CHAPTER TWO: CHALLENGES TO ECOWAS OBJECTIVES

SECURITY PERSPECTIVE

2. 1. Inter-state relations

Although colonial legacy has left West African states divided into Anglophone and Francophone, there has all along been significant security harmony between them that prevented major inter-state wars in the region. Among the ECOWAS Anglophone members, Gambia, Ghana, Liberia, Nigeria, and Sierra Leone, only Liberia and Sierra Leone share a common geographical boundary. Whereas the Francophone are interconnected in what previously constituted the colonial French West Africa. The French have played an important role in assuring peaceful coexistence among its former colonies as members of the French Community. The sense of being bound to each other politically, economically, and even culturally helped harness better mutual cooperation between the members of Francophone community. In fact, among the common masses of French-speaking African countries, mutual feeling of cultural unity and belonging to each other prevails, reducing thereby inter-state tension and conflict. This is as far as inter-state ethnic social relation is concerned. Because when it comes to intra-state cultural or ethnic relation, different national groups compete for power and political posts, the matter that destabilizes harmony among them.

On the other hand, inter-state relation between the Anglophone and Francophone groups forming ECOWAS is relatively mild on the public level. Meaning, there has not been any open war between any two ECOWAS states, like the case between Ethiopia and Eritrea, Sudan and Uganda, Tanzania and Uganda, for example. Relations are in better harmony today particularly after the end of the civil wars both in Liberia and Sierra Leone. This does not however, rule out the fact that there are still other elements of instability, manifest and latent that raise the question of regional
security uncertainty. Nevertheless, the fact is that most African conflicts are fought within, not between, states. ¹⁵ But their implications in neighbouring countries were of great significance.

One of the latent elements that can destabilize inter-state security harmony between ECOWAS is border problem. In 1985 there was a short small-scale war between Mali and Burkina Faso over a borderland claimed by the latter. The issue was resolved by the International Court of Justice ruling the land for Mali. This had led to a final settlement of border dispute between the two. Similarly, in 1989, conflicts over grazing land involving villagers in the Senegal River Valley ignited the tinder of ethnic tensions in the capitals of both Mauritania and Senegal. ¹⁶ Hundreds of people died, followed by the fleeing from Senegal of 170,000 Mauritanian nationals, and the expulsion of 70,000 Senegalese and 40,000 other black nationals from Mauritania. Diplomatic ties were cut, and an exchange of artillery between the armies of the two countries followed in January 1990. Mauritania claimed that Senegal supported the rebels African Liberation Forces of Mauritania fighting against its government, while Senegal accused Mauritania of sending arms to separatist rebels in Senegal’s Casamance region. Although the situation had lulled, still the possibility that further tension may occur at any time can not be denied.

There is also a dispute between Niger and Benin over a small island on their border, the Isle of Leté since 1964. Both claim to have sovereignty over it resulting in the closing of borders between the two. Tension escalated recently and was about to escalate to a military confrontation in 1999. Nevertheless, there is relative calm over the dispute as both parties agreed to settle it peacefully rather than by the use of force. It is still another challenge that waits a solution from the ECOWAS or from other

destination. But as long as it continues to exist, regional security stability among the ECOWAS would remain precarious.

It had been said earlier that Africans have developed interest in problems going on in neighbouring countries. Sometimes such interest is meant to help bring peace to the neighbour in question. While in other case it exacerbates further the problem by being impartial by the interested state in the conflict. This can be attested by analyzing some aspects of the civil wars in Liberia and Sierra Leone where indirect intervention led to so much tension in the relations between ECOWAS member states. For this led to indifference from African governments to intervene in the right time to solve a conflict in another state before it turns to become a bloody disaster. Non-intervention in the internal affairs of members and the respect to their sovereignty was accepted by all West African countries. But Taylor's NPFL was well known to have been made up of exiled dissidents from across the region, and to have received financial, logistical, and military support from certain African countries.¹⁷ For example, Cote d'Ivoire and Burkina Faso had played major roles in this domain as Taylor's invasion of Liberia began from the former. While on the other side, Sierra Leone was opposed to Taylor and was the major supporter of his rival ULIMO, in addition to the fact that it was one of the first countries to respond to the formation of ECOMOG force for intervention in the civil war, which means it was against Taylor's movement.

