

NEW PERSPECTIVES ON WEST AFRICAN HISTORY

Essays in Honour of Professor S.C Ukpabi

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ECOWAS and The Dynamics of Conflicts and Peace Building

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Abstract

The paper has its central focus on ECOWAS and the Dynamics of Conflicts and Peace-Building. It examines the need of Africa leaders who sought to fight collectively their dependency and chart a new path for collective national political and economic independence. The paper relied on secondary sources of data collection inform of content analysis of articles, journals, papers and books written by season scholars in the areas of integration, conflict and peace-keeping and peace-building. Our findings show that, the establishment of ECOWAS in 1975 was mainly for socio- economic development in the field of economic activity among its member states; and in social and cultural matters for the purpose of raising the standard of its people thereby contributing to the progress and development of African continent. However, due to the distressing events in several of its member states, ECOWAS soon realized that for economic development to thrive there should be relative peace and stability. It thus, dawned on it that it had to proffer solutions to conflicts in member states by getting involved in the conflicts to ensure that an environment conducive to the implementation of its economic programmes. Thus, the interventions of ECOWAS in member states such as Liberia, Sierra-Leone and Guinea-Bissau are good examples at finding sub-regional solution to the sub-regional conflicts and peace-building. The paper concludes that, to advance peace-building activities and address ECOWAS security threats, there should be the need for clear understanding of the different causes, dimensions and impacts of conflict and security threats among regional actors and decision makers.

Introduction

The clarion call for economic integration especially in Africa is seen as a very noble course. It is based on the platform that colonial rule created nations and societies that

are highly dependent on their metropolitan masters. It is as a result of the drive to acquire both political and economic self-reliance that African leaders of thought sought to fight collectively their dependency, and chart a new path for their collective national political and economic independence.

Economic integration is the gradual but steady progress of concrete tariff reduction alongside with other barriers to trade between the contracting parties to their mutual advantage. It is thus imperative for union based on collective mutual benefits that the founding fathers of the Economic Community of West African States (ECOWAS) met in Lagos in 1975 to ratify the ECOWAS Treaty.

For the sake of clarity, we should distinctly identify a number of continental economic groupings with similar objectives and goals with ECOWAS. We could mention the European Union (EU), East African Community (EAC), Organization of Petroleum Exporting Countries (OPEC) and CEAO etc as some few examples.

Economic integration takes different forms depending on the interests of their founding fathers. There are the following.

- (a) **The Free Trade Area:** This is a situation whereby the restriction on customs duties and tariffs are removed.
- (b) **The Customs Union:** In addition to free trade, there are common external tariffs and fixed custom duties to non-members.
- (c) **A Common Market:** This is a situation in which in addition to free trade there is movement of capital and labour amongst member nations.
- (d) **An Economic Union:** This is a situation where in addition to free trade, common tariffs, customs and capital movement, there are common economic, monetary, fiscal (tax), social and cultural policies. This is the semblance of what ECOWAS intends to achieve.
- (e) **Supra - National Union:** In addition to common economic, fiscal, social, cultural and monetary policies, the governments surrender their sovereignty and become a common political entity. This does not exist in absolute sense in contemporary international organizations.

Integration theorists believe that integration increases the size of the market of member nations, ensure optimal use of resources, expand the level of economic activity, promote effective allocation of resources, reduce waste and ensures self-reliant development, which invariably leads to political stability. It is against the plethora of these positive advantages that motivated the leaders of the West African sub-region to form an economic union in the name of ECOWAS.¹

The West African sub-region considered in this paper covers the area of 6.5 million square kilometers which embraces 16 countries from Mauritania to Nigeria. There are 4 former British colonies called Anglophone states. These are Nigeria, Ghana, Sierra Leone and Gambia. There are 8 members of the former Federation of French West Africa referred to as Francophone states namely Mauritania, Senegal, Upper Volta, (Burkina Faso) Cote d'Ivoire, Guinea, Republic of Benin, Niger and Mali. Togo was the former German possession which was subsequently administered by the British and the French. Liberia was not colonized while Guinea Bissau was a former Portuguese colony.²

At the inception when ECOWAS was established in 1975, its objective was solely socio-economic - "to promote cooperation and development in all field of economic activity among its member states; and in social and cultural matters for the purpose of raising the standard of its people, increasing and maintaining economic stability; and contributing to the progress and development of African continent".³ None of the sixty-five articles of the treaty looked at the issue of sub-regional defense and security. However, due to the distressing events in several of its member states, ECOWAS soon realized that for economic development to thrive there should be relative peace and stability. It dawned on it that it had to proffer solutions to conflicts in member states by getting involved in the conflicts to ensure that an environment conducive to the implementation of its economic programmes was maintained.

