

ECOWAS AND CONFLICT RESOLUTION IN LIBERIA: ECOMOG INTERVENTION AND NEGOTIATIONS

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A number of countries in the West African sub-region have been devastated by armed conflicts which had regional, social, economic and political implications. These conflicts had threatened the fundamental objectives underlying the establishment of Economic Community of West African States (ECOWAS) which were to promote regional cooperation and regional economic integration among member countries.

These conflicts had degraded human capacity and eroded developmental gains in the West African sub-region especially the conflict in Liberia, had catastrophic consequences within and beyond West Africa. Consequently, ECOWAS has to evolve its own peculiar means of resolving the conflicts based on the observation that there can be no regional economic integration in the absence of regional peace and security.

THE LIBERIAN CONFLICT: 1989 – 2003

The Liberian crisis which attracted international attention in 1989 did not evoke any serious response from the regional or

international community. The USA even sent marines to evacuate their citizens and to protect its Satellite Tracking Station (STS) located in the Liberian capital, Monrovia. Up to that stage, the conflict was reported as strictly the internal affair of Liberia; neither the OAU now African Union nor ECOWAS made any serious efforts to intervene, although there were calls for negotiations for a peaceful settlement.

From the analysis of Lt. General C.I. Obiakor (2013), former Force Commander (FC), United Nations Mission in Liberia (UNMIL), the battle for Monrovia took a new turn in 1990 when several foreign embassies were ransacked by the rebel forces of the National Patriotic Front of Liberia (NPFL) and the Independent National Patriotic Front (INPFL) whereby foreign nationals were either maimed or killed.

THE FIRST LIBERIAN CIVIL WAR: 1989 – 1996

The immediate history of the Liberian crisis can be traced back to the assassination on 12th April, 1980 of President William Tolbert and other key officials in his government by Master-Sergeant Samuel Doe. By 1980, the Americo-Liberians represented only 5% of the population of Liberia estimated at 2.8 million. Before the coup of 12th April 1980, government function was based on appointment of the Presidents relatives into sensitive positions. The civil liberties of the citizens were seriously trampled upon. Corruption was encouraged within the civil services and public servants were mostly concerned with the three persons: **me, myself and I**. The True Whig Party (TWP) was the only political party in Liberia and Dr. Amos Sawyer and Dew Mason

encountered tremendous difficulties before they founded their political party in 1973, known as the Movement for Justice in Africa (MOJA). Then situation led to bitterness, frustration and determination for the few elite indigenous Liberians **(Sesay, 1992:31)**.

As a result of bad policies of Tubman's regime, inflation rose sharply and unemployment was put between 20 to 25%. A riot was organised in April 1979 by the Baccus Mathews-led Progressive Alliance of Liberia (PAL). Security forces stormed the headquarters of the PAL and arrested key personnel. In the process, Liberian forces destroyed lives and property **(Sesay, 1992:34)**. Fortunately, on the eve of the 16th Organisation of African Unity (OAU) Summit in Monrovia, July 1979, the detained men were released and PAL was eventually allowed to form a political party

Then, the Peoples Progress Party (PPP) emerged and on the 7th March 1980, it called a general strike to force the then President of Liberia out of office. The next day, the leaders of PPP were rounded up and charged with an attempt to topple by force, the legal government of Liberia. Sequel to the alleged trial, the government determination to execute the alleged **"coup plotters"** filtered to the rank and file of the Liberian Army. On the 12th April 1980, two days before the planned riots, 17 non-commissioned officers of the Liberian Army led by Master-Sergeant Samuel Doe overthrew the Liberian Government. Master-Sergeant Doe, then 28 years of age became the first indigenous son of Liberia to be head of state after 133 years of Americo-Liberian domination, 1847-1980.

According to ***Lt. General Victor Malu (2012)***, the former ECOMOG Force Commander in Liberia and Chief of Army Staff, Nigerian Army, Samuel Doe established a military regime called the People's Redemption Council (PRC) and enjoyed early support from large number of indigenous Liberian tribes who had been excluded from power since the founding of the country in 1847 by freed American slaves.

As a reward for PPP and MOJA's role in the successful coup, most of the prominent indigenous elites were appointed into former reserved positions in Doe's cabinet. The relationship between Doe's Peoples Redemption Council (PRC) and the political groups were however short-lived. Samuel Doe appointed people from his ethnic group, the majority Khran tribe, into very sensitive government positions. The mismanagement of the economy and corruption in the government caused the economy to nose-dive. Doe's coercive regime itself became neck-deep in the same sins that it had accused its predecessor of committing against indigenous Liberians (***Sesay, 1992:35-36***).

Any hope that President Doe would improve the way Liberia was run was put aside as he quickly clamped down on opposition, fuelled by his paranoia of a counter-coup attempt against him.