It is in this context of suspicious and uncertain relations between some ECOWAS members that the civil war in Sierra Leone could be comprehended. The RUF rebels invasion of the country in March 1991 was seen a Taylor's revenge against the APC government. Liberian involvement became obvious after Taylor became president and

gained some stability for his regime. This was testified by Keikura Kpoto, the pro-
tempore president of the Liberian Senate, in his address to the National Consultative
Conference on the peace process in Freetown in April 1999. He stated that: “I do not
come here to argue the merits or non-merits of the Liberian involvement. How can
any body say we are not involved, with tens of thousands professional Liberian
fighters the Liberian government cannot provide jobs for”. 18 Burkina Faso had also
been involved in the crisis as RUF rebels recruited hundreds of soldiers from that
country. When in 1998 an agreement was reached between the Sierra Leone
government of Tejan Kebah and the rebels, the government had to take compromising
measures to neutralize neighbouring countries in order to survive. It exchanged
ambassadors with Liberia, it dropped its plans to have Liberia and Burkina Faso
condemned at the United Nations, and decided not to oppose Togo’s -also accused of
involvement and support to the rebels- policy of having Libya involved in the Lomé
peace talks. Guinea Conakry also appears on the scene whereby it accused Sierra
Leone and Liberia of arming rebels in its own land. That’s why according to Cotono
Peace Accord of July 1993, the ECOMOG was mandated by the UN and OAU to set
a buffer zone along Liberia’s borders with Guinea, Sierra Leone and Cote d’Ivoire. 19

At this moment, an internal political and military conflict is going on in what was
once one of the most peaceful and stable ECOWAS member country, Cote d’Ivoire.
Dissident soldiers who are originally from the North part of the country with strong
ethnic and religious links with Burkina Faso, control more than half the country in
their drive to overthrow the present government. It is assumed by many, including the
Ivorian authority that the rebellion has been supportedlogistically and militarily by
Burkina Faso. The outcome of the recently concluded peace accord between the

18 Yusuf Bangura, opcit., p. 576
19 Laurence Juma, opcit., p. 90
Ivorian government and the rebels remains uncertain till this day. However, it is likely that tension and mistrust between Cote d'Ivoire and Burkina Faso would be heated. Already hundreds of Burkinabes (citizens of Burkina Faso who live in Cote d'Ivoire) have fled Cote d'Ivoire as ethnic violence against them has begun. It can thus be seen that most of the inter-state disputes and conflicts in the past as well as the present takes place among ECOWAS Francophone countries. The only exception was Liberia and Sierra Leone who are both anglophone. Even among these two, some Francophone states of the community were involved in their conflict in one way or another. For example, Charles Taylor, the leader of the rebellion in Liberia invaded the country from Cote d'Ivoire. While The rebels in Sierra Leone began their rebellion from Guinea.

2.2. Intra-ECOWAS lack of commitment

Another problem that poses a challenge to the success of ECOWAS objectives for West Africa is lack of unanimous commitment to bear collective responsibility to guarantee regional security. When in 1990 Ibrahim Babangida of Nigeria called for the establishment of ECOMOG to help solve the Liberian crisis, among the sixteen ECOWAS members, only five responded. Namely, Gambia, Ghana, Guinea, Nigeria, and Sierra Leone. Interestingly, all are Anglophone members except Guinea. Of course Guinea and Sierra Leone had to yield to the call as they shared borders with Liberia and the conflict would have immediate impact on them. The soldiers sent to the ground did not reflect real commitment and preparedness to end the war as soon as possible. Because in no way could 3,000 soldiers be an adequate number capable of bringing to an end that serious security question, given the fact that the technological, economic, and military equipment of these soldiers were very conventional and poor.
As Jerry Rawlings, the president of Ghana and ECOWAS chairman, told an emergency meeting of chiefs of staff of ECOWAS member-states in October 1995, implementation of the Abuja Agreement was threatened because ECOMOG troop levels were inadequate: they needed to be raised from 3000 to 12 000. He also pointed out that the funds were insufficient to ensure effective nationwide deployment to oversee ...the disarmament, demobilization and reintegration of all the various fighting factions. Only after one year and two months, October 1991, did small contingents of 500 soldiers arrived from Senegal. The motive behind Senegalese participation into ECOMOG’s initiatives was a national interest rather than humanitarian or other commitment to the ECOWAS. It was during a state visit to Washington by the Senegalese President, Abdou Diouf, that Bush agreed to ‘forgive’ his country’s $42 million debt to the United States if/when it joined the Ecomog force in Liberia.