In many West African Countries citing Cote d'Ivoire as an example social, economic and environmental tensions have become politicized and therefore contentious in the struggle for power among the ruling elites. Given the dynamic nature of conflict existing, governance frameworks and mechanisms to regulate conflicts of interests and access to resources and opportunities at all levels are less able to prevent their violent escalation.

During the outbreak of hostilities in Liberia, Sierra-Leone and Guinea-Bissau from 1989 to 2000, ECOWAS already had certain legal instruments that enjoined member states to respect each other's territorial integrity, exist alongside each other in peace and harmony, and unite to ward off both external attack, armed threat or aggression directed against a member state and internal armed Conflict engineered from outside. These instruments were the Protocol on Non-Aggression of 1978 and the Protocol on Mutual Assistance in Defense of 1981.⁵

The Origin of ECOWAS

The establishment of ECOWAS in 1975 should be seen as the result of several attempts over a period of one and half decades to form a sub-regional organization embracing the whole of West Africa. Initial efforts had a lot of problems, as a result of the rivalry between Ghana under President Kwame Nkrumah and Nigeria under Prime Minister Tafawa Balewa in the early 1960s and later because of the struggle for supremacy in the sub-region between Nigeria and Cote d'Ivoire which were divided along Anglophone-Francophone dichotomies.⁵ The rivalry between Ghana and Nigeria found expression in the almost diametrically opposed positions taken by President Nkrumah Kwame of Ghana and Prime Minister Tafawa Balewa, Balewa of Nigeria on the question of integration. The former advocated a continental political union of Africa while the latter was for a functional cooperation on sub-regional basis. The Differences between the two leaders manifested in several other areas that it become almost impossible to accommodate both in any integration scheme in the sub-region.⁶

The lack of cooperation within Anglophone West Africa did not make it conducive for any cooperative scheme with the Francophone states which were geared more towards exclusive integration schemes of their own; Attempts at integration after the demise of President Nkrumah Kwame and Prime Minister Tafawa Balewa in 1966 was further delayed by the Nigerian civil war (1967-1970) and its aftermath which expanded the gap between Anglo and Francophone West Africa. Cote d'Ivoire was the only West African state that recognized the secessionist Biafran Republic during the Nigerian civil war, a clear indication that Cote d'Ivoire, aware of the threat Nigeria posed to its quest to leadership of the sub-region, wanted to see the latter dismembered.

The signing of the treaty establishing the Economic Community of West African States (ECOWAS) marked a watershed in the history of the sub-region. It was as a result of careful planning and intensive diplomatic activities between the Federal Republic of Nigeria and the Republic of Togo.⁷ The treaty was signed on 28th May, 1975 but came into effect on 23rd June, 1975. It contained 64 articles which were arranged into 14 chapters. The purpose of the ECOWAS treaty was the promotion of economic development of the 16 member states through the integration of their economy.⁸

Although the signing of the treaty and its ratification was swift, the implementation

suffered serious setbacks. These setbacks were due to misinterpretations and membership of different monetary zones by its members. The member states protected their divergent self interests guarding individual state sovereignties at the expense of the community interest.

A critical look at the legal documents of the ECOWAS showed that the treaty focused very little on defense and collective security. This is more glaring when one noticed that the treaty came into effect in 1975 but it was not until 1979 that the Authority of the Heads of State and Government put into effect some moves on defense and collective security. The Protocol Relating to Mutual Assistance on Defense was signed in 1981 after protracted negotiations by Togo and Senegal. The community members observed that the Non-aggression Pact was insufficient to deter threats to the sub-region. The protocol expressly stated that member states were convinced that economic progress cannot be achieved unless the conditions for the necessary security are ensured by all member states in the community.⁹

Conceptual Analysis

The topic "ECOWAS and Dynamics of Conflicts and Peace-Building" contains two words that are fundamental to this paper, but the two words also require conceptual definitions. The words are conflict and peace-building.