In October 1985, the presidential election was rigged in favour of President Samuel Doe. However, Doe banned political parties such as Amos Sawyer's LPP and harassed opposition leaders in order to prevent them from contesting the election. As a result of his reigning terror, Brig. General Thomas Quiwonkpa, the former Commanding General of the Armed Forces of Liberia (AFL) who Doe had demoted and forced to flee Liberia, attempted to

overthrow Doe's regime on the 12th November 1985, from the neighbouring country Sierra Leone. The coup attempt failed and General Quiwonkpa was killed coupled with large scale crackdown in Nimba County, north of the country, against the Gio and Mano tribes where the majority of the coup plotters came from (***National Concord, 13th November, 1985***).

Charles Taylor, a former member of President Doe's cabinet, who had been accused of embezzlement then escaped to Cote d'Ivoire where he assembled and recruited a group of rebels (mostly ethnic Gios and Manos who felt persecuted by Doe) which later became known as the ***National Patriotic Front of Liberia (NPFL)***.

Taylor thereafter crossed back into Liberia from Cote d'Ivoire on 24th December, 1989 and within six months took over about 25% of the Liberian landmass. Samuel Doe undertook a mass killing of the Gios and the Manos from Nimba County which he believed to have been the base and tribesmen of General Quiwonkpa (***Sesay, 1992:40***).

This generated refugees and tensions which in turn inflamed bitter opposition to Doe's regime. Prince Yormie Johnson, an NPFL fighter under Charles Taylor, split to form his own guerrilla force after crossing the border which he named ***Independent National Patriotic Front of Liberia (INPFL)*** based on the Gio tribe.

The Liberian insurrection soon evolved into an ethnic conflict which further became a civil war between Yormie Jonson's INPFL, Charles Taylor's NPFL and Samuel Doe's Armed Forces of Liberia (AFL). The former was served by the Gio and Mano ethnic

population and the later was made up of mostly the elements of Doe's Khran tribe and their Mandingo allies. In one of Doe's brutal raids, over 5000 people mainly women and children of the Gio and Mano tribes were massacred. By December 1990, it was estimated that at least 10,000 people had been killed, **(Sesay, 1992:42-43).**

Over 3,000 foreign nationals in Monrovia were also killed by the NPFL and INPFL. The foregoing is a sufficient demonstration of the deadly and devastating consequence of the Liberian conflict that may derive from the mismanagement of the Liberian diversity and national economy.

ECOWAS INTERVENTION IN LIBERIA

Sequel to the request made to ECOWAS by the then Liberian President Samuel Doe coupled with the Liberian crisis that has assumed an intolerable level of intensity, the ECOWAS Standing Mediation Committee (SMC) comprising Nigeria, Ghana, Togo, Mali, Gambia, Guinea and Sierra Leone was formed in May, 1990 in Banjul to mobilise diplomatic efforts to resolve the conflict. The SMC met in Freetown at ministerial level in July.

On the 6th and 7th of August 1990, the ECOWAS SMC held its first summit meeting at the Kairaba Conference Centre Banjul, attended by five ECOWAS Heads of State and Government namely General Ibrahim Babangida (Nigeria), Flt. Lt. Jerry Rawlings (Ghana), General Joseph Momoh (Sierra Leone), Sir Dauda Jawara (Gambia) and General Lansana Conte (Guinea). Also in attendance were the foreign ministers of Togo, Mali, a member of the Liberian Inter-Faith Mediation Committee and the

then OAU Secretary General Dr. Salim Ahmed Salim (**Obasi, 1992:177**).

After a critical review of the Liberian situation, the SMC noting the wanton destruction of human life and property, the displacement of persons, the plight of foreign nationals particularly ECOWAS citizens, the SMC agreed on a comprehensive plan for restoring peace and security in Liberia. That plan, as contained in the Communiqué issued at the end of the summit provided:

- i.** That the warring parties observe an immediate ceasefire;
- ii.** That an ECOWAS Ceasefire Monitoring Group (ECOMOG) be constituted, with troops drawn from Member States of the ECOWAS Standing Mediation Committee as well as from Guinea and Sierra Leone, placed under a Commander provided by the Republic of Ghana and assisted by a Deputy provided by the Republic of Guinea, for the purpose of keeping the peace, restoring law and order and ensuring that the ceasefire is respected;
- iii.** That a broad based Interim Government be set up by the Liberians themselves, through a national conference of political parties, warring parties and other interest groups;
- iv.** That none of the leaders of the warring factions should head the Interim government and that whoever heads it should be ineligible to stand for presidential election;
- v.** That the interim Government establish an independent and acceptable Electoral Commission, for the organisation of general and presidential elections which should be held in 12 months;

- vi.** That the elections be open to international observation with ECOWAS Observer Group constituted at the appropriate time, to ensure that it is free and fair;
- vii.** That in view of the substantial material and financial resources necessary to make ECOMOG and the Election Observer Group possible, a special Emergency Fund be established with an initial capital of 50 million US Dollars generated through voluntary contributions from ECOWAS Member States and third parties (donor governments and agencies); and
- viii.** That the entire international community, particularly members of the United Nations Security Council, lend support to ECOWAS humanitarian and political initiatives in Liberia, in the interest of the African people as a whole, and for the overall maintenance of international peace and security (***Final Communiqué: ECOWAS SMC, Banjul 6-7 August, 1990.***)