Because of its military and economic potential, Nigeria played a bigger role in the attempt to secure stability in ECOWAS countries. In Sierra Leone, the same lack of commitment was repeated. Though the civil war in that country began since March 1991, there was no any intervention by ECOWAS to end the crisis. Before the military overthrew the civilian government, the only foreign soldiers present there were from Nigeria. They had been posted there as a bilateral agreement between the governments of the two countries. In 1997, the UN Security Council endorsed ECOMOG’s policies on the comprehensive embargo against the AFRC/RUF. The main troop contributors to the ECOMOG force were from Nigeria and Guinea. Many Francophone countries and Ghana were critical of the military operation but

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supported the embargo. 22 This implied that the success of the security effort depended heavily on Nigerian support and the willingness of its policy-makers and soldiers to bear high human and financial costs of the war if it dragged on. Something worthy of noting is that, between December 1999 and January 1999 more than 1,200 Nigerian soldiers were killed in Sierra Leone because most of the troops stationed in that countries were Nigerians.

Some doubt had been cast on Nigeria’s real motives behind its position in the crises in both countries in question. The ECOWAS/ECOMOG initiatives in both countries were mainly a Nigerian effort. It would be an understatement to say that the Nigerian military government of General Babangida and later General Sani Abach valued democracy to the extent that they would be willing to put the lives of Nigerian soldiers in danger and commit such huge amount of resources to the attainment of peace in neighbouring states.

The Nigerian interests must be seen as an effort to reach out for their friend, Samuel Doe, who was besieged by the ever-advancing forces of Charles Taylor. Some observers have even claimed that Doe wrote a letter to Nigeria asking for assistance. There is little doubt that Nigeria’s Babangida did not like Taylor. No wonder when Nigerian leadership changed, the ECOMOG’s attitude also changed to favour an election which was to be a walkover for Taylor. 23 The ECOMOG had an important position in the strategy of Nigerian president Sani Abacha. Its success could help ameliorate his image which was tarnished at home and ostracized internationally. However, Nigeria’s commitment also changed due to certain political changes that took place after Abacha’s sudden death in June 1998.

22 Yusuf Bangura, opcit., p. 556
23 Laurence Jumu, opcit., p. 95
The new leader, Abdusalam Abubakar, appeared least committed to Nigerian involvement in the Sierra Leone issue. He announced that he want Nigerian troops withdrawn before his office tenure ended in May 1999. Similarly, during the presidential elections in March the same year, all the three candidates of three major parties harshly criticized Nigerian role in the operation. For instance, Olusegun Obasanjo in an interview before becoming president emphatically wondered about Nigerian interests in Sierra Leone while it is peaceful, and its wealth was being wasted. The presidential candidate of the joint All Peoples Party/Alliance for Democracy, Olu Falae, also said he would withdraw Nigerian soldiers within one year if he assumed power. This decline of commitment was visible even when the eastern suburb of the capital Freetown was still under the control of rebel forces. Opposition voices to ECOMOG were raised deep in Nigeria especially in the southwest of the country, where vocal groups were opposed to Abacha. They questioned the government failure to provide information about the real human and financial costs of the operation. $ I million a day was drained from the Nigerian treasury while basic services and structure were deteriorating. The collapse of oil prices by 40 per cent in late 1998 and early 1999 also contributed to the weakening of the Nigerian military establishment's commitment to the Sierra Leone operation.24

On the other hand, ECOMOG soldiers' lack of discipline and concern for peace and stability were demonstrated on a number of occasions. While in Liberia, the Nigerian Ministry of Defense instructed ECOMOG to remain neutral and deal with the matter as an internal affair. However, on several occasions, it assisted some factions involved in the war against their opponents. In October 1992, it was a heavy bombing campaign from ECOMOG that led Taylor to loose most of the territories he once

24 Yusuf Bangura, opcit., p.562
controlled. That's why it was accused of becoming an armed combatant instead of peacekeeping force. A number of peacekeepers themselves allegedly took part in some of the most serious looting cases in Monrovia. There were reports of missing pay for soldiers. The consequence was that the soldiers resorted to theft from humanitarian cargo ships.