Conflict

This is usually based upon a difference over goals, objectives or expectations between individuals or groups. Conflict occurs when two or more people, or groups compete over limited resources, perceived or actual incompatible goals. In other words, conflict is a state of opposition, disagreement or incompatibility between two or more people or groups of people which is sometimes characterized by physical violence. However, one should not confuse the distinction between the presence and absence of conflict with the differences between, competition and cooperation.

In competitive situations, two or more parties each have mutually inconsistent goals, so that when either party tries to reach their goal it will undermine the attempts of the other to reach theirs. Therefore, competitive situations will by their nature cause conflict. But conflict can also occur in cooperative situations in which two or more parties have consistent goals because the manner in which one party tries to

reach their goal can still undermine the other.

A clash of interests, values, actions or directions often spark conflict. Thus, conflict refers to existence of that clash. Psychologically, a conflict exists when the reduction of one motivating stimulus involves an increase in another so that a new adjustment is demanded. Even when we say that there is a potential conflict, we are implying that there is already a conflict of direction even though a clash may not yet have occurred.

Peace building

There are two distinct ways to understand peace-building. The United Nations (UN) in its document "An Agenda for Peace", defines Peace-building as consisting of a wide range of activities associated with capacity building, reconciliation and societal transformation.¹⁰ Peace-building is a long term process that occurs after violence has slowed down or halted. Thus, it is the phase of the peace process that takes place after peacemaking and peacekeeping. Many non-governmental organizations (NGOs) on the other hand, understand peace-building as an umbrella concept that encompasses not only long-term transformative efforts, but also peacemaking and peacekeeping. It therefore means that peace-building would include early warning and response efforts, violence prevention, advocacy work, civilian and military peacekeeping, military intervention, humanitarian assistance, ceasefire agreements and the establishment of peace zones.

In its narrower sense, peace-building is a process that facilitates the establishment of durable peace and tries to prevent the reoccurrence of violence by addressing root causes and effects of conflict through reconciliation, institution building and political and as well as economic transformation. This consists of a set of physical, social and structural initiatives that are often an integral part of post-conflict reconstruction and rehabilitation. It is generally believed that the central task of peace-building is to create positive peace, a stable social equilibrium in which the surfacing of new disputes does not escalate into violence and war.

Sustainable peace is characterized by the absence of physical and structural violence, the elimination of discrimination, and self-sustainability; moving towards this environment goes beyond problem solving or conflict management. Peace-building initiatives try to fix the core problems that underlie the conflict and change the patterns of interaction of the involved parties; and they aim also to move a given

population from a condition of extreme vulnerability and dependency to one of self sufficiency and well being.

Some scholars however draw a distinction between post-conflict peace-building and long-term peace-building. Post-conflict peace-building is connected to peacekeeping and often involves demobilization and reintegration programmes, as well as immediate reconstruction needs. Meeting immediate needs and handling crises is no doubt important, but while peacekeeping and peacemaking processes are crucial part of a peace transitions, they are not enough in and of themselves to meet longer-term needs and build a lasting peace.

Long-term peace-building techniques 'are designed to fill this gap, and to address the underlying substantive issues that brought about conflict. Various transformation techniques aim to move parties away from confrontation and violence, and towards political participation, peaceful relationships, and social harmony. This longer-term perspective is crucial to future *violence prevention* and the promotion of a more peaceful future. Thinking about the future involves articulating desirable structural, systematic and relationship goals. These might include sustainable economic development, self-sufficiency, equitable social structures that meet human needs and building social relations.

Peace-building measures also aim to prevent conflict from reemerging. Through the creation of mechanisms that enhance cooperation and dialogue among different identity groups, these measures can help parties manage their conflict of interests through peaceful means. This might include building institutions that provide procedures and mechanism for effectively handling and resolving conflict. For example, societies can build fair courts, capacities for labour negotiation, systems of civil society reconciliation and a stable electoral process.

