).

35 The Netherlands government donated four million guilders to ECOMOG in order to facilitate deployment of the Malian contingent. Star Radio: Liberian Daily News Bulletin, 11/11/98.

36 Thus, one could argue that ECOMOG’s deployment in the circumstances of August 1990 found a partial parallel in the vain but ludicrous call by Kofi Annan, in October 1997, to send a peace-keeping force to Congo-Brazzaville at the moment that Sassou-Nguessou’s militias had forced a military breakthrough and defeated the legitimate government with French and Angolan help. *NRC Handelsblad* (The Netherlands), 16/10/97.

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