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## **THE COST OF PEACE: ASSESSING THE DOMESTIC IMPACTS OF NIGERIA'S MILITARY DEPLOYMENTS TO ECOMOG OPERATIONS**

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## **Abstract**

*A new wave of thinking is evolving in diplomacy: that of deploying military resources for peace instead of war. This new method which gained currency immediately after the World War II and has come to shape international relations in the beginning of the 21<sup>st</sup> century is constantly bedeviled by far reaching socio-economic implications due to the often haphazard and disarticulated approach of such engagements. Although Nigeria stands tall as a vanguard of peacekeeping around the world, the collateral impacts of these overtures on her domestic affairs has been daunting. From 1960 when she first sent her troops to quell the crisis in the Congo, the country has participated in more than 30 peace missions around the globe, some of which she actually initiated. Nigeria's spearheading of ECOMOG operations was not without some far reaching impacts on the home front. Her experiences in spearheading the ECOMOG missions in Liberia and Sierra Leone came with not only tales of war but other extra-military impacts suffered by the country during and after those operations. This paper attempts to interrogate such domestic fall-outs and argues for a sufficient articulation of such exercises to mitigate long-term impacts.*

**Keywords:** Peace, military deployments, domestic impacts

## **Introduction**

Employing military resources for peaceful ends is fast becoming a viable alternative in military circles especially in a world which has increasingly become less prone to interstate aggression. It has been noticed that the global community is more wont to peaceful diplomacy than provocation and blatant show of strength which was the norm up to the middle of the 20<sup>th</sup> century. The current practice is a coordinated military intervention for the restoration of peace in war zones or a deliberate beef-up of military resources to prevent a breakdown of order. It is generally referred to as peacekeeping missions or Peace support operations. Peacekeeping missions are military policing action undertaken by military personnel and the police, under the authority of a political body – an organization, group of states or in rare cases, a single nation – to support the implementation of an agreed peace. Peace Support Operations are conceived as all the multidimensional activities undertaken by international actors to address the major civil conflicts that occurred in West Africa during the 1990s and early 2000s.(Olonisakin:7) This has remained Nigeria`s strategic option which has won her accolades in diplomatic circles.

While it cannot be denied that Nigeria commands one of the most powerful and visible military in Africa, her posture in the continent has remained non aggressive but predominantly geared towards preventing conflict and maintenance of peace through her peace keeping efforts. Apart from the few years of civil war and her active involvement against the apartheid regime in south Africa in the years during which she was tagged “a frontline state” especially during the Murtala Mohammed era, Nigeria`s armed forces have been involved more than any other in preserving order across the length and breadth of Africa, and her capacity to instill peace and restore order in the continent remains epochal. Instead of using her military might to browbeat other weaker and poorer nations to doing her bidding as in most diplomatic practice, her focus

has been to preserve stability and peace in the continent as exemplified in her acclaimed exploits with ECOMOG in Liberia and Sierra-Leone.

Nigeria has no history of wars with her neighbours except the brief tensions with Chad Republic and Cameroun over boundary misunderstandings which were comprehensively resolved. In fact, The Nigerian Army doctrine is anchored on the need for the Armed Forces to be strategically defensive in posture in line with Nigeria's foreign policy of good neighbourliness and non-aggression. Thus, the Nigeria military doctrine has been based on primarily "Active Defence, Flexible Offensive", which builds upon "Responsive Offensive Doctrine" (Ogah 2009: 263-264). The adaption of Maneuverist Approach to warfare by the Nigerian Army is the fallout of this doctrine. Like China, Nigeria has adopted non-provocation and non-aggression posture towards its neighbours and States in Africa based on the principle of good neighbourliness and peaceful co-existence. The third is politico-strategic and a derivative of the former. Nigeria has no sub-imperial or hegemonic ambition towards its immediate neighbours and the West African Sub-region. The self-sacrificing Nigeria's peacekeeping supports in the West African Sub-region and Africa bear no fruits of even national interest articulations. Such efforts have been largely altruistic. In post-peace support efforts in Congo, Chad, Liberia, Sierra Leone, Rwanda and Sudan, states which did not share the burden of peace support efforts are cultivating and reaping off their resources.(Akpuru-Aja:2012)

The desire to understand the primary motive for Nigeria's intervention and subsequent resolution of conflicts especially in the West African region has been the concern of scholars for decades. This explains the enormous ideas that have been put forward by scholars to explain this phenomenon over the years.

The foreign policy of any nation constitutes an integral part of her overall strategy for survival in a competitive global system. The importance of this dimension of a nation`s grand strategy is aptly captured by Kurt London, when he asserted that foreign policy may be called the father of all things in International Relations. (Kurt: 1965:1)

This perception is corroborated by William Wallace, who identified Foreign Policy as that critical “area of politics which bridges the all-important boundary between the nation state and its international environment” (Wallace: 1971:1)

Accordingly, the over-riding objective of any country`s foreign policy is to promote and protect that “country`s national interests in its interaction with the outside world and relationship with specific countries in the international system. (Olusanya and Akindele:1986:2)

A critical approach to attaining this goal is the formation and maintenance of a functional military to safeguard both internal and external interests. Indeed, Section 217 (2) of the Nigerian constitution provides that the federation shall...equip and maintain the armed forces as may be considered adequate and effective for the purpose(s) of

- a) defending Nigeria from external aggression.
- b) maintaining its territorial integrity and securing its borders from violation on land, sea or air.
- c) suppressing insurrection and acting in aid of civil authorities to restore order when called upon to do so by the president (1979 Constitution of the Federal Republic of Nigeria, Section 217).

Between the attainment of independence in 1960 and the advent of the civil wars which plagued West Africa in the early 1990s, there had emerged some broad and consistent consensus that Nigeria`s national interest consist of the following;

1. The defense of the country's Sovereignty, independence and territorial integrity
2. The restoration of human dignity to black men and women all over the world, and in Africa
3. The creation of the relevant political and economic conditions in Africa and the rest of the world which will not only facilitate the preservation of the territorial integrity and security of all African countries but also foster national self-reliance in African countries,
4. The promotion and improvement of the economic well-being of Nigerian citizen, and
5. The promotion of world peace and justice. (Adeniji: 2000)

While there was a national consensus in support of these broad objectives, each of the governments at the national level since the political independence of the country in 1960, gave its own interpretation of these objectives, according to its own level of emphasis to each of them. A country's foreign policy represents the totality of objectives, orientation and actions which influences it in the quest to cope with its external environment. These foreign policy components are of course reflective of the sum total of those principles which have grown out of its history, political process and leadership, economic and military capabilities. Put differently, foreign policy study projects a state's objectives, orientation, action in response to the external environment n, and its capabilities. These components are interrelated since the goals of foreign policy are a function of the political process by which it is focused partly by its capabilities, and partly by the political processes through which it was selected. (Rosennau :1969: 167)

From inception, Nigeria's foreign policy has been anchored to a large extent, on these principles and objectives. This continuity is noticeable in the restatement of foreign policy objectives in the 1989 and 1999 constitutions as follows.

1. Promotion and protection of national interest,
2. Promotion of the total liberation of Africa and support of African Unity,
3. Promotion of international cooperation for the consolidation of universal peace and mutual respect among all nations and elimination of racial discrimination in all its manifestations,
4. Respect for international law and treaty obligations as well as the seeking of settlement of international disputes by negotiation, mediation, conciliation, arbitration and adjudication, and
5. Promotion of a just world economic order. (The constitution of the Federal Republic of Nigeria 1999)

Nigeria`s role in the liberation of southern Africa from white oppressive minority rule, racism and apartheid, was so decisive that the states conferred the unique title of “front line state.” Nigeria was definitely in the fore-front of the fight against racial discrimination and colonization between 1960 and 1979. Those years definitely constituted the golden age of Nigerian`s foreign policy triumphs. As Sagay rightly observed, the years preceding the Nigerian Civil war, from the dawn of independence on October 1, 1960 were years of Innocence. Nigeria was the beautiful bride of the international community wooed by both the East and West, feted by the common wealth, toasted by the non-aligned nations and respected by the defunct Organization of African Unity. The success of Nigeria in the civil war coupled with the unprecedented reconciliatory approach of the victorious Nigeria government, with its “no victory, no vanquished” Policy, sent the country`s image soaring to great heights. The early seventies were also years of increasing economic prosperity, mainly through the increasing

production of petroleum resources, i.e. oil and gas. With the country's increased moral stature and greater economic power, the country was posed to play a leadership role in the continent. (Garuba:1987)