The Evolution of the ECOWAS Conflict Management System

ECOWAS from onset adopted the Protocol of Non-Aggression (PNA)¹¹ in 1978 which was aimed at creating a friendly atmosphere, free from any fear of attack or aggression of one state by another. From the beginning, ECOWAS leaders admitted that the community cannot attain its objective safe in an atmosphere of peace and harmonious understanding. The PNA, therefore demanded, inter alia, that members; refrained from threats or the use of force against the territorial integrity or political independence of other member states; refrained from committing, encouraging or

condoning acts of subversion; and, resort to all peaceful means in the settlement of disputes arising among themselves. (PNA Articles 1-5). The PNA had the advantage of creating a friendly atmosphere and generating trust among members; it was not an adequate mechanism for addressing external aggression or externally supported domestic insurrection and revolt.

The Non-aggression Pact was adopted in 1979 by the Authority of Heads of State and Government. The authority called on member states to eschew aggression under the frame work of the Non-Aggression Pact. However, the member states foot dragged for 4 years after its adoption before it was ratified by only 4 of the 16 member states. It definitely demonstrated the lack of faith in the sub regional protocol.¹² It was to cater for this inadequacy that the Protocol relating to Mutual Assistance on Defense (PMAD) came into being in 1981.

Articles 2 and 3 of PMAD are the principles of collective security and collective defense respectively. In Article 2, any armed threat or aggression against any member state was to be considered as one against the entire community, while Article 3 required member states to give mutual aid and assistance to members so affected. The PMAD provided further that, units from the armies of ECOWAS countries would constitute Allied Armed Forces of the Community (AAFC) only when needed in an emergency, (PMAD Article 13). It therefore did not create a permanent ECOWAS standing army. This would mean that when the time came for ECOWAS to enter Liberia unlike NATO, there were no stand-by units and ECOMOG had to rely on personnel contributed on a voluntary basis by member states.¹³

The AAFC, which could carry out joint military exercise, was to be under the command of a Force Commander appointed by the ECOWAS Authority and together with the Chief of Defense Staff (CDS) of the affected state; he was to implement the decisions of the authority, (PMAD Article 14). The actions of the Force Commander were to be subject to the competent authority of member state(s) concerned (PMAD Article 9). This last provision could be easily applied in situations of external threat against a member state. But in the case of an internal conflict in a failed state as was demonstrated in Liberia the provision would create problems, since there would be no competent political authority. This was the dilemma that the first ECOMOG Commander in Liberia had to contend with.¹⁴

The PMAD in Article 8 also provided for a Defense Council comprising defense and

foreign ministers of member states and charged with preparing the agenda for the authority on defense matters and in an emergency to examine the situation and strategy to be adopted, and the means of intervention to be used. Furthermore, the Chiefs of Defense Staff (CDS) of member states were to constitute the Defense Commission with the responsibility of examining the technical aspects of defense. This is contained in Article 11. However, Article 12 provided for the appointment of a Deputy-Executive Secretary for Military Affairs whose functions included updating plans for the involvement of troops and logistics, initiating joint exercises and managing the military budget of the Secretariat.

The PMAD made provision for three categories of hostile military actions that ECOWAS could handle, namely, aggression from a non-member state with external dimensions. These categorization into three which are namely: an internal conflict in a member state; conflict between two member states, and internal conflict in a member state with external dimensions. The last category which is an internal conflict engineered and supported actively from outside and/is likely to endanger the security and peace of the entire community.¹⁵ Under such circumstances, the authority should meet to decide at the request of the member state, on the expediency of military action and entrust its execution to the Force Commander of the AAFC.

Even though the provision for the involvement of ECOWAS in internal conflict may seem to run counter to the principle of non-interference in internal affairs of states, as stipulated in the very first paragraph of the same protocol, it should be borne in mind that, there is a proviso in Article 17(2) that community forces shall not intervene if the conflict remains purely internal. The ECOWAS Treaty was amended to include the Defense Council as one of the principal institutions of the community and the Defense Commission as one of the specialized and technical commission as a demonstration of the seriousness while member states attach to the PMAD.