The lessons that can be derived from ECOWAS effort is that its preoccupation with Liberia and Sierra Leone means that only little, if any, progress was made in materializing its major objectives in West Africa. Its sixteen member-states lacked the resources and the political will to undertake a long-term mission of this sort. Economic growth in the region declined and member-states became increasingly indebted. In these circumstances, it will clearly be no easy task to implement the provisions of ECOWAS treaty, which was signed at the Organization's 16th summit in Benin in 1993 and took formal effect on 30 July 1995. The treaty provided for the imposition of a community tax, and for the establishment of a regional parliament, an economic and social council, and an ECOWAS court of justice. 25

2.3. Contagious military behaviour

Government and political instability in almost all African states have been hampered by series of military coups and counter coups. This is irrespective of whether the country was Anglophone, Francophone, or its former colonial master was Belgium, Portugal or Spain. As such, West Africa is no exception. For example, between 1963 to 1985 alone, the sub-region witnessed 30 military coups which left eleven of sixteen ECOWAS member states with military governments. 26 The resulting militarization of the region is another source of security instability in the

25 William Tordoff, opcit., p. 271
26 Emanuel Hansen, opcit., p. 177
area. Military governments are usually insecure because of the possibility of a counter coup. This has negative effects on the success of any regional integration among ECOWAS. Most of the army interventions in politics especially those after independence, occurred because of psychological contagion among soldiers. A good number of the officer corps in many African countries have received excellent training at Sandhurst College and advanced education at the Imperial College in Britain, Mons in France and in the USA. The first generation of African military officer corps was in this category. 27 This means that contagion incited a similar military coup in one African state to take place in another. The proximity of years governments overthrow took place substantiates this fact. That is because most of the military leaders of African states have contact with each other and had met during military training in France, US, or Britain as mentioned. In 1972 there was a military coup in Ghana, followed by one in Niger in 1974, and 1975 in Nigeria. In 1979 there was a counter coup in Ghana again. The phenomenon continues through the post-Cold War era. Since 1990s, several successful and unsuccessful coup attempts happened in at least seven West African states. In Mali 1991, Niger 1996, Nigeria, Sierra Leone 1997, Gambia, Guinea-Bissau, and Cote d’Ivoire (recently). These are among ECOWAS members only, meaning that other coups in non-ECOWAS countries would further narrow the proximity if they are also counted and added to this list of coups. The most remarkable feature of contagious military behaviour is within the state itself. The number of successful, unsuccessful and plots to overthrow governments is astonishing. For instance, Nigeria 35 times, Sierra Leone 31, Mali 17, Guinea-Bissau 14, Liberia 13, Niger 9, Gambia 4, Senegal 4, and Cote d’Ivoire 2. 28

Even among some of the democratic states of the community, there was no exemption from military intervention. Burkina Faso, one of the most democratic Francophone states in the 1960-80 period, went through four military coups in about seven years in 1980s. There are many motives behind this security instability. One of them is that the army controls the weaponry and has the capacity for staging an organized violence. However, the sum up of these motives involves factionalism among political, economic, traditional and military elite. That’s why sometimes the army comes to power under the pretext of restoring peace and order, and saving the nation from the games of corrupt politicians and bureaucrats. In other words, the army functions as a peacekeeping force in times of domestic unrest and threat to national integrity. From one perspective, such claim is genuine, generating thereby wide support from majority of the people, especially in the early days of the coup. In some instances, support is also gotten by the military from many intellectuals among the civilians. For instance, Niger army coup in 1996 against the civilian government was accepted and even officially signed by the ousted President Mamane Ousmane and his Prime Minister, days after the coup.

However, from another perspective, coups have destabilized and jeopardized political and economic development amongst ECOWAS states. The events that followed the military coup in Niger in 1996 signaled the reemergence of African militaries as critical forces to be reckoned with in Francophone Africa, as well as the growing stagnation of the democratization process that had begun in 1990. 29 That is because it was the first among a democratically elected government in former French colonies.