Angola provided the country with the first opportunity to play the role of big brother in the fight against white minority rule. It will be recalled that Nigeria successfully challenged the pretensions of non-regional big powers (UK and the USA) when General Murtala Muhammed delivered the famous and historic "Africa has come of Age" address to the extra-ordinary summit of the OAU at Addis Ababa, Ethiopia on 11<sup>th</sup> January 1976. There he declared "Africa has come of age. It is no longer in the orbit of any continental power. It should no longer take orders from any country, however powerful". The speech was followed by Nigeria's recognition of the MPLA as the Government of Angola, followed by a massive pouring of material and military support for the MPLA. It could be said that the MPLA was established in Government by Cuba and Nigeria. This was the tone of the country's foreign policy when in August 1979, General Obasanjo's government nationalized the assets of British Petroleum, when the latter was caught exporting oil to South Africa in breach of UN and OAU sanctions.

However, inspite of the accolade which the country garnered from her progressive foreign policy which was in tune with the hopes and aspirations of Africans and Blacks in the Diaspora, the enormous funds expended in this direction can better be imagined and a huge cut of the domestic and equally pressing needs of the country.

One area in which Nigeria has maintained a laudable consistency, is in the area of contribution to international peace keeping. She had contributed forces to virtually every UNO, AU and ECOWAS peacekeeping endeavors since 1960. In fact, Nigeria had the largest number of casualties among international peace-keepers in 2012, according to the United Nations (UN),



which honoured its peace-keepers in the 2013 event at its headquarters in New York. While 111 peacekeepers died last year, Nigeria alone had 17 fatalities, more than 10 per cent and Nigeria is the fifth largest contributor of peace-keepers to the UN with 4,736 serving worldwide. According to the UN secretariat, among the peace-keepers who died in 2012 are 17 from Nigeria, making the country the UN member-state with the most human sacrifice for world peace last year. (GUARDIAN,29<sup>TH</sup>,MAY 2013:p.1)

TABLE 1:  
Nigeria's Participation In Global Peace Support Operations Since Independence

| NO | COUNTRY /AREA  | CODE      | YEAR/ PERIOD | ORGANIZATION | NATURE OF FORCES                 | SIZE                    | TYPE OF PSO                        |
|----|----------------|-----------|--------------|--------------|----------------------------------|-------------------------|------------------------------------|
| 1  | Congo          | ONUC      | 1960-1964    | UN           | Army and police                  | One Battalion           | Peacekeeping and Peace Enforcement |
| 2  | Indo -Pakistan | UNIPOM    | 1963-65      | UN           | Army                             | Few Observers           | Observation                        |
| 3  | New- Guinea    | UNSF      | 1962-63      | UN           | Army and police                  | Few Observers           | Observation                        |
| 4  | Lebanon        | UNIFIL    | 1978-84      | UN           | Army                             | One Battalion and staff | Peacekeeping                       |
| 5  | Iran – Iraq    | UNIMOG    | 1988-91      | UN           | Army, Navy, Air Force            | Few Observers           | Observation                        |
| 6  | Iraq – Kuwait  | UNICOM    | 1991- date   | UN           | Army, Navy, Air Force            | Few Observers           | Observation                        |
| 7  | Angola         | UNAVEM I  | 1991         | UN           | Army, Navy, Air Force and Police | Few Observers           | Observation                        |
| 8  | Angola         | UNAVEM II | 1991-92      | UN           | Army                             | Few Observers           | Observation                        |
| 9  | Angola         | UNAVEM II | 1992-95      | UN           | Army                             | A Detachment            | Observation, Election monitoring   |
| 10 | Namibia        | UNTAG     | 1989-90      | UN           | Police                           | Few Observers           | Observation, Election monitoring   |
| 11 | West Sahara    | MINURSO   | 1992-93      | UN           | Police                           | Few Observers           | Observation, Referendum            |
| 12 | Cambodia       | UNITAC    | 1992-93      | UN           | Police                           | Few Observers           | Observation                        |
| 13 | Somalia        | UNOSOM    | 1992-94      | UN           | Army, Navy, Air Force            | One Battalion           | Peacekeeping                       |
| 14 | Yugoslavia     | UNPROFOR  | 1992-95      | UN           | Army, Navy, Air Force and Police | One Battalion           | Peacekeeping                       |
| 15 | Mozambique     | UNOMOZ    | 1992         | UN           | Police                           | Few Observers           | Observation                        |