Following the Banjul decision of the ECOWAS standing Mediation Committee to establish ECOMOG, five countries – Nigeria, Ghana, Guinea, Sierra Leone and the Gambia agreed to contribute to the multilateral force for the Liberian mission code-named “***Operation Liberty***”. Due to the precarious situation in Liberia at the time, it was decided that the troops would assemble in Freetown before the movement to Monrovia. The ECOMOG forces assembled as planned between 8th and 15th August, 1990 under the command of Ghana’s ***Lt.-General Arnold Quainoo.***

The ECOWAS peace plan was accepted by Prince Yormie Johnson, leader of the Independent National Patriotic Front of Liberia (INPFL) and President Samuel Doe. However, Charles Taylor of the National Patriotic Front of Liberia (NPFL) not only rejected the peace proposal but threatened to kill a Nigerian or Ghanaian for each Liberian killed by ECOMOG forces (***The Guardian, 31st August, 1990***).

And as a tangible expression of their opposition to ECOMOG, NPFL troops stormed the embassies of the participating countries and held a number of their national hostage. In addition, the NPFL stayed away from the fresh peace talks scheduled to begin in Freetown just as the ECOMOG troops were being assembled, (***Daily Champion, 30th August, 1990***).

With one of the most important parties in the Liberian conflict poised for a show down, ECOMOG would either have to suspend its landing in Liberia until a more auspicious political environment was created or push ahead and risk becoming directly involved in the war. Although ECOMOG went ahead to land in Monrovia on 24th August 1990, its strength of only 3,500 cannot possibly be regarded as one deployed for decisive military confrontation. It was merely expected to monitor a ceasefire which it was hoped would have been successfully brokered by the ECOWAS Standing Mediation Committee.

Upon landing however, ECOMOG discovered it had no peace to keep. Rather it was confronted by an open declaration of war against it by the NPFL rebels already convinced about an impending military victory. As narrated by ***Lt. General Victor***

Malu (2012), ECOMOG at this initial stage had set for itself a very limited objective. This was to secure a buffer zone that would allow for uninterrupted movement by clearing the resistance and harassment from the NPFL as it was then becoming impossible for ECOMOG to operate under the circumstances, with only 3,500 strongman force under fire from warring factions especially NPFL. ECOMOG's mandate was changed from peace-keeping to peace-enforcement. Subsequently, ECOMOG's strength increased from 3,500 to 6,000 and then to 12,000.

As **Lt. General Victor Malu (2012)** puts it;

These strategic changes practically enabled, strengthened and emboldened ECOMOG to deploy fully albeit under violent opposition from Charles Taylor's NPFL.

The friendship that developed between Prince Yormie Johnson-led Independent National Patriotic Front of Liberia (INPFL) and ECOMOG made ECOMOG and the INPFL to start deploying their forces for joint patrols and guard duties. Unfortunately, on 9th September 1990, Prince Johnson took advantage of this relationship, abducted and murdered President Samuel Doe who had arrived without invitation at ECOMOG Headquarters on a visit to the ECOMOG Force Commander, Lt. General Arnold Quainoo (***National Concord, 10th September, 1990***).

As President Doe was captured and killed by INPFL forces, the expectation was that the worst in the Liberian crisis was over. This was because both the NPFL and INPFL had considered the continued presence and stay in power of President Samuel Doe

as the main reason for the intractable and irresolubility of the Liberian crisis. But the death of Samuel Doe merely deepened the existing contradictions. His Chief of Army Staff and Presidential Guards Commander, Brigadier General David Nimley announced the formation of a National Interim Council headed by him. According to ***Lt. General Malu (2012)***, then the battle between NPFL, INPFL and the Armed Forces of Liberia (AFL) became more clearly defined whereby all factions continued to struggle for the control of Liberian Executive Mansion in Monrovia. With military discipline absent and bloodshed throughout the capital region, Charles Taylor's hostility towards ECOMOG and the realisation of his Presidential Ambition, increased.

On the 29th September 1990, the official mandate of ECOMOG was reviewed and changed. It was now to use force to impose and enforce the Ceasefire. The incident of abduction and killing of Samuel Doe obviously cast a doubt on the responsibility and suitability of the Force Commander who was subsequently replaced by Major General Joshua Dogonyaro in October 1990 (***James, 1992:141***).

ECOMOG continued with its peace enforcement duties while other eight ethnic groups had emerged. Soon, the conflict degenerated into a full scale ethnic war. This made ECOMOG's task more difficult requiring much more diplomatic efforts on the part of ECOWAS.

The fighting capability of ECOMOG was enhanced with deployment of more men and material from Nigeria and Ghana. The objective of the new combative peace enforcement army was

still limited. It was to liberate Monrovia town, secure the strategic Spriggs Payne Airport, to dislodge the NPFL rebels from its strongholds at Buchanan seaport and the Robertsfield Airport, to reactivate essential services like the damaged electrical and water supply infrastructure in Monrovia (***The Independent, 10th September, 1990***).

ECOMOG OPERATION AND NEGOTIONS IN LIBERIA

On 24th October, 1990 the INPFL and the AFL signed an agreement on cessation of hostilities and despite Charles Taylor's NPFL and unending ceasefire violations, Amos Sawyer, Charles Taylor and Yormie Johnson came up to meet in Bamako, Mali in November 1990 and then in Lome, Togo in February – March 1991, (***The Concord, 2nd May 1991***).

By November 1990, ECOMOG's strategy of limited offensive had accomplished much of its basic objectives. By the time the well attended extraordinary summit of ECOWAS met in Bamako between 27th and 28th November 1990, the NPFL of Charles Taylor which is the main contending force in Liberia, for the first time, were prepared to accept a ceasefire (***The Guardian, 29th November, 1990***).

Apart from the ceasefire, the Bamako Peace Accord also included other provisions and features. The ECOWAS Peace Plan outlined in August 1990 in Banjul, was now endorsed by all Heads of State. The ECOMOG was to be expanded to allow for participation of other interested countries. The Interim

Government of Prof. Amos Sawyer was to be reorganised to include two Vice Presidents, the first from NPFL, the second from INPFL, a Speaker and Deputy Speaker from INPFL and NPFL respectively. The accord also provided for elections to be held within one year to be supervised by international community ***(The Guardian, 29th November, 1990).***

The two summits resulted in the signing of agreements by the three leaders who also agreed with the arrangements for convening an All-Liberian National Conference in Monrovia. This conference was held from 15th March to 20th April, 1991 in Virginia, Liberia which was attended by 151 delegates from political parties, warring factions, interest groups, a large number of Liberians and country representatives. ECOWAS SMC was also represented as well as UN and OAU now AU. Prof. Amos Sawyer was also endorsed by the conference as Interim President and Dr. Peter Naigow as Vice- President. However, Prof. Sawyer offered Charles Taylor and his NPFL a large number of the seats in the Interim Government but the NPFL rejected the offer and intensified violence against ECOMOG. Charles Taylor refused to recognise the Interim Government, insisting that the signing of the accord should have terminated the government. The warring factions also refused to disarm. The meeting was still useful in preserving the unity of ECOWAS which was profoundly shaken by conflicting positions taken towards the Liberian crisis by member states, pre-summit consultations, especially the visit of ECOMOG contact group to pro-NPFL states like Libya, Cote D'Ivoire and Burkina Faso to produce a benign reproachment ***(National Concord, 27th December, 1990).***

The various warring factions, however, showed no serious commitments towards sustaining the momentum of the peace process as they did not only refuse to disarm but embarked on massive rearmament. This necessitated another meeting in Lome in February 1991 under the auspices of the ECOWAS Standing Mediation Committee (SMC), during which the rival groups accepted to refrain from importing or acquiring weapons or war materials and confine their troops to positions to be determined by ECOMOG (***The Guardian, 14th February, 1991***).

The fragile peace prevailing in Liberia gave way to serious confrontation between Charles Taylor's forces and the Sierra Leonean Army in March 1991. The Sierra Leonean government had accused Taylor's NPFL of illegal mining across the border and of sponsoring the rebel group operating in eastern Sierra Leone (***Defence Strategy Review, March-April, 1991***).

The invasion of Sierra Leone by Charles Taylor's NPFL forces although eventually contained, nevertheless increased the dangerous prospects of the spill over of the Liberian crisis to neighbouring countries and hence the imperative necessity of finding a comprehensive solution. Much of the initiative for seeking such a solution was taken by President Houphouet Boigny of Cote D'Ivoire who attempted to use his leverage with Charles Taylor to secure a series of agreements in 1991. The most important of these agreements was the Yamoussoukro IV Accord by which the various factions were expected to disarm and encamp preparatory to free and fair democratic elections. The ECOWAS-ECOMOG officials and the International

Negotiation Network (INN) held a number of consultative meetings. Following these meetings, Prof. Sawyer and Charles Taylor accepted to pledge their reconciliation in Yamoussoukro, Cote D'Ivoire, on 30th June, 1991 in the presence of the Heads of State and Government of ECOWAS countries (***The National Concord, 1st July, 1991***).

This procedural agreement was endorsed by the UN Security Council but there was no progress in its implementation. ECOWAS authorities held a summit in Dakar, Senegal from 27th-29th July, 1992 and threatened to impose economic sanctions against NPFL. The latter reacted by launching a massive military campaign against ECOMOG. The UN Security Council met and endorsed ECOWAS decisions and imposed a general and complete embargo on all deliveries of weapons and military equipment to Liberia. Ambassador Trivor-Somer was appointed as the Special Representative of the UN Secretary General to Liberia (***Vogt, 1992***).

The Yamoussoukro accords were reinforced by the Geneva Agreement. In the latter agreement, ECOMOG was expected to complete the occupation of Liberia by 6th May, 1992 (***Africa Research Bulletin, 31st May, 1992***).

The encampment and disarmament of armies, the documentation of personnel, weapons and ammunition as well as creation of and storage for weapons at designated centres were to run concurrently and were to be completed by 8th June, 1992.