29 Peter J. Schraeder, op. cit., p.208
The role of Nigeria, as an African giant and the political, economic, and military leader of ECOWAS is of more tremendous effects on the stability of the community. Military rule for 28 of its 38 years as an independent state has prevented Nigeria from assuming a regional role comparable to South Africa's in the southern region. The fate of Nigeria's democracy movement holds significant import for the evolution of democratic political systems in other countries in West Africa, and across the continent. \(^{30}\) In some countries, the military had been able to perform, to an extent, better than previous civilian governments. Like the regime of Seyni Kountche of Niger, and that of Yahya Jammeh in Gambia. The best achievements of such kids of regime lie in the ability of the army to maintain stability and order when not threatened by a counter military struggle. This is maintained because the army's means of rule is coercion and force of course. Nonetheless, democracy, freedom of speech, political participation, and other civil rights are normally limited by this approach. According to many political commentators, for example Samuel Huntington, the military is not a force for a positive political change and sustainable development in advanced countries. Rather, it is more progressive in backward societies like those of sub-Saharan states. The caveat is that military officers were more likely inclined to sponsor policies of modernization when there was a miniscule middle class and some little political participation. \(^{31}\) Of course, this positive aspect of military contribution to development is not general as stated recently. Therefore, due to the increasing growth of political consciousness among the masses and particularly students in ECOWAS member states in post-Cold War era, strong opposition to military rule has put serious constraints on unelected governments. For this reason, the military has adopted a new political strategy to hold on power, by going into

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\(^{31}\) StevenThomas Seitz, opcit., p. 73
election in civilian dress. Like the case of Ibrahim Barre Mainassara in Niger, Jerry Rawlings in Ghana, Yahya Jammeh in Gambia, and Gnassingbe Eyadema in Togo.

These movements for democracy are supported by international pressure for human rights and democratic principles. The best achievement of this was in June 1999 when sub-Saharan Africa’s two most important countries celebrated major democratic rituals. President Thabo Mbeki succeeded Nelson Mandela in South Africa, and Nigerians ended 16 years of increasingly repressive military rule by electing Olusegun Obasanjo as president. The two new presidents then teamed up diplomatically in June, successfully persuading the Organization of African Unity to agree to sanction any African government that comes to power by military means. ¹² This same new resolution has also been incorporated in the charter of AU.

Unfortunately, this is only a principle on paper the implementation of which will remain to be difficult. The military in West as well as other parts of Africa is not likely to be deterred by such rhetoric. The proof of this is the current standoff with military rebels who have occupied more than half of Cote d’Ivoire, previously one of the most stable African states.

¹² John Stremlau, “Ending Africa’s Wars”, Foreign Affairs, 2000, Vol. 79, No. 4, p. 120
2.4. Direct & indirect external power interference

Inter-state lack of commitment, and military behaviour, are not the only factors responsible for Africa's present precarious security conditions. But the policies of the major powers during the Cold War have serious impacts on West Africa's Post-Cold War problems. It is sufficient to state that those policies contributed to ECOWAS failure to achieve its objectives as designed.

Despite the independence of African states, France continues to maintain and expand its presence in Africa in what was and is still known as Francophone Africa. Agreements for co-operation between France and the newly-independent states were signed immediately after the various proclamations of independence. These agreements contained important provisions for mutual military aid. These agreements however, gave France the opportunity to interfere in the internal affairs of its former colonies, directly and indirectly. During the Cold War it supported dictators who comply with its national interests eventhough they acted contrary to its democratic ideals. Many of such entrenched dictators behaved in a way that was detrimental to the progress and development of their nations. But no pressure was put on them from Paris to reform their governments. At the end of the day, they were to be overthrown by military coups that were mostly supported by the masses of the people. For example, Hussein Habre of Chad, Mousa Traoure of Mali, and Diori Hamani of Niger, Samuel Doe of Liberia. On the other side of the scale, when some leaders tried to renounce their special relationship with France, as Guinea did in 1958 when it voted against the creation of a revised French community of states, French

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retribution was swift: all aid to Guinea was abruptly cut off by an angry de Gaulle.  