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| TABLE 1 - Conclusion |                   |         |              |               |                                 |                    |                                       |
|----------------------|-------------------|---------|--------------|---------------|---------------------------------|--------------------|---------------------------------------|
| NO                   | COUNTRY /AREA     | CODE    | YEAR/ PERIOD | ORGANI ZATION | NATURE OF FORCES                | SIZE               | TYPE OF PSO                           |
| 16                   | Rwanda            | UNAMIR  | 1994-date    | UN            | Army, navy Air Force and Police | One Battalion      | Peacekeeping                          |
| 17                   | Ouzou strip       | UNASOG  | 1994         | UN            | Army                            | Few Observers      | Observation                           |
| 18                   | Israel            | UNITSO  | 1995         | UN            | Army                            | Few Observers      | Observation                           |
| 19                   | Tajikistan        |         | 1994-95      | UN            | Army                            | Few Observers      | Observation                           |
| 20                   | Macedona          |         | 1995         | UN            | Army                            | Few Observers      | Observation                           |
| 21                   | Slovenia          |         | 1996-1998    | UN            | Army                            | Few Observers      | Observation                           |
| 22                   | Kosovo            |         | 1999         | UN            | Army                            | Few Observers      | Observation                           |
| 23                   | Ethiopia /Eritrea |         | 2000-date    | UN            | Army                            | Few Observers      | Observation                           |
| 24                   | Dem. Rep of Congo | MONUC   | 2003- date   | UN            | Army                            | Few Observers      | Observation                           |
| 25                   | Chad              |         | 1981-82      | OAU           | Army and Airforce               | One Brigade        | Peacekeeping                          |
| 26                   | Rwanda            |         | 1994         | OAU           | Army                            | Observer           | Observation                           |
| 27                   | Sudan             |         | 2004-date    | AU            | Army and Airforce               | One Battalion      | Peacekeeping                          |
| 28                   | Liberia           | ECOMOG  | 1990-date    | ECOWAS        | Army, Navy Airforce             | One Division       | Peace Building / Election Supervision |
| 29                   | Sierra Leone      | ECOMOG  | 1998-date    | ECOWAS        | Army, Navy Airforce             | Several Battalions | Election Supervision /Peace Building  |
| 30                   | Cote D'Ivoire     | ECOMOG  | 2003- date   | ECOWAS        | Army                            | Few observers      | Observation                           |
| 31                   | Tanzania          |         | 1964         | Bilateral     | Army                            | One battalion      | Quelling Mutiny                       |
| 32                   | Chad              | HARMONY | 1979         | Bilateral     | Army                            | One battalion      | Peacekeeping                          |
| 33                   | The Gambia        |         | 1993         | Bilateral     | Army, Police                    | Training Team      | Training                              |
| 34                   | Sierra Leone      |         | 1994-date    | Bilateral     | Army                            | Training Team      | Training                              |

Source : Nwolise, O., "The Nigerian Military in Peacekeeping since Independence" in Gbor, J.W.T. (ed). 2004, Military History :Nigeria from Pre- colonial Era to the Present , Lagos ,Longmans Nigeria limited ( the table above excludes Nigeria's current participation in Western Sudanese Region of Darfur under UNAMAID)

### **The ECOMOG experience**

The events which gave rise to the deployment of peacekeepers under the acronym ECOMOG were series of crisis mostly insurrections which engulfed some countries in the West African region with dire implications for the stability of the entire sub-region. The causes of such fisticuffs were dissimilar. According to Olonisakin, the crisis in Liberia was initiated by a relatively unknown rebel force, the National Patriotic Front of Liberia (NPFL) under Charles Taylor, which took up arms against the government of late President Samuel Doe in December 1989 and with external assistance from several neighbouring African countries inclusive of Cote d'Ivoire, and Burkina Faso, was able to make the country ungovernable. In the course of the war, other armed factions, often formed along ethnic lines, emerged to compound the conflict. After seven years of war and at least a dozen peace agreements, Charles Taylor emerged President of Liberia, following elections in 1997. When Liberia was to be engrossed in another round of civil war, the cause was the failure of the Taylor government to embark on genuine reconciliation and peace building .