As part of ECOMOG's efforts to implement the Yamoussoukro and Geneva Accords, the then new ECOMOG Force Commander,

Major General Ishaya Bakut, deployed his men in small units all over Liberia in May 1992, in his determination to supervise and implement disarmament without the use of force. Ghanaian troops were deployed at the seaport of Buchanan, a mixture of Nigerian and Ghanaian troops were in Gbanga, Senegalese troops were in Vahun.

The exercise ran into difficulties due to the activities of NPFL which was hostile to ECOMOG troops deployed to its territory. The movement of the soldiers were restricted and they were forbidden from carrying their weapons when leaving their place of abode for town, which often led to conflicts that developed between NPFL militants and ECOMOG troops. The worst incident occurred when a dispute developed between a party of Senegalese and hostile NPFL fighters in Vahun. In the process, six Senegalese soldiers were killed (***West Africa Magazine, 23rd - 29th August, 1992***).

The then ECOMOG Force Commander, Major General Ishaya Bakut had to recall his soldiers in the face of real danger to their lives. War soon broke out again in October 1992 between the NPFL and ECOMOG. In view of the deteriorating situation in Liberia, the ECOWAS Chairman President Nciphore Soglo requested for an urgent meeting of the authority of Heads of State. He failed to attract the necessary 2/3 quorum because several members considered a fresh meeting to examine new initiatives superfluous.

After sixteen summits and meetings at various levels to deal with Charles Taylor's intransigence since ECOWAS became involved in

the Liberian crisis, several Heads of State were becoming increasingly reluctant about further participation in meetings. The fresh initiative had to be limited eventually to a Joint Meeting of the ECOWAS Standing Mediation Committee and the Committee of five. In the communiqué issued at the end of the meeting, members noted the intensification of hostilities between the United Liberation Movement of Liberia for Democracy (ULIMO), INPFL, NPFL and the hostage taking by NPFL of over 500 ECOMOG troops, deployed to NPFL controlled territory as part of the disarmament and encampment exercise and the unprovoked and premeditated armed attack by NPFL against ECOMOG forces. While pledging absolute neutrality of ECOMOG forces, the Force Commander however maintained the right of ECOMOG as a peacekeeping force to defend itself against armed attacks from any quarters. It however urged all the warring factions to ensure the strict observance of a ceasefire throughout Liberia (***West Africa Magazine, October, 1992***).

The meeting decided to set up a Ceasefire Monitoring Committee made up of Benin, Burkina Faso, Cote d'Ivoire, Ghana, Guinea, Nigeria, Senegal and Togo. The mission of the committee was three-fold: inform the warring parties concerned of the decision of this meeting; closely monitor the strict implementation within 15 days from the declaration of the deadline; and to meet five days before the deadline to assess the extent of implementation of the Yamoussoukro IV Accord (***West Africa Magazine, 2nd – 8th November, 1992***).

The communiqué threatened the imposition of sanctions against any party which fails to comply with the Yamoussoukro IV Accord and decided to make the necessary representation to the UN Security Council as the sanctions enforcement body.

By the time of Cotonou meeting in October 1992, ECOMOG was forced to shed its peace-keeping image for a peace-enforcement role in the face of a desperate NPFL offensive. Additional Battalions including a Tank-Battalion were rushed in from Nigeria. Aircrafts ferried in both men and ammunition over long distances to the small Spriggs Payne Airport which itself was being threatened. As Lt. General Obiakor (2013) aptly puts it;

ECOMOG succeeded in dealing with NPFL menace via its enforcement and superior fire power capability which once more pushed Charles Taylor's recalcitrant NPFL to the negotiating table.

At the height of the war, the UN Security Council passed Resolution 788 requesting among other things, the Secretary General to dispatch urgently a Special Representative to Liberia, followed by the deployment of a 360-man UN Observer Mission in Liberia (UNOMIL); **(West Africa 22nd - 29th November, 1992).**

By July 1993, negotiations between the interim Government and the warring factions in Liberia had produced the Geneva II Accord. This accord was followed closely by the Cotonou Accord which combined elements of the Geneva Accord to produce a comprehensive peace agreement. This agreement provides for:

- i.** A Liberian National Transition Government (LNTG) to replace the interim government and the National Patriotic Reconstruction Assembly Government of Charles Taylor.
- ii.** The LNTG is to be composed of a five-man council of state with rotational chairmanship of two months.
- iii.** The LNTG must be conducted into office within approximately 30 days from the date of the signing of the agreement.
- iv.** The setting up of the LNTG must be implemented concomitantly with disarmament.
- v.** ECOMOG to take full charge of the disarmament process and the UNOMIL is to ensure that the disarming process is progressing satisfactorily before the new government is installed; (West Africa Magazine, July 1993).

An OAU Special Representative, Canaan Banana joined the UN Special Representative and ECOWAS in brokering the new agreement. Additional troops from Egypt, Zimbabwe, Uganda and Tanzania were expected to join ECOMOG in supervising the disarmament and encampment programme.