The same policy was taken against Thomas Sankara of Burkina Faso, who displayed a degree of political disobedience to the former colonial master during the late 1983-1987. Although he was popular among the common people, he was assassinated 1987 and many believed that France had a great role in the plot. According to French policy in Francophone Africa, the French Prime Minister, Pierre Beregovoy, stated in October 1992 that when confronted with the simultaneous and potentially conflicting goals of promoting democracy, ensuring development, and maintaining security, Francophone African leaders were expected to adhere to the following order of priorities: first and foremost, security; followed by development, and finally, democratization. And this had all along been the strategy among most of ECOWAS Francophone members since independence right to the end of the Cold War. Security was assured to some limited extent. But foundations for sustainable future development and stability were shaky due to the policies of many pro-French leaders. Even when the age of democratization began in the Post-Cold War era and French President Francois Mitterrand declared that French Official Development Assistance (ODA) would favour democratic states, there was inconsistency in that approach from the French part. Because Paris always increased its financial assistance to its favoured clients during and before elections. Like in the elections in Senegal, whereby Abdou Diouf won the 1993 amid charges of irregularities that were followed by civil and political unrest. Throughout his regime, Diouf was supported by France and his government of national unity received additional $688 million, whereas the amount was only $216 million previously.

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France was also accused several times of inciting and supporting the Tuareg armed rebellions in both Mali and Niger. The Tuareg issue is one of the challenging questions that created security instability in both countries. One group of Tuareg dissidents plotted to overthrow the one-party regime of General Mousa Traore; others have been secessionists. The flames of this separatism are fanned by a belief that the French promised to create an independent Tuareg state in return for Tuareg participation in the French force fighting in colonial Indochina. The response from Mali and Niger armed forces were in some instances fierce, especially the latter which have been condemned by Amnesty International and France’s Socialist Party.

Libya is also considered one of the countries outside ECOWAS to have contributed much in destabilizing the community. With regard to the same issue of Tuareg, Niger’s government during Kountche’s military regime has taken exception to Ghaddaffi’s self-appointed role as protector of ‘light skinned minorities in Sahel states governed by black regimes’. In the Niger context this means the semi-nomadic Tuareg and Toubou in the north and east of the country whom Ghaddaffi also provided with financial and material inducements to join his Islamic Legion. When the regime of Traore used brutal way to respond to Tuareg rebellion in his country, he alleged that the rebels were Libyan proxies and that many of them belonged the Islamic Legion of that country. As a matter of fact, many able-bodied Sahelian immigrants have served as soldiers for Libya and the Afghan resistance. The crisis in both states was relieved through peace accords mediated by Algeria and Libya itself in 1991. But still the possibility of renewed tension and rebellion prevails, which will

16 Richard L. Sklar, op cit., p. 225
make the issue regional in scope, as the Tuareg people inhabit several adjacent areas in Mali, Niger, Algeria, Libya, and Burkina Faso. Libya is known as well to have been the supporter of other many security problems in ECOWAS. Both fighters of NPFL of Charles Taylor and RUF of Foday Sankoh were trained in Benghazi training camps. This is the main reason that the creation of AU under the initiatives of the Libyan was looked upon with suspicion by many African leaders and others.

The United States is also known to have supported dictators among ECOWAS. The most important of these was Samuel Doe of Liberia, who came to power after a military coup in 1980. His military regime was firmly supported by Washington till the end of the Cold War. During that decade Liberia received $41.8 million in Military Assistance Program (MAP) grants, as well as $17.7 million in Foreign Military Sales Financing (FMF) loan guarantees to buy weaponry and other equipment from the United States, and $5.3 million to enable more than 300 Liberian soldiers to be trained under the International Military Education and Training (IMET) Programme. This security assistance was provided in exchange for the right to maintain US installations in Liberia, particularly strategic communications facilities.38 The consequences are many. Militarization of the many ECOWAS members led to further impoverishment, deprivation, misery and poverty for the people. Colossal amounts of money were spent on the import of arms and for military budgets. Such wasteful expenditure led to the debt problems of many of these countries making them highly susceptible to external domination and dictates.