The PMAD on paper made a giant leap forward in ECOWAS preparedness for conflict management, but that protocol was allowed to be infested by the virus of non-implementation; and but for Liberia, it surely would have remained a dead letter. By 1990, the Deputy Executive Secretary had not been appointed, member states had not earmarked units to the AAFC for joint operations to take place and none of the institutions created was fully operational. However, the very existence of the PNA and PMAD provided some legal basis for ECOWAS' intervention in

Liberia. At last, the two protocols together are a testimony to the fact that ECOWAS was not a purely economic integration outfit which could not assume responsibility for sub-regional conflict management.

Conflict Dynamics

There are priority issues concerning the dynamics of conflict in West Africa which would attract our attention in subsequent paragraphs.

- ❖ **The nature and causes of conflict in West Africa:** Violent conflict is a dynamic phenomenon that has multilayer causes and consequences at multiple levels. Structural causes of conflict are related to the legacy of colonialism and external intervention, power structure, governance mechanisms and diverse interests within the framework of West African States. Given the changing nature of conflict and its causes, existing conflict resolution mechanisms are not sufficiently prepared to respond to these changes.
- ❖ **The regional dimensions of conflict: role of involuntary migration and the war economy:** Distinct conflicts are interconnected via a range of factors that link the local, national and regional levels of violence and instability. While cross-border areas profoundly shaped by interactions between conflict zones and zones of involuntary migration tend to catalyze the proliferation of insecurity, instability and conflict to the region, the illicit war economy contributes to fueling instability and insecurity at all levels.
- ❖ **Consequences and impacts of conflicts at the national and regional levels:** Violent conflict, insecurity and instability accelerate social, economic and political change at all levels. However, they do not affect all actors in the same way. They may generate losers and winners according to the capacity of local actors to counteract or reduce the economic consequences of violent conflict. As involuntary migrants can become development agents for both host communities and countries of origin, population movements are not inherently negative.
- ❖ **Local, national and regional levels of intervention in resolving conflict and promoting peace and reconstruction:** The restoration of security is crucial for achieving sustainable peace. Among the various initiatives undertaken by different actors are Demobilization, Disarmament and

Reintegration (DDR) process of ex-combatants. They are certainly key phases in the process of emerging from conflict. In addition, access to land appears to be a strategic issue that needs to be addressed across the West African sub-region to douse the recurring crises.

The dynamics of conflicts and peace-building in the West African sub-region reveals that ECOWAS stand firm on the twin inseparable pillars namely -economic development and political stability. This position is premised on the argument that peace and security are necessary requirements for the sub-regional development. By the time the founding fathers formed ECOWAS in 1975, their main concern was economic integration as a tool of improving the lives of their people. As stated in the ECOWAS Treaty of 1975, the objectives of the community were "To promote cooperation and integration leading to the establishment of an economic union in West Africa in order to raise the living standards of its people and to maintain and enhance economic stability, foster relations among member states, and contribute to the progress and development of the African continent."⁶ The subsequent fourteen chapters and sixty-five articles of the ECOWAS Treaty equally focused exclusively on economic matters. From its inception therefore, ECOWAS was perceived purely as an economic enterprise. In the light of rising tensions and increasing conflicts in the sub-region however, ECOWAS was compelled to adapt and reorient itself to issues of security and stability at the same time as it was preoccupied with economic integration.

Available evidence shows that in the period between 1970 and 1990, West Africa alone had a total number of 31 successful military coup d' etats, 21 attempted coups and 54 plots to over throw governments. Most of these political upheavals spilled over to neighbouring states in terms of refugee flows and sub-regional instability. The Mano River Basin itself is just emerging from brutal and destructive intrastate violent conflicts, which started in 1989, and destabilized Liberia, Sierra-Leone and Guinea. Currently, La Cote d'Ivoire, is embroiled in a fragile peace. The region has also experienced low intensity armed conflict in Guinea Bissau, Mali, and Senegal. ECOWAS was therefore confronted by the dual challenge of adaptability and effective response to the security concerns of the sub-region. The organization responded by taking measures to create institutions, mechanisms and procedures aimed at promoting peace and security in the sub-region such as the signing and

implementation of the following agreements:

The Protocol on Non-Aggression in 1978.

The Protocol on Mutual Assistance in Defense in 1981.

The 1991 Declaration of Principles.

The Revised 1993 ECOWAS Treaty.

The 1998 Declaration of a Moratorium on the importation, exportation and manufacture of light weapons in West Africa and Security in 1999.

The community therefore adopts a graduated strategy for building peace which is implemented as a continuous undertaking. We shall amplify some relevant Articles as contained in the revised 1993 ECOWAS Treaty to facilitate our better understanding of our inquiry.

Article 42: ECOWAS Institutional Capacity for Peace-Building: To stem social and political upheavals, ECOWAS shall be involved in the preparation, organization and supervision of elections in member states. ECOWAS shall endeavour to assist member states emerging from conflicts to increase their capacity for national, social, economic and cultural reconstruction. In this regard, all ECOWAS financial institutions shall develop policies to facilitate funding for reintegration and reconstruction programme.

Article 43: Peace-building during hostilities: In zones of relative peace, priority shall be accorded to implementation of policies designed to reduce degradation of social and economic conditions arising from conflicts.

Article 44: Peace-building at the end of hostilities: To assist member states that have been adversely affected by violent conflicts, ECOWAS shall undertake the following activities:-

- Consolidation of the peace that has been negotiated;
- Establishment of conditions for the political, social and economic reconstruction of the society and governmental institutions;
- Implementation of disarmament, demobilization and reintegration programmes including those for child soldiers;
- Resettlement and reintegration of refugees and internally displaced persons; and

- Assistance to vulnerable persons, including children, the elderly, women and other traumatized groups in the society.

Article 45: Restoration of Political Authority: In situations where the authority of government is absent or has been seriously eroded. ECOWAS shall support processes towards the restoration of political authority. Such support may include the preparation, organization, monitoring and management of the electoral process, with the cooperation of relevant regional and international organizations. The restoration of political authority shall be undertaken at the same time as the development of respect for human rights enhancement.

It is not surprising therefore, that ECOWAS depicts the relationship between economic development; peace and security. For instance, the preamble to its protocol relating to Mutual Assistance in Defense, signed in Freetown in 1981, states clearly that "economic progress cannot be achieved unless the necessary conditions for security are ensured in all the member states of the community". The linkage is equally enunciated in Article 4 of the ECOWAS Revised Treaty which states for example, that "members affirm and declare adherence to the maintenance of regional peace, stability and security through the promotion of a peaceful environment is a prerequisite for economic development".¹⁷

The establishment of ECOMOG and its intervention in Liberia, Sierra-Leone and Guinea Bissau must be seen in the context of this same fundamental principle. By and large, it can be said that ECOWAS has responded fairly well both to the challenge of adaptability and the prevention and management of conflicts in the sub-region. The record shows that it has made every effort to address the challenge of adaptation. For example, the decision to strengthen ECOMOG as an organ to assist the ECOWAS Mediation and Security Council is a direct response to new and emerging peace and security realities in the sub-region.

The establishment of the mechanism for conflict prevention, management, resolution, peacekeeping and security is another way in which it has responded effectively to the challenges. In the protocol to that mechanism, it states that the community had been concerned about the proliferation of conflicts which it says "constitute a threat to the peace and security in the African continent and undermines her effort to improve the living standards of the people".¹⁸ ECOWAS has not only adapted itself to new realities by revising its Treaty, it has found it necessary to

enhance the 1999 protocol by incorporating provisions concerning issues such as prevention of internal crises, democracy and good governance, the rule of law and human rights. Its concern about the increasing incidence of conflicts caused by religious intolerance, political marginalization and non-transparent elections has also been reflected in relevant instruments and documents.

The challenge of capacity and capability is perhaps the most formidable one facing ECOWAS in the areas of peace-building and security. By this, we are referring to the problem of resources for peace-building and security. Without resources, the military and the civil police cannot perform their duty effectively since they require adequate training and equipment to be able to control and secure the borders. Civil and public servants cannot improve on their jobs if they are not motivated and adequately supported.