However, like all previous agreements, the Cotonou Peace Accord failed in spite of its tremendous promise. Although a new government was constituted within 30 days as provided in the agreement but the disarmament and encampment of the forces of rival factions did not proceed concomitantly as required; **(Stephen Ellis, 2001:57-68).**

Instead of progressing towards peace, Liberia sank into more crisis and more rebel factions emerged e.g. Lofa Defence Force

(LDF) and National Patriotic Front of Liberia-Central Revolutionary Council (NPFL-CRC). The NPFL was seriously challenged by a hitherto non-existent Liberian Peace Council (LPC) to fight it in its areas of control in Sende, Rivercess, and Grand Gedeh counties. At the same time, United Liberation Movement of Liberia for Democracy (ULIMO) suffered a violent internal rift and split along ethnic lines with Alhaji Kromah leading one faction ULIMO-K and John Roosevelt leading the ULIMO-J; **(Hartung, 2005, Vol. XXX, No. 2).**

The seeming intractability of the Liberian impasse has brought disappointment to many. In February 1994, President Jerry Rawlings said that his country is constrained to express disappointment at the lack of progress towards the implementation of the Cotonou Peace Accord and threatened to review Ghana's participation in ECOMOG if there was no progress in the peace process.

Between December 1994 and January 1995, Rawlings as chairman of ECOWAS initiated new moves towards peace in Liberia. On the 21st December 1994, a new Peace Accord was signed by seven factional leaders. A ceasefire was to take effect from December 28th, 1994 whereby a collective presidency would run the country until elections were held in November, 1995; **(West Africa, 22nd – 27th December, 1994).**

However, on the question of who should fill the fifth slot in the 5-man collective presidency, the meeting could not resolve. The position was expected to be filled after a joint agreement between

the Armed Forces of Liberia (AFL), a coalition of Lofa Defence Front (LDF) and the Central Revolutionary Council (CRC).

The Accra talks ended abruptly on January 12, 1995. The Liberian crisis assumed a new dimension on January 14, 1995 as thousands of Liberians took to the streets when the factional leaders returned home without meeting the widespread expectations of a final peace settlement; ***(The Newswatch, 15th January, 1995)***.

The demonstration was a clear and unmistakable expression of the rising frustration and anger of the Liberian masses about their unfulfilled aspirations for peace and stability which was missing as a result of selfishness and crass opportunism of their so called leaders. However, the Abuja Accord of August 1995 achieved relative peace but in April 1996 the NPFL and ULIMO again began fighting in Monrovia, leading to evacuation of most international Non-Governmental-Organisations and the destruction of much of the city.

Finally, in August 1996, these battles were ended by the Abuja Peace Accord in Nigeria, reached between ECOWAS Heads of State and eight (8) Liberian warring factions, agreeing to disarmament and demobilisation by 1997 and elections involving all interest groups in July of that year; ***(The Newswatch, 30th August, 1996)*** and the realisation of Liberia's post war Armed Forces acceptable to all sections of the country's clans and ethnic groups was then envisaged.

PEACE AGREEMENTS SIGNED INCLUDED; The

- i.** ECOWAS Peace Plan – Banjul Communiqué (7 August, 1990)
- ii.** Banjul III Agreement (24 October, 1990)
- iii.** Bamako Ceasefire Agreement (28 November, 1990)
- iv.** Banjul IV Agreement / Joint Statement (21 December, 1990)
- v.** Lome Agreement (13 February, 1991)
- vi.** Yamoussoukro I Peace Accord (30 June, 1991)
- vii.** Yamoussoukro II Peace Accord (29 July, 1991)
- viii.** Yamoussoukro III Peace Accord (17 September, 1991)
- ix.** Yamoussoukro IV Peace Accord (30 October, 1991)
- x.** Geneva I Agreement (7 April, 1992)
- xi.** Geneva II Agreement (17 July, 1993)
- xii.** Cotonou Peace Agreement (25 July, 1993)
- xiii.** Virginia, Liberia Agreements (15 February, 1994)
- xiv.** River-view, Liberia Agreement (28 February, 1994)
- xv.** Akosombo Peace Agreement (12 September 1994)
- xvi.** Committee of Nine at Ministerial Level (October, 1994)
- xvii.** Committee of Nine at Ministerial level (November 1994)
- xviii.** Committee of Nine at Ministerial level: Accra Clarification (12 December, 1994)
- xix.** Accra Agreements/Akosombo Clarification Agreement (21 December, 1994)
- xx.** Accra Mini Summit (24 January, 1995)
- xxi.** ECOWAS Committee of Nine at Abuja (May, 1995)
- xxii.** ECOWAS Committee of Nine (Ministerial) in Accra (7 May, 1996)

xxiii. ECOWAS Committee of Nine “Abuja Peace Agreement”
(The Newswatch, 30th January, 1996).

THE 1997 LIBERIAN ELECTIONS

From the eyewitness account of Lt. General Chikadibia Isaac Obiakor (2013) who was then a Brigadier General and ECOMOG Chief Coordinator for the 1997 Liberian General Elections, he noted that:

Simultaneously, elections for the presidency and national assembly were finally held in July 1997 in consonance with the Abuja Peace Agreement of August 1996, in an atmosphere relatively conducive to free movement and security of persons. The elections were regarded as free and fair by the international community and observers alike whereby Charles Taylor and his National Patriotic Party (NPP) won an overwhelming victory against 12 other presidential candidates.

Charles Taylor took 75 percent of the presidential poll (no other candidate won more than 10 percent) while the NPP won a similar proportion of seats in both parliamentary chambers. On the 2nd August 1997, Ruth Perry handed over power to elected President Charles Taylor; **(Newswatch, 9th August, 1997).**

During his presidential inauguration in Monrovia, Charles Taylor also enjoyed ECOMOG military parade and inspected guard of honour mounted by the same ECOMOG soldiers that he fought over the years with superlative degree of bitterness. The fear and suspicion of ECOWAS member states on Nigeria’s “insincerity

and partiality” were also laid to rest when Charles Taylor, the principal adversary of ECOMOG emerged as the elected and inaugurated President of Liberia.

As General M.L. Agwai (2012) puts it;

The impact of the first Liberian Civil War (1989-1996), which was one of Africa’s bloodiest, claimed the lives of more than 200,000 Liberians and further displaced a million others into refugee camps in neighbouring countries. The entire villages were emptied as people fled from the infamous “Child Soldiers” who committed atrocities, maiming, raping and murdering people of all ages under the influence of drugs and alcohol.

Furthermore, the following “armed and rebel groups” actively participated in the first Liberian civil war:

- i.** Armed Forces of Liberia (AFL)
- ii.** Liberia Peace Council (LPC)
- iii.** Lofa Defence Force (LDF)
- iv.** National Patriotic Front of Liberia (NPFL)
- v.** Independent National Patriotic Front of Liberia (INPFL)
- vi.** National Patriotic Front of Liberia-Central Revolutionary Council (NPFL-CRC)
- vii.** United Liberation Movement of Liberia for Democracy (ULIMO)
- viii.** United Liberation Movement of Liberia for Democracy- Johnson faction (ULIMO-J)
- ix.** United Liberation Movement of Liberia for Democracy- Kromah faction (ULIMO-K) (***Moran, 2008:19***).

Liberia's civil war claimed the lives of one out of every 17 people in the country, uprooted most of the rest and destroyed a once-viable economic infrastructure. The civil strife also spread to Liberia's (River Manu Union) neighbours thereby contributing to a slowing down of the democratisation that was progressing steadily through West Africa at the beginning of the 1990's which in turn destabilised a region that already was one of the world's most marginal **(General Agwai, 2012)**.

THE SECOND LIBERIAN CIVIL WAR: 1999 – 2003

According to Lt. General Obiakor (2013), the first Liberian Civil War ended with the 1997 general elections in which Charles Taylor took power as democratically elected President of Liberia. The Second Liberian Civil War began in April 1999, when Liberian refugees and dissidents under the banner of Organisation of Displaced Liberians (ODL) collaborated with some elements of ULIMO Forces. They reformed, re-organised and metamorphosed as Liberians United for Reconciliation and Democracy (LURD).

With active support from Guinea, LURD invaded Liberia and began fighting from Lofa County with the aim of destabilising President Charles Taylor's government and gaining control of the local diamond field. Thus, Guinea became LURD's main source of military and financial supply. By July 2000, the various dissident groups have coalesced and collapsed under LURD ably led by Sekou Conneh **(Lt. General V.S.L. Malu, 1999:123)**.

Liberians had voted for Charles Taylor in the hope that he would end bloodshed. The bloodshed did slow considerably but it did not end completely as violent events flared up regularly after the putative end of the war. Furthermore, Taylor was accused of backing guerrilla warfare in neighbouring countries and funnelling diamond monies into arms purchase for the rebel armies he supported within and outside Liberia. The Liberian dissidents were thought to be mostly Mandinka and Krahn fighters of the former AFL, ULIMO-J and ULIMO-K but another factor in forming LURD was an alliance, brokered then by ECOMOG-SL Force Commander, General Maxwell Khobe between Liberian dissidents and Sierra Leonean Kamajor hunter militia, including Chiefs Sam Hinga-Norman and Eddie Massally **(General V.S.L. Malu, 1999)**.

Against these dissidents, President Charles Taylor deployed irregular ex-National Patriotic Front of Liberia (NPFL) with his more privileged units, such as Anti Terrorist Unit, positioned to ensure the irregulars fight. Simultaneously in September 2000, there was counter-attack on Guinea from Liberia, Sierra Leone by Revolutionary United Front (RUF) still loyal to President Charles Taylor and Guinean Dissidents which achieved initial success; **(Huband, 2000)**.

By January 2001, however, President Taylor's forces were pushed back inside Sierra Leone and Liberia hence the insurgents were becoming and posing a major threat to the Taylor's government. From the in-depth analysis of Lt. General Obiakor (2013), Liberia was then engaged in three-way conflict with herself, Sierra Leone

and Guinea Republic. By the beginning of 2002, both of these countries were practically supporting LURD, while President Taylor was supporting various opposition factions in both countries. By supporting the Sierra Leonean rebels (RUF) and Guinean dissidents, President Taylor drew the enmity of the British and Americans which increased the British and American pressure on President Taylor with rising financial support for Guinea Republic and UK/US proposed sanctions.

At Klay Junction, by mid-February 2002, LURD troops were just 44 kilometres from Monrovia and this forced President Charles Taylor to declare a state of emergency **(International Crisis Group (ICG), April 2002:8).**

The ICG report of February 2002, says that this attack was made by pursuing a strategy of infiltration of south-western Liberia through the thick bush of Southern Lofa, looping around government strongholds and disrupting supply lines.....while LURD claims between 300 to 500 men were assigned to that mission, the number that actually attacked was likely closer to twenty **(ICG Report, 2002).**

Any image of a large force gradually pushing toward Monrovia is mistaken, hit and run raids, rather than a continuous advance seem to have been the pattern. Through the first half of 2002, LURD mounted raids in Bomi, Bong and Montserrado counties, hitting in addition to Klay Junction, Gbanga and Tubmanburg, each time temporarily seizing control from government fighters, **(ICG Report, 2002:3)**

ECOMOG INTERVENTION

Again, the Liberian Government under President Charles Taylor requested the intervention of ECOWAS due to the escalated fighting between government forces and LURD. Consequently, the Authority of Heads of State and Government met in Yamoussoukro on 17th May, 2002 and took decisions leading to peaceful resolution of the conflict. ECOWAS-led International Contact Group on Liberia (ICGL) comprising the UN, EU, AU, Morocco, Nigeria, France, UK, USA and Ghana was established. Co-chaired by the representative of EU and ECOWAS Chairman, the ICGL had the mandate of facilitating, coordinating and complementing the existing peace initiatives **(Lt. General Obiakor, 2013)**.

These included the negotiation of a ceasefire, the deployment of the UN-financed stabilisation force and support for the creation of an environment for peace building and democracy.

In early 2003, a second rebel group emerged in the south, the Ivoirian-backed Movement for Democracy in Liberia (MODEL) and by the summer of 2003, Taylor's government controlled only a third of the country while LURD controlled the northern third of Liberia as their forces were still threatening Monrovia. As a new bout of fighting began in March 2003 after a relative lull, LURD and MODEL had gained control of nearly two thirds of the country. Regional and international pressure led to the convening of a conference in Accra by the then ECOWAS Chairman, President John Kufuor on 4th June, 2003. By July 2003, Monrovia appeared to be in real danger of being occupied and devastated despite ongoing peace talks, **(Utas, 2004:213)**.

Furthermore, Lt. General Obiakor (2013), mentioned with emphasis that:

On the 29th July 2003, LURD declared ceasefire and ECOWAS sent Nigerian ECOMOG peacekeepers to Liberia. The first battalion came from Sierra Leone, detaching from United Nations Mission in Sierra Leone and the second battalion came from Nigeria itself, which is a practical demonstration of ECOWAS Treaty on Mutual Defence Assistance, 1981.

After intensive diplomatic consultations, President Charles Taylor resigned on 11th August 2003, ahead of the Accra Comprehensive Peace Accord (CPA) which formed the negotiated end of the second Liberian Civil War. ECOWAS then had a ceasefire agreement signed in Akosombo, Ghana on the 17th June, 2003 and the Comprehensive Peace Agreement (CPA) signed in Accra, Ghana on 18th August 2003 (**Jaye, 2003 Vol. 30**).

In support of all these ceasefire and peace agreements, UN mandated the deployment of ECOWAS Mission in Liberia (ECOMIL). On 14th August 2003, the rebels lifted their siege of Monrovia and 200 American troops landed to support the West African Peace Force. Thousands of Liberians and foreigners danced and sang as American troops and ECOMIL (the Nigerian-led West African forces), took over the port and bridges which had split the capital into government and rebel-held zones; (**The Newswatch, 23rd August, 2003**).

For the transitional period, an executive unicameral assembly and all inclusive National Transition Government of Liberia

(NTGL) were provided by the CPA. Vice President Moses Blah handed over power to NTGL on 14th October 2003, which led to the dissolution and dismantlement of irregular forces. In order to facilitate the implementation of the CPA, the Authority of Heads of State and Government engaged in tireless shuttle diplomacy which led President Taylor to be flown into exile in Nigeria on 14th October 2003.

An arrest warrant for President Charles Taylor for war crimes committed by his Revolutionary United Front (RUF) rebel allies in Sierra Leone was later issued by Interpol but Nigeria refused to deport him for a time unless they receive a specific request from Liberia; ***(Newswatch, 20th October, 2003)***.

He was later arrested in 2006 at Nigerian borders with Niger and taken to International Criminal Court (ICC) in Hague, Holland.

At long last, the October 2005 general and presidential elections were won by incumbent President Ellen Johnson-Sirleaf who was initially a strong supporter and cabinet member of President Charles Taylor. She was inaugurated in January 2006, as the first democratically elected female President of Liberia and indeed Africa.