Now after the end of Cold War, most major powers showed no interest in Africa’s security crises. They advocate the idea that African problems are the creation of their own and as such are to be managed by them alone. Of course Africans are also keen

38 Daniel Volman, *opcit.*, 9
to reject non-interference in their own affairs, and that they are the ones to take measures that would solve their crises. However, they did not deny the fact that they depend on others for assistance. As the debate goes on on this matter, the view of urgency to help Africans in managing their conflict seems to gain better ground among the international community. That is, the call for the “enhancement of African peacekeeping capacity”. If foreigners were no longer willing to die in African “hells on earth”, the majority of Africans were to give whatever it might require to bring back peace in their trouble land. These committed Africans however, needed to be properly trained and adequately equipped. And in this, the international community had to assist and support them. One point most agreed upon was that the international community had the “responsibility to help build Africa’s capacity to help itself, in peacekeeping as in other areas. 39

2.5. The role of ECOWAS leadership

African leadership from independence to the present is to be blamed for many problems that undermine Africa’s development and prosperity. This ranges from dictatorship at home, to being agents for foreign powers’ interests that are detrimental to the continent. In other words, external powers role in undermining Africa’s peace and stability explained earlier, was supported by leaders and important figures within the African elite themselves. In essence, no internal affairs of any state in the world had so far and are still being manipulated by extra-continental powers like those of Africa. It is of little wonder that in 1996 alone, 14 of the 53 countries of Africa were afflicted by armed conflicts, accounting for more than half of all war-related deaths worldwide and resulting in more than 8 million refugees, returnees and displaced

39 Anatole Ayissi, op cit., p.8
persons. Examples and facts are many in this domain. But the West African leadership alone is sufficient enough to provide substantial evidences. Several military coups among ECOWAS members were orchestrated from outside. The late president of Côte d’Ivoire, Houphouët-Boigny revealed some facts in an interview with the French-language weekly magazine, *June Afrique*, issue No. 1048, February 4, 1981. He said: “destabilization is not a new thing. Did you know why Idi Amin made his coup in 1972? It was not he who did it, but the British. He did not even know what he wanted himself. It was the same in Ghana, when the military overthrew Nkrumah. They came to see me. I asked them why. They replied: ‘All is not well any more.’ That is all! I also asked them what they were going to do; they did not know. People outside knew it for them”. This clearly means number of coups takes place without any specific reason, and thus brings to a halt development projects of previous government, if there were any. It is already explained that many of such new leaders were strongly supported by foreign powers. Although many leaders advocate self-reliance, yet many others especially authoritarian allies among Francophone community want France’s influence maintained.

Acts of brutal violation of human and civil rights by many incumbent leaders were the main causes that fostered rebellions and ethnic hatred between various tribes and ethnicity. In Liberia, Doe’s regime relied heavily on a military dominated by his won Krahn ethnic group. After the election of 1985 that was marked by obvious fraud, a coup attempt against him was foiled. Consequently, massive reprisals were launched against the Gio and Mano tribes, who were considered supporters of the attempt. The civil war in the aftermath of such events was consequently motivated by tribal reasons. In Niger too, throughout the reign of Kountche, discontent were expressed in

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40 Ibid., p.5
his favouring members of his relatives and his Zerma tribe over others. In the same manner, the present crisis in Cote d’Ivoire is partially blamed on the country’s elite policies after the late Boigny for discriminating against the tribes of the north. The issue was made worse when the northerner presidential candidate Alassane Oudara was prevented from standing in the election because his native origin belongs to Burkina Faso.

Mistrust, division, and suspicion among ECOWAS leaders also undermine the efforts for economic integration, let alone political. For example, since the beginning, Houphouet-Boigny differed with Nkrumah in the structural shape independent African states should take, as stated before. He also supported the secessionist rebel movement of Biafra and committed his country to advancing its cause in the international arena. Cote d’Ivoire during his era became a haven to many political exiles from Nigeria, Ghana, and Guinea. France for quite long time had the intention of establishing strong bilateral trade ties with the authoritarian military government of Nigeria. This development was only possible after the death in December 1993 of Boigny, who viewed Nigeria as a regional threat. 42 He is also known of being very pro-French and the West. He followed a policy of complicity and compromise with them. Over the years, whilst other African states have protested against French nuclear tests in the Sahara and have been strident in their denunciation of French military interventions in Chad, Zaire, Gabon, Biafra and elsewhere, The Ivory Coast has been known to welcome and encourage some of these French initiatives. 43 In the same manner, while Nigeria and other ECOWAS leaders followed a stern policy towards South Africa’s apartheid regime, the Ivorian president advocated a compromise and in fact, established diplomatic relations with it.

42 Peter J. Schraeder, *opcit.*, p. 211
The Akosombo Accord that was signed by Liberian war factions in 1994 under the initiatives of Rawlings of Ghana failed because of mistrust from some Liberian civilian leaders, as well as some ECOWAS leaders. With a reputation in West Africa as a man of action, Rawlings appeared to have edged Nigeria out of the Liberian peace process. Certainly a number of Nigerian leaders were reported to be uneasy over the friendship that seemed to have developed between Rawlings and Taylor, who in the past had refused to co-operate in any of their peace initiatives. Apart from holding private conversations in Ghana, Taylor’s hastily acceptance of the Akosombo Accord while discussions were still underway on the possibility of expanding the Council (from five to six members), as well as his proposed position as its First Vice-Chairman in charge of security and foreign affairs, gave rise to intense suspicion that Rawlings was prepared to compromise on a range of issues simply to get his own sponsored agreement signed. The Nigerians who had been attempting their best since 1990 were evidently less content about the credit Rawlings hoped to gain from successful diplomacy that would increase his political status as an international statesman.

African leaders especially those involved in conflicts, are most of the time reluctant to reach a peaceful compromise that does not safeguard their personal interests. This is a general characteristic found in different parts of the continent. Richard Holbrooke, the US Permanent Representative to the UN, used his time as chair of the Security Council to declare January 2000 “Africa Month” and threw his weight behind resolving the Congo war. But after convening in New York, the key players in the conflict failed to take advantage of the opportunity to work out a peace accord. The

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44 Max Ahmadu Sesay, *opcit.*, pp. 399-400
45 John Stermlau, *opcit.*, p. 123
same mentality had been witnessed over and over again in the long process of peace in Liberia, particularly on the part of Taylor. Yet after settlement succeeded and the Council of State was established, instead of compromising for the sake of peace, he and Kromah influenced the Council to send an elite police unit to arrest ULIMO leader, Johnson for murder charges. After all, the high number of deaths resulting from the civil war had been started by Taylor, who himself had been accused of executing some of his supporters. While never denying the murder charges, Johnson saw no reason why he should be treated differently from other warlords. The consequence was a renewed of fighting in and outside Monrovia at the cost of expected security tranquility.

Another inconsistency in ECOWAS leaders efforts for regional security, is demonstrated in the struggle to restore the ousted Sierra Leone elected government. Because while the initiative was going on under the leadership of Nigeria, the Nigerian government itself as mentioned before, was not democratic. Amazingly, nine months before that event, the democratic government of Nigeria was overthrown by Ibrahim Mainassara, who was known to be a close friend of Nigerian Sani Abacha. And no exception was taken against that. Moreover, few years later, another counter coup took place in the same country by Mousa Mallam Wanké, and inaction was the reaction of ECOWAS/ECOMOG again.

One more cause of political and security deterioration among ECOWAS is incumbency, which means, the monopoly of many years of political posts and power. Most of the top elite in West Africa belongs to the first and second post-independence generations, giving no opportunity to new young figures in their respective countries. Some of these leaders led their countries to independence, but then clung to power

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46 Max Ahmadu Sesay, opcit., p. 403-404
like traditional African tribal chiefs to rule for life. Houphouet-Boigny ruled Côte d’Ivoire for 32 years until his natural death. The president of Togo Gnassingbe Eyadema ruled for 32 years. Siaka Stevens ruled Sierra Leone for 17 years till his death. When their contributions to their respective countries are evaluated, most of them are found to have only underdeveloped their nations. They have rather developed a system of patronage, greed, corruption, ethnic politics, and repression to perpetuate their clinging to power. Post-colonial African leaders imposed authoritarian rule on their people, crushed dissent, muffled the media, jailed opposition leaders without trial and fanned the flames of ethnic conflicts. For example, Siaka Stevens robbed his country of its resources, and in his own way wrecked most of the valuable institutions of his country. He replaced competent ones, filling government positions with his cronies and with people from his Limba ethnic group. He censored the press and muffled any dissent from his opposition.

This political trend can only be tackled by democratization, that is, congressional, or parliamentary and presidential elections.

In the final analysis, any real progress towards greater economic and political integration in West Africa – and hence the survival and success of ECOWAS- is predicated upon the emergence of an able, honest and dedicated political leadership truly committed to the ideals of Pan-Africanism and African unity and able and willing to translate these into concrete decisions and actions for the benefit of their people.

\[47\] David N. Abdual, *op. cit.*, p. 76

\[48\] David N. Abdual, *op. cit.*, p. 75