The socio-economic status of a nation is often reflected on the capacity to provide adequate safety and security for its population. For example an important part of a peace-building process in Sierra-Leone has been the training and restructuring of the military force. The country has benefited considerably from the International Military Assistance Training Programme (IMATP) led by the United Kingdom. Action has been taken to upgrade and strengthen the training facilities at Benguema and the establishment of the Horton Academy.¹⁹ Operation Pebu is also initiated as a housing project for the military. The idea is that in providing training to improve the skills of security personnel, there is need also to provide equipment and transportation facilities as well as basic services such as housing. Many, if not all of the threats to peace in the sub-region have their roots from poverty, economic and social instability.²⁰

From the Sierra-Leone experience, the greatest threat to peace-building and security is the prevalence of poverty. Pervasive poverty is clearly a potential source of instability and therefore a serious threat to the consolidation of peace in the country. In June 2001, the Sierra-Leonean government developed a poverty reduction strategy in the form of an Interim Poverty Reduction Strategy Paper (IPRSP) whose main objective was to reduce poverty reduction programmes and the promotion of pro-poor economic growth. In October 2002, the Sierra-Leone government launched the National Recovery Strategy (NRS) with the clear object of consolidating state authority and peace-building, the protection of human rights, the promotion of reconciliation, reintegration and resettlement, the rebuilding of

communities and improving service delivery and economic recovery.²¹

However in February 2005, these two poverty reduction initiatives were followed by the inauguration of the Poverty Reduction Strategy Paper (PRSP) whose major thrust is the reduction of poverty through the promotion of good governance, security and peace; the promotion of pro-poor sustainable growth for food security and job creation and the promotion of human development. All these concerns are indeed reiterated in the 1999 Protocol, where ECOWAS leaders acknowledge in Article 25, that poverty alleviation and promotion of social dialogue are important factors for peace. It says, "Member states undertake to provide the basic human needs of their populations", and in Article 26, that they should undertake to fight poverty effectively in their respective countries within the community, especially by creating an environment to provide investment and the development of a dynamic and competitive private sector.

The burden of debt has also been recognized as another factor inhibiting the capacity of African countries to create enabling environment for peace and development. Among the recommendations of the former UN Secretary-General, Kofi Annan which he suggested a few years ago in his report to the Security Council on the causes of conflict and promotion of durable peace and sustainable development in Africa was that, creditors should seriously consider in response to the request of the African Union, canceling the entire debt of the poorest African countries and convert into grants, all remaining official bilateral debt of the poorest African countries. Given that the West African sub-region is one of the world's poorest regions, the relative lack of funding Africa often crystallizes into unending conflicts.

Conclusion

ECOWAS started as a purely economic integration scheme prior to the assumption of its present status as an important conflict management mechanism. It is indicative that the community has played a significant role in peace-building in the sub-region. The challenges and tortuous path that ECOWAS has blazed from inception notwithstanding, it remains the most progressive sub-regional agency for managing conflicts and promoting peace in Africa. Meanwhile, sub-regional dynamics have played a role in conflict and peace within the ECOWAS community. The regional dynamics, especially the regional interdependence of violence hasten the spillover of conflict from one country to another.

There is also a counter-dynamic involved in regional politics as well but the spillover complicates peace-building by enlarging the conflict zone, sub-regional coordination efforts of ECOWAS provided a stronger foundation for lasting peace than efforts kept at simply the national level. The interventions of ECOWAS in member states such as Liberia, Sierra-Leone and Guinea Bissau are good examples at finding sub-regional solution to the sub-regional conflicts and peace-building.

Recommendations

In order to advance peace-building activities and address ECOWAS security threats, there should be the need to look into the following recommendations:-

- (a) There is the need for clear understanding of the different causes, dimensions and impacts of conflict and security threats among regional actors and decision makers;
- (b) There should be workable programmes for socio-economic reintegration of all actors (ex-combatants, involuntary migrants, internally displaced persons (IDPs), and victims of conflicts etc.) in the peace-building process that takes into account the changes that occurred during the conflict;
- (c) There should be interchange and networking of information sharing on successful strategies and approaches and collaboration between initiatives and actors working in conflict and emerging from conflict settings at all levels in West Africa;
- (d) There should be increasing involvement of regional bodies (e.g. ECOWAS) in efforts at peace mediation and improved security;
- (e) There should be inclusion of a network of Non-Governmental Organization (NGOs) and Community Based Organizations (CBOs) in the area of peace and security;
- (f) There should also be an international financial recovery facility or standing trust fund for peace-building.

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