

Peacekeeping Operations by United Nations in Partnership with a Sub-regional Organisation Experiment in Liberia 1993–98

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Liberia has witnessed intense internal strife, conflicts and total breakdown of law and order in the past. A West African organisation, ECOWAS and United Nations operated together in Liberia to obtain a peaceful settlement. It was the first UN peacekeeping mission undertaken in collaboration with a peacekeeping operation already being undertaken by a regional grouping. Though there are obvious advantages of regional groupings taking such initiatives there are numerous nuances which emerge when such organisations operate together. This article examines the various nuances of a regional organisation and the UN operating together in such a format. For its complications, this experiment was precursor to several regional experiments particularly by the African Union. The author was a Military Observer in UN Observer Mission in Liberia from November 1995 to November 1996 during the most violent period of the First Civil War. He functioned at the grassroots level and has put across his observations and analysis from the functional level.

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BACKGROUND

Africa is prone to conflicts due to its complex demography, geography, and a history of extreme exploitation. Liberia, a West African Country has witnessed intense internal strife, conflicts and total breakdown of law and order in the past. Conflict within the nation, has had two distinct phases, the First Liberian Civil War from 1989 to 1997; and the Second Liberian War from 1999 to 2003. The origins of the Liberian civil wars can be traced back to the formation of Liberia when former slaves from the United States of America were settled in Liberia around 1822. Liberia remained under US control till it became independent in 1847. The settled slaves were from different parts of Africa and became political elites in Liberia with utter disregard to the indigenous population. Retaining the US sheen, they were better organised, educated and armed than the indigenous people. The indigenous people thus remained under the subjugation and domination of these elites. This created severe animosity and antagonism between the two sections of the population. Master Sergeant Samuel Doe who belonged to one of the numerous ethnic indigenous tribes, stormed to power through a military coup in 1980 but failed to address the issues of numerous ethnic groups in Liberia. This parochialism elicited immense reaction and anger from the marginalised ethnic groups and tribes. Such a situation pushed Charles Taylor, a local warlord, to spark off the first Liberian civil war.

THE GENESIS OF PARTNERSHIP MODEL AND MAJOR PLAYERS

During the first civil war, a sub-regional organisation known as the Economic Community of West African States (ECOWAS)¹ was actively involved in peace-brokering and peacekeeping. This was a significant development; it was the first time that an African sub-regional organisation had endeavoured to conduct peacekeeping operations. Articles 52 to 54 of Chapter VIII of the United Nations (UN) Charter elaborate the role of regional arrangements in peace operations. They facilitate the existence of regional arrangements for maintenance of peace and security as appropriate for regional action. However, such arrangements and activities should be consistent with the purposes and principles of the UN. Notwithstanding the above, no enforcement action can be initiated by any regional or sub-regional organisation without the sanction of

the UN. ECOWAS' efforts to achieve a peaceful settlement in Liberia included fielding of an armed observer group and mediation through a series of agreements. Subsequently, as the situation deteriorated, the UN also got involved in the form of an unarmed observer mission called the United Nations Observer Mission in Liberia (UNOMIL) which operated along with the ECOWAS. It was the first UN peacekeeping mission undertaken in collaboration with a peacekeeping operation already being undertaken by a regional grouping. The stakeholders in Liberia included a plethora of ethno-politico-militant groups. The main players were the National Patriotic Front of Liberia (NPFL), led by Charles Taylor; the United Liberation Movement of Liberia for Democracy (ULIMO-K); the ULIMO-J, the Liberian Peace Council (LPC) and the Armed Forces of Liberia (AFL). The author was a Military Observer in UNOMIL from November 1995 to November 1996 during the most violent period of the First Civil War. He functioned at the grassroots level and experienced the nuances of operating in such an environment with myriad players and actors. This analysis examines the various aspects of a regional organisation and UN functioning together, in peacekeeping efforts.

Fighting began in late 1989 between the government forces and the NPFL fighters and thereafter escalated rapidly encompassing all other factions. These factions fought bitterly with each other for ethnic, economic and other reasons leading to killings on a large scale. In addition to the killing of almost 2,00,000 people, the conflict displaced a large section of population within Liberia and into the neighbouring countries resulting in about 8,50,000 refugees. Amongst various initiatives of ECOWAS was fielding a Military Observer Group (ECOMOG)² in August 1990. ECOWAS countries were committed to contribute troops, subject to the availability of the required logistics and financial support. Nigeria provided the largest contingent of troops for the force followed by Ghana, Guinea and Sierra Leone. Gambia and Mali provided ridiculously small contingents of ten soldiers each.

Despite all the efforts, the situation kept on worsening, and led to further killings and human rights violations against innocent civilians such as forced labour. Most of the factions also recruited and employed children for combat, and about 15,000 to 20,000 child soldiers were estimated to be fighting under the major factions. After protracted deliberations, the Security Council established UNOMIL on 22 September 1993.³ UNOMIL was an unarmed observer mission which was mandated to work along with ECOMOG for implementation of peace

agreements. It entirely relied upon ECOMOG for security and sanitisation of operational areas to accomplish its mandate. Its initial mandate was for seven months, however, it was granted several extensions till its termination in 1998. UNOMIL also rendered humanitarian assistance in Liberia through activities of the World Health Organization, Food and Agriculture Organization, United Nations Development Programme, United Nations Children's Fund, and World Food Programme. As a result of the focussed efforts of ECOWAS and UNOMIL, the Liberian National Transitional Government (LNTG), a coalition government, comprising of faction heads, was formed in March 1994.

A Special Representative of the Secretary-General (SRSG) headed the UNOMIL. It had a military component headed by the Chief Military Observer (CMO) and a civilian component. UNOMIL headquarters was located at Monrovia with a Logistic Cell and a Medical Unit. At a later stage, an ECOMOG liaison cell was also co-located with the UNOMIL HQ. The civilian component included political, humanitarian and electoral personnel to assist the SRSG in these aspects of the mandate. The electoral assistance was designed to observe and verify the entire election process. It was initially estimated that about 300 military observers would be required comprising of approximately 42 teams, each of six observers for investigation, (and manning) airports, seaports, and border crossings; and the remaining observers at UNOMIL HQ and four regional headquarters. The Mission's mandate was as under:⁴

1. Exercise its good offices to support ECOWAS and the LNTG.
2. Monitor compliance with respect to the ceasefire and other military provisions.
3. Verify disarmament and demobilisation including weapon collection. This required deploying monitoring and verification teams at each disarmament/demobilisation centre.
4. Support humanitarian assistance activities including assisting local voluntary Human Rights Groups with respect to training and logistics.⁵
5. Investigate and report human rights violations to the UN Secretary-General.
6. Observe and verify the election process along with ECOWAS and Organization of African Unity (OAU).

ECOMOG was headed by a Force Commander (Major General) headquartered at Monrovia. The maximum strength of ECOMOG

during the period was about 12,000 troops which is approximately 10 infantry battalions. For operational purposes, ECOMOG divided the country into three sectors, each under the control of a brigade HQ at Tubmanburg, Gbarnga and Greenville, respectively. At its peak, ECOMOG troops were deployed in nine safe havens (6,000 all ranks), 13 assembly sites (3,000 all ranks) and at 14 border crossing points (3,000 all ranks). The mandate of ECOMOG was as mentioned below:

1. Maintenance of general security throughout the country and protection of civilians in safe havens.
2. Enforcement of the arms embargo by taking control of border crossing points and all entry points by land, sea and air.
3. Establishment and security of assembly areas, where the fighters would gather before disarmament.
4. Establishment and security for encampment sites for disarmament and activities related to demobilisation.
5. Assist in the return of refugees and internally displaced persons.

With the advent of ECOMOG the various stakeholders in Liberia during the First Civil War are depicted in Figure 1.

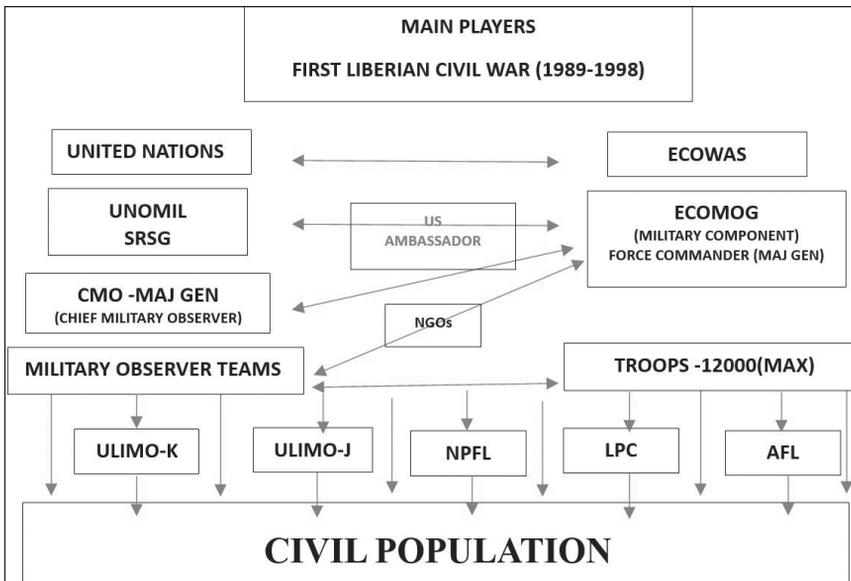


Figure 1 Stakeholders in First Liberian Civil War

PROGRESS OF PEACEKEEPING OPERATIONS

The aim of the UNOMIL and ECOMOG was to install a popular civilian government in Liberia. Towards this end, their primary efforts were to disarm and demobilise an estimated 33,000 fighters (militants were colloquially called as fighters) and hold free and fair elections. The considerable number of factions created more entities to pacify and led to even more chaos and confusion. The progress was slow, and very few fighters were demobilised in the initial phases. Insecurity in some areas precluded full deployment of ECOMOG and thus UNOMIL. The UN Secretary-General continued to believe that UNOMIL's efforts were critical to the implementation of the peace agreements and to assisting the LNTG and the Liberians to achieve last peace. Concurrently several other agreements like the Akosombo Agreement (September 1994), the Accra Agreement (December 1994) and the Abuja Agreement were concluