

#### **1. 4. THE ECOWAS / ECOMOG IN LIBERIA & SIERRA LEONE**

As stated earlier, OAU had always avoided direct intervention in the internal affairs of its members. The creation of a dichotomy between internal and inter-state conflicts led to the OAU's inability-and unwillingness- to involve itself in conflicts (such as in Uganda during the brutal reign of Idi Amin, and the various conflicts in Rwanda and Burundi) which, although on the face of it internal, had salient international repercussions.<sup>8</sup> Rather, it only confined itself to discussions and mediation to resolve issues of this caliber. It is for this reason that some charged it of helping keeping many African dictators on power. It was only in 1993 that it adopted its "Mechanism for Conflict Prevention, Management and Resolution", as a first regional structure of its kind for preventive diplomacy to try to find peaceful solutions to numerous conflicts in the continent.

It merits mentioning that the United States which is expected to keep global peace and stability under its announced "New World Order" began to shy away from African problems. This new strategic stand was strengthened by the American experience in Somalia and the considering of Africa as the least important for American interests. Because the real motive for American interest in Africa in the past was its concern for the spread of communism. The collapse of communism eliminated this motive. The lengthy and incomplete list of the primary tasks of the United States policy in Africa is an agenda of quiet desperation. Given the wars that are causing policymakers to focus on state collapse and ethnic irredentism in the Balkans and

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<sup>8</sup> Makumi Mwagiru, "The Organization of African Unity (OAU)", London: Sage publication, 1996, p. 6

Central Asia, and given the White House's natural focus on Russia, Israel, and economic competition with Asia, African questions will remain second order.<sup>9</sup>

In this political situation, the Liberian civil war broke out as a result of the National Patriotic Front of Liberia's (NPFL) invasion of the country, led by Charles Taylor's in December 1989. Within one year, large territories in the northern and eastern parts of the country fell to the rebels, creating thereby total chaos in the daily life of the people. Many groups within and without the country including Muslims and Christians tried to bring to an end the crisis but all their efforts were in vain. Many reasons motivated ECOWAS to intervene to bring to a halt the disaster. Among them was the fear that the conflict would create a regional instability, as well as a social catastrophe manifested in civilian casualties, refugees and displacement of persons. The first step taken by the military wing of ECOWAS, the ECOMOG was to send troops to Liberia to force the warring factions to accept a cease-fire declared by the community. The NPFL, which was on the brink of capturing Liberian Capital City, Monrovia didn't welcome the force. It was only after a fierce fighting that its leader Taylor had to yield to the *Bamako Cease-fire Agreement* on 28 November 1990 which was initiated by the ECOWAS in Mali. Consequently, an interim Government of National Unity was created and peace ensued for two years. After this period, fighting erupted again and ECOWAS had to arrange another accord in Cote d'Ivoire, the *Yamoussoukro Agreement* with the objective of encamping and disarming the rival combatants and prepare for free election. However, the treaty failed again because of continuing fighting between the NPFL and the United Liberian Movement's (ULIMO) forces.

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<sup>9</sup> Robert I. Rotberg, "The Clinton Administration and Africa", *Current History*, vol. 92, No. 574, p. 193

In June 1993, a massacre of 500 persons was attributed to the NPFL before a UN-appointed investigation team discovered that it was a nother Liberian faction which really committed the atrocity. But ECOMOG was increasingly growing impatient with the unfruitful outcome of its peace efforts that it became directly involved in the fighting against Taylor's forces. Then on 25 July 1993 the *Cotonou Peace Accord* was signed in Benin for the sake of establishing a transitional government representing all factions. The critical question of disarmament, encampment and demobilization were to be supervised by the ECOMOG troops, the OAU and the UN observer missions. As accustomed, a much similar violation of previous treaties followed. The warring parties just as before were not comfortable with disarmament. There was renewed fighting between the NPFL and the ULIMO forces. Tensions and sub-divisions amongst the factions themselves also contributed to the complete abrogation of the Accord. The ULIMO, for example, broke into two factions - one led by Johnson and the other by Kromah.<sup>10</sup> In Ghana, Trevor Gordon-Somers, a UN representative negotiated the *Akosombo Agreements* between three faction leaders, Taylor, Kromah, and Hezekiah Bowen. Accordingly, the country was partitioned into three factional hegemonies. But this undermined the credibility of UN in the peace efforts as other faction leaders rejected the agreement.

The *Abuja Accord* signed in Nigeria in September 1995, marked the significance of ECOWAS/ECOMOG success as a relatively efficient regional organization if measured according to African standard. The Accord formed a government of national unity with a Council of the State comprising the top factional leaders and civilian representatives. An election was to be held in August 1996 after disarmament in January the same year. That was delayed due to renewal of fighting in some parts

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<sup>10</sup> Laurence Juma, *opcit.*, p. 91

of the country. Nonetheless, most factions turned their militias into political parties and embarked on election campaigns reset for 19 July 1997. The government was established under Charles Taylor's presidency. The ECOMOG was mandated to create a national army for Liberia, and was successful at last in bringing relative calm and order in the country.

The civil war in Sierra Leone began on 23 March 1991, when the Revolutionary United Front rebels led by Foday Sankoh launched an attack from Liberia, against the All People's Congress government. Then in April 1992, some soldiers overthrew the APC government and formed the National Provisional Ruling Council (NPRC) under Captain Valentine Strasser. As the government was still unable to crush the rebellion, civilians in the east and south of the country organized their own militias to help the army. Due to intensified pressure for democratic reform, Strasser's deputy, brigadier Maada Bio, overthrew his senior in January 1996 and arranged for a free election which brought to power a civilian government under Ahmed Tejan Kabbah. The new government negotiated a peace agreement with the RUF in Abidjan in November 1996. But in less than a year, in May 1997, a major, Johnny Paul Koroma, was made a head of a new military regime that overthrew Kabbah's government. The New Armed Forces Revolutionary Council (AFRC) invited the RUF to join their regime; Sankoh was made deputy president and several RUF members were given posts.<sup>11</sup>

The ECOWAS foreign ministers concerned about the development of events in the West African country, met in Conakry in June 1997 in an attempt to find measures to overturn the military coup. Then on 28-29 August, the ECOWAS summit meeting in Abuja (Nigeria) decided to extend ECOMOG operations to Sierra Leone. Eventually, a peace settlement was initiated in Conakry in October 1997 that was doomed to fail

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<sup>11</sup> Yusuf Bangura, "Strategic Policy Failure and Governance in Sierra Leone", *The Journal of Modern African Studies*, UK: Cambridge University Press, 2000, 38, 4, p.555

because of the AFRC/RUF government dishonouring of it. As such, the community backed by OAU and UN support, had to use military force to remove the de facto regime from power in February 1998, restoring thereby the civilian government to its legitimate political position. However, this did not assure perfect peace and security in Sierra Leone, as the rebels were still strong and determined to destabilize the system.

The government held consultation with the parliament to propose a new army of 5,000, 1,000 of which were from the ex-Republic of Sierra Leone Military Forces (RSLMF). Such a small army could not protect the country from the rebels and as such, it had to depend on the ECOMOG. The government banned the AFRC and RUF urging their combatants to surrender in order to be accorded favourable treatment. The resilience of the rebels was, however, proven just ten months, as on 6 January 1999 they entered Freetown triumphantly and virtually controlled the whole northern region. One of the main reasons for the government rapid collapse was the disloyalty of many of the rehabilitated soldiers. The ECOMOG forces that were largely made of Nigerian soldiers had to withdraw from most parts of Freetown to other towns when the rebels attacked. Vengeance against the previous government loyalists followed. About 250 policemen were killed, police and other government offices destroyed, and many judges and lawyers went underground or fled. The civilian government in exile had no other alternative but to open peace dialogue with the military regime. Nigerian official pronouncements during much of January, February and March 1999 preferred negotiations as the best means of ending the crisis. The balance of international opinion ranging from Britain, the UN, and US all shifted in favour of dialogue and the relegitimization of the military junta. The government yielded and allowed Sankoh to meet his comrades in Lome on 18 April 1999 to discuss settlement. Finally, on 7 July the same year, a peace accord was signed according to which Foday Sankoh and the

RUF were given absolute pardon and a power share in the government until new elections were held in February 2000. The ECOMOG was mandated to keep peace and a time was set for its withdrawal after the creation of a new national army. Astonishingly, the accord failed when the rebels seized UN peacekeepers and threatened to attack the capital again.

From this perspective, it can be concluded that ECOWAS/ECOMOG peace endeavour in Liberia was more successful than in Sierra Leone. Although in the former it can also be argued that it was a peace achieved without justice, as it appeared that rebellion can pay without being held accountable to atrocities committed during the rebellion. Because a great many Liberians believed that Taylor would return to war if he lost the election, his commitments in the Abuja Accords and to ECOMOG notwithstanding.<sup>12</sup> Nonetheless, he was to be accepted as president of the country by both Liberians and outside observers because he was elected by 75% of votes casted in a democratic procedure. Many leaders from the Unity Party, Kromah's All Liberian Coalition Party (ALCOP), and Boley's National Democratic Party of Liberia (NDPL) accused the election commission along with ECOMOG of having engaged in widespread fraud and that the results were incredible. But the United Nations Observer Mission in Liberia (UNOMIL) and ECOWAS jointly issued a certification declaration the electoral process to be fair, free, and credible.

A similar attempt was made in Sierra Leone in conformity with Abidjan Peace Accord of November 1996. The RUF was pardoned of all crimes it had committed during the war, granted a chance to form a political party, and allowed to send representatives to such institutions as the electoral commission and peace

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<sup>12</sup> Terrence Lyons, "Liberia's Path from Anarchy to Elections", *Current History*, 1998, Vol. 97, No. 619, p. 230

commission.<sup>13</sup> This is notwithstanding the fact that the RUF was considered by the majority of ethnic sections of the society as illegitimate, destructive, and brutal. "Granting it such privileges seemed to many as rewarding criminals for their crimes against the nation. With all these perceptions in mind, considerable stability, though shaky, prevailed in both countries mainly due to the initiatives of ECOWAS and its military wing, the ECOMOG.

ECOWAS/ECOMOG actions in these civil wars were in line with its objective of assuring "Security First" for the sake of sustainable economic development that would lead to honourable life for the people of West Africa. Similarly, this anticipated goal was in line with OAU's pan-African objective of creating an economically integrated Africa that would eventually lead to political integration of the continent. As stated before, OAU has been replaced by the AU that is presumed to be shaped in the image of EU. In this respect, it is of acknowledged importance that a brief illustration be made on the EU and AU.

#### **1. 5. THE AFRICAN UNION: RHETORIC VERSUS REALITY**

The AU's objectives are the same with that of OAU although some additions were made. It is believed that the AU will be stronger, better financed, and will have a power to establish a common African Parliament, a Central Bank, a common African currency, and an International Court of Justice. Its ultimate goal will be an economic and political integration that would witness the removal of national boundaries, a merged army, and one single African passport. That is, as declared by the Libyan leader Moummar Qaddafi, "the United States of Africa" (USA), an idea which dates back to the early days of Pan-Africanism. This means democracy will grant the

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<sup>13</sup> Yusuf Bangura, *opcit.*, p. 559

common masses greater political participation in the continental leadership, establish and run a sustainable African-controlled economy, and bring human rights violators to account for their deeds. Moreover, the Union agreed to function on several principles.

For instance;

1. Respect for borders that existed since independence.
2. Peaceful resolution of conflicts among members.
3. Prohibition of the use of force or threat to use force in the case of dispute between the Union's member states.
4. Non-interference in the internal affairs of any member
5. The right to intervention in accordance with the Union Assembly decision in time of dire internal crisis like war or genocide.
6. Condemnation and rejection of military coup or any unconstitutional change of government.

Every nation or community has to have a vision that would serve as a guideline for its future plan and prospects. But that has to be rationally practical so that it won't turn to be an illusion to the disappointment of its advocates and supporters. The OAU from 1963 until its official replacement with the AU on 8<sup>th</sup> November 1999 had failed to materialize most of its visions for the African peoples. Yet, African states have to look for measures that would strengthen their position in the world, in a time when different parts of the globe are forming regional groupings for similar economic and political objectives.

The EU has almost arrived at the junction of creating one unified currency for its members. But this stage of European economic development is of long historical origins. The most important of these origins is the Industrial Revolution, which has transformed the countries of Western Europe from weak to international superpowers.



Their colonial past and exploitation of weaker nations played a major role in their present supreme international position. Their vision of forming a union began after the Second World War and planning began ever since. They have been able to prevent another continental or inter-state war for the last 57 years. From one perspective, they are at the pinnacle of world economic development. In another, they have achieved the best democracies in the world, with strong although constitutionally limited governments accountable to the people. The armed and police forces are well disciplined to keep law and order for the normal function of society, rather than becoming a tool for authoritarianism and security destabilization. Secularism has been embraced by EU member states as a national ideology accepted by the majority of the people, creating thereby a considerable harmony among the Union. In short, security and stability have been assured, and the ability to sustain them is indisputable.

All the present African nation states are new states created by European colonial powers. Most of them during and after the 1960s. Politically, and economically the majority of them are unstable. In terms of industrialization, they remain producers of primary materials without any significant technological potential. Socially, there are always uncertainties of ethnic or tribal conflicts in many of these states. In fact, the question of ethnic rivalries stands as one of the biggest challenge for the AU to respond to.

Thus, in the light of this elaboration, it would appear rather peculiar that the AU is modeled after the EU. All the historical experiences of EU member states are quite irrelevant to African history. Therefore, it is questionable that its success in the present time can be achieved by the AU. Besides, there are many other challenges that the Union is bound to face. For example, the EU makes democracy a condition for

membership, and as such didn't start by including all European countries as members. AU's standard is unclear. There is also the threat of Western imperial interests in the continent. For instance, US Africa Growth and Opportunity Act (AGOA 2000). This bill has the potential of dividing the trade relations among African states, because it allows the US to choose which countries it sees as "deserving" (by unclear standards).<sup>14</sup> would probably divide trade relations between African countries, as it permits US to select the states it sees deserving the Act. Most investments in the AU are going to be foreign. Human rights principles are upheld by the AU in accordance with the African Charter on Human and Peoples' Rights. But only five countries of the UN have ratified the protocol of the African Court on Human and Peoples' Rights. Meaning that there is no provision for creating relevant institutions to guarantee these Rights.

Prominent advocates of pan-Africanism like Dr. Kwame Nkrumah for example, the former Ghanaian leader, believed that Africa could not survive except as a single unified entity. Whereas others like the former president of Cote d'Ivoire, Felix Houphouet-Boigny, was of the view that the newly independent countries of Africa ought to strive first to be strong nation states before a continental unity could be achieved. The compromising stand was the creation of sub-regional blocs that would pave the way to the ideal goal. But despite this strategy, there are many obstacles that would most likely jeopardize AU's objectives. The West African region as mentioned earlier, seems to be the most zealous and most efficient as to constitute a model for other African sub-regions in their efforts to help realize the African dream. This is in terms of its cooperation, relatively significant cultural similarities, and determination to see security prevails among its member countries so that social and economic

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<sup>14</sup> Natalie Steinberg, "Background Paper on African Union", 2001, p. 4

prosperity be possible. However, ECOWAS is not different from other sub-regional organization in the African continent. This fact brings into question the credibility of ECOWAS to function as a model for other sub-regional groups.