In Sierra Leone, another rebel force, the Revolutionary United Front (RUF), under Foday Sankoh, challenged successive central governments in the country from 1991. Although this did not result in the proliferation of armed factions, there also emerged other actors, including civil militias and mercenaries known as Executive Outcomes, who fought on the side of the Government of Sierra Leone.(Olonisakin:7)

Nigeria's active participation in the conflict in the West African sub-region which began with the first deployment of her troops under the banner of ECOMOG is a subject of intense debate and controversies largely because of the novelty of the operation and the attendant miss-steps and perception rating of Nigeria under the former military ruler, General Babaginda goaded

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the ECOWAS operation to save the embattled Liberian President, Samuel Doe from impending doom, other less charitable Commentators attribute it to the pursuit of personal economic and business interest in Liberia cleverly disguised in altruistic garb.(Alade:2000:20- 40).

The enterprise was fundamentally controversial not on account of its mission which was to save lives but mainly on perception and internal wrangling leading to the formation of ECOMOG between the Anglo and Franco-speaking members of ECOWAS.

Babangida dismissed critics by insisting that Nigeria could not look the way when the security situation in the region was a threat to international security. This was consistent with the claim and actions of Nigerians and their leaders that the country was destined to provide leadership for Africa and the entire Black race<sup>33</sup>.

He justified his actions on the argument that Nigeria is the only country that every other country was looking up to, to provide the desired leadership.

In pursuing the foreign policy objectives of any nation, the paramount of the leader's perception of the domestic and international situations to which the nation must respond remains strong. The leader is responsible for perceiving and interpreting the reality that confronts his country, and responding as may be deemed appropriate. The policies and actions of nations do not respond to the objectives' facts of the situations...but to their 'image' of the situation. It is what we think the world is like, not what it is really like that determines our behaviour. (William: 1995).

Since the formation and intervention of ECOMOG in 1990, the concept of 'regional peacekeeping operations' has become very attractive in the international circles especially where it is seen as a viable strategy for the maintenance of international peace and security.

The Organization of African Unity (OAU)'s Council of Ministers approved the ECOWAS Peace Plan towards the end of February 1991 and its Secretary General appointed Professor Canaan Banana as an Eminent Person for Liberia. The 1993 Contonou Accord accommodated an expanded ECOMOG force under the auspices of the OAU to be composed of African troops outside the West African region. Tanzania and Uganda sent troops. Assistance from the rest of the world was not forthcoming as the Liberian crisis was reckoned to be an African problem that required an African solution. In the meantime, ECOMOG was having numerous challenges on the field, its neutrality was being questioned and more importantly it was beginning to have credibility problems. With respect to Sierra Leone, the United Nations and the Organization of African Unity urged ECOWAS to send in the troops for the restoration of constitutional government. With the failure of diplomatic efforts and the escalation, ECOMOG's mandate was upgraded from sanction enforcement to actual military intervention resulting in the ousting of the AFRC/RUF government.

The United Nations Security Council (UNSC) took cognizance of the ECOWAS peace plan on 22<sup>nd</sup> January 1991 and on 7<sup>th</sup> May 1992, the Council commended ECOWAS and the Yamoussoukro Accord of 30<sup>th</sup> October 1991. On 7<sup>th</sup> November 1992 the expanded Standing Mediation Committee of ECOWAS invited the United Nations Secretary General to appoint a Special Representative to cooperate with ECOAWS in the implementation of the Peace Plan.

The United Nations Security Council established United Nations Observer Mission in Liberia (UNOMIL) ON September 22 1993. Its tasks were to monitor the cease -fire, verify that ECOMOG is fulfilling its mandate to secure the country and carry out disarmament. It also had the mandate to help co-operate humanitarian relief, report on violations of human rights and to report any major violations of international humanitarian law to the United Nations Secretary

General. The 1993 Cotonou accord made provision for the UN observer Mission in Liberia to help supervise and monitor the agreement in conjunction with ECOMOG. The United Nations Observer Mission in Liberia (UNOMIL) represents a particular interesting new development in the United Nations' "traditional" military observer role.

A major component of the UNOMIL mandate was to oversee the activities of the regional Peacekeepers rather than the Liberian parties themselves. The Cotonou agreement stipulated that the United Nations should deploy military observers to monitor the cease-fire verification and demobilization activities of the new ECOMOG. In the Agreement defining relationship between the two, it was stipulated that UNOMIL and ECOMOG will have separate command structures and neither shall direct the other in its actions. While some degree of peace enforcement powers were conferred on the regional organization, the United Nations force will be including search, seizure and storage for weapons, demobilization of forces and the guarding of encampments.

In the establishment of UNOMIL, there was an attempt by the International community to bring some level of accountability to the ECOMOG forces compelled the United Nations Security Council to specifically address the issue.

The Security Council established the United Nations Observer Mission in Sierra Leone (UNOSIL) in June 1998 to consider the human rights situation in Sierra Leone. In October 1999, the Security Council established the United Nations Mission in Sierra Leone (UNAMSIL). UNAMSIL was to cooperate with the Government and other parties in the implementation of the Lome Peace Agreement and to assist in the implementation of the disarmament, demobilization and reintegration on 7<sup>th</sup> February 2000, the Security Council revised the mandate of UNAMSIL the Mission was authorized to take the necessary action to ensure the security and freedom of movement of its personnel, and within its capabilities and area of deployment, to afford

protection to civilians under imminent threat of physical violence taking into account the responsible of the government of Sierra Leone.

At the time of its intervention in Liberia there was no direct precedent that ECOWAS could follow for the constitution and operation of a regional peace keeping force. The only models available to the ECOWAS leaders were the peacekeeping operations of the United Nations. The convention of the United Nations in peacekeeping operations is to obtain the consent of the parties involved in the conflict, the Armed Forces of Liberia and the independent Patriotic Front of Liberia that was in control of almost 90% of the territory. This immediately placed the operation on a different footing from the United Nations model. ECOWAS leaders and their jurists went the whole length to provide a juridical platform for the presence of the sub-regional force in Liberia. All the reasons commonly canvassed to justify intervention in classical international law were resorted to as the basis for the intervention of ECOMOG. These reasons are discussed below.

It was argued that the security of neighboring States was in serious danger and that the welfare of the entire community was affected. Indeed there were clashes on the Liberia/Sierra Leone borders, and that the stability of Sierra Leone, which was already shaken, was further jeopardized especially by series of armed expeditions from Liberia. There were also armed clashes along the Liberia/ Cot` de' Ivoire border. It cannot be denied that the outflow of refugees from Liberia impacted the welfare of the entire sub-region. Take for instance, before the intervention of ECOWAS, about 500,000 refugees had moved into Guinea, Ghana, and cot d'Ivoire, Sierra Leone, Togo, Nigeria, Gambia and Mali.

The All Liberian Conference of 27<sup>th</sup> August made of various interest groups and community organizations declared, "today there is no Government in Liberia..." Relying and

The cost of peace: assessing the domestic impacts of Nigeria's military deployments to ECOMOG operations acting on the inherent sovereign right of the Liberian people to make laws for their governance, the conference endorsed the ECOWAS Peace Plan and appointed an interim government. The short fall was that the conference occurred after ECOMOG Forces had landed in Liberia. The fact remains at the time of the Conference was convened, Liberia was in a state of anarchy. The adoption of an ECOWAS Peace Plan however served as validation for the entry of ECOMOG Forces into Liberia.

There was evidence before the ECOWAS leaders that the attack on Liberia was launched from outside. There was also abundant evidence to show that among the rebels were non-Liberians including soldiers of fortune. The fact that the armed movement came from across the border brought the crisis within the purview of the 1981 ECOWAS Protocol on Mutual Defense. Under the Protocol, the Community was entitled to: (i) declare that the armed threat or aggression against the Community; and (ii) call on its member States to give assistance for the defense of the aggressed member State.

There was an on-going war in Liberia and law and order had completely broken down in the country. On 30th May 1990, the United Nations Secretary-General ordered the evacuation of all UN personnel from Liberia. In August 1990, the United States of America intervened in Liberia but only to the extent of evacuating her nationals, and other nationals of Europe and Asia. By that time, "all semblance of civil authority had ceased to." The ECOWAS leaders had the option of intervening just for the sake of their nationals trapped in the Liberia WA, but they chose to take a more selfless approach more so that it had become the International Community that all semblance of authority had ceased to exist.

Proponents of ECOMOG intervention also argued that there was a civil war going on, and that posed a threat to Liberia. The Civil War was prosecuted in a manner which constituted a



flagrant disregard for the obligations of Liberia under the Geneva Conventions and Protocols. All principles of war were violated and the civilian population became the major target for the warring parties. Tens of thousands of innocent civilians were massacred; thousands of foreign nations trapped in the county and hundreds of thousands became refugees.

While the International Community choose to initially ignore the Liberian conflict, its neighbours in the sub-region particularly Nigeria could not maintain a posture of indifference to the situation in Liberia. Thus the Authority of Heads of State and Government of ECOWAS were used by the country to act in a novel but every bold manner to save lives and properties. ECOWAS leaders however embraced the logic that regional organizations had to share this responsibility with the Security Council. That is, their responsibility was to ensure that peace and stability is maintained within the region and in the African Continent as a whole. The inhuman treatment resulting from the tragic situation in Liberia was not only a threat to the well-being of the Community but also posed a threat to international peace and security. The intervention of ECOWAS in Liberia was indeed response to a dire humanitarian problem.

TABLE 2:

Impacts Of Ecomog Engagements On Nigeria

(i) Peacekeeping, Peace Support Operations and Enforcement Action in West Africa since 1990

| Intervening Agency                           | Country   | Pattern of Intervention  | Period   |
|--|---|--|--|
| ECOWAS through<br>ECOMOG, ECOMICI,<br>ECOMIL | Liberia,<br>Sierra Leone<br>Guinea Bissau<br>Cote d'Ivoire<br>Liberia | Peacekeeping/Enforcement<br>Peacekeeping/Enforcement<br>Peacekeeping<br>Peacekeeping<br>Peacekeeping | 1990 – 1998<br>1997<br>1998<br>2003<br>2003  |
| United Nations                               | Liberia<br>Sierra Leone<br>Cote d'Ivoire<br>Liberia                   | Peacekeeping(Observation)<br>Peacekeeping/PSO<br>Peacekeeping/PSO<br>Peacekeeping/PSO                | Sept. 93 Sept '97<br>July '99 – Dec. 05<br>Sep. 03 –<br>Ongoing<br>April 04 –<br>Ongoing |
| British Army                                 | Sierra Leone  | Enforcement;<br>support for SSR  | June 2000  |
| Mercenaries                                  | Sierra Leone  | Specific Assignment  | 1996   |

SOURCE: (Olonisakin:23)

## **Financial Cost On Nigeria**

The real cost of ECOMOG operations is a military secret. According to a report, Nigerian troops at one time accounted for almost two third of ECOMOG force in Liberia. Apart from picking the bills of the operation before the intervention of the UN and the OAU, Nigeria had to offer assistance to other West African countries to enable them deploy their troops (Olukoshi:573).

According to a study, the support that has come to the peacekeeping operations from non-African countries, especially countries in the European Union and the United States has been largely logistical but also financial in nature. In Liberia, ECOMOG had considerable support from EU countries and the United States. In Sierra Leone, the UK, apart from committing troops in 2000, also provided logistical and financial support to ECOMOG. In Cote d'Ivoire, Britain has supported the peace efforts through assistance to Ghana, while the French contributions were conveyed through Niger, Senegal and Togo. The United States made its contribution through strategic transportation and in funding 2/3 of the food requirement for the Cote d'Ivoire operation<sup>17</sup> The financial cost for ECOMOG operation in Cote d'Ivoire, (about 15 million Euros) was obtained through a set of financial assistance agreements that included contributions from France, United Kingdom, The Netherlands, Belgium, Germany, Sweden, Italy, Luxembourg and Spain. However, Nigeria remains the largest contributor to peacekeeping operations in West Africa. The ECOWAS Security Council left the logistics problems almost entirely to Nigeria as all other countries were obviously incapacitated by SAP induced economic stress of the 1990s. All in all, Nigeria is said to have spent in excess of 12bn USD on peace operation since the first ECOMOG operation in Liberia in 1990.( Olonisakin:24) In 2001, Olusegun Obasanjo said Nigeria had spent \$13bn on peacekeeping operations over 12 years.

Hundreds of Nigerian soldiers were thought to have been killed in operations in Liberia and more than 800 soldiers have been killed and at least 1000 wounded in Sierra Leone, which exposed the country to her "biggest financial burden" (ibid). Indeed, when the UN offered to expand the ECOMOG troops to include soldiers from other African countries, Nigeria had to appeal for a refund of some of its costs in Liberia by the UN.(Ibid)

### **Family Disconnect**

There was the problem of family disconnect as those that were deployed to ECOMOG operations in Liberia to Sierra Leone did not return home for over two years. The difficulty of communication made many Nigerian soldiers to complain of losing touch with their families. Thousands of Liberian men and women were driven away from their homes as the rebellion progressed and those left at home saw the ECOMOG soldiers as messiahs who had come to save them only to be exploited sexually. The Director General of the Directorate of Technical Cooperation in Africa, Ministry of Foreign Affairs, Dr. Sule Yakubu Bassi disclosed this at an interactive session with the House of Representatives Committee on Diaspora admitted that Nigerian soldiers were caught in relationships that produced many children. According to Bassi, "There are 250,000 Nigerian children of ECOMOG soldiers. The children were born by Nigerian soldiers who went to Liberia during the war... We have cases of women and children coming to look for husbands and fathers at the Nigerian Embassy. This has posed a big challenge to the Nigerian Embassy officials."

While enumerating some of the challenges faced by Nigerian Embassies and Missions, Bassi disclosed that the Nigerian Embassy in Liberia was constantly flooded by children and their mothers in search of their fathers. This was aside Sexually transmitted diseases, especially

HIV/AIDS, which have been identified as the second largest killer of Nigerian soldiers especially during peacekeeping operations outside Nigeria. According to UNAIDS Report on Nigeria, 11 % of Nigerian ECOMOC soldiers were HIV infected.(UNAIDS:2000) Colonel Adewale Adeniyi Taiwo, commanding officer of 245 Battalion, who disclosed this during the workshop for officers and senior non-commissioned officers of 82 Division, said members of the Nigerian Armed Forces, especially the soldiers, had been reckless when it came to sexual behaviour during foreign assignments, noting that this accounted for the reason many suffered from related diseases and infections. Taiwo, who spoke as a guest lecturer on the topic, "Nigeria in Peace Support Operations: An Appraisal," during the 82 Division officers and senior non-commissioned officers' study period hosted by the 13 Brigade, Nigerian Army, at the Eburutu Barracks in Calabar, stressed that Nigerian soldiers should curtail this habit, hinting that "during the ECOMOG operation in Sierra Leone, HIV/AIDS became the second largest killer of deployed Nigerian troops next to gunshot wounds." He attributed this to the long period of stay of Nigerian units in various missions abroad, saying this usually led to reckless sexual behaviour on the part of the troops. He added that "the longer units are deployed in a mission, the more prone they are to HIV/AIDS and other infections."

## **Corruption**

Revelation on corruption by Nigerian military top brass came to light during the popular National Truth and Reconciliation Commission of 2000/2001, during which very senior military officers who have held various strategic and sensitive commanding positions accused each other of corruption during ECOMOG operations in Liberia and Sierra Leone. Some of the startling revelations was that Nigerian soldiers who served under the then West African Monitoring

Group (ECOMOG), in Liberia and Sierra Leone were actually supposed to be paid 45 US dollars a day instead of the 5 US dollars they received, making a total sum of 1350 US dollars per month and not 150 US dollars as they were paid. This short payment affected over twenty thousand soldiers over a period of ten years from August 1990-april 2000. It was during the commission's sitting that Nigerians were made to understand that even the combat helmets supplied to the soldiers were actually motor cycle crash helmets lacking in the quality to serve as a protection against rifle fires and bomb fragments.

According to Human Rights Watch report of 1999, the soldiers were supposed to be paid a special monthly allowance of \$150 per month allowance in addition to their wages while they were in active duty in ECOMOG, but were often denied their wages to up to three months in most cases.

### **Mutiny/ Protests**

The treatment of the Nigerian contingents was not without protestations by the returning peacekeepers. For instance, a contingent of soldiers who returned from a peace keeping assignment in Liberia made their feelings known to the Nigerian public in a peaceful way in Akure, Ondo State. They complained of illegal diversion of their operational allowances running into Thousands of US dollars by some of their officers. The military authorities responded by instituting a court martial which found the culprit officers guilty of stealing money belonging to junior soldiers, and the protesting soldiers guilty of voicing out against the stealing of their rightful earnings. In a ridiculous verdict, the Brigadier General Ishaya Bauka headed court martial only cautioned the thieving officers with lose of rank, while the soldiers, the actual

victims of the theft were sentenced to life imprisonment (before international outcry forced the Army to commute it to seven years imprisonment).

By the time ECOMOG operations came to an end in the early part of 2000, hundreds of soldiers bearing all sorts of physical deformities and injuries which included losing an eye, limb or leg and sundry bullet wounds were still lying in several military hospitals all over the country, with some of them having been in bed for over eight years. It was until the advent of democratic governance by 1999, that lucky ones amongst them were batched for further treatment (mostly surgery) abroad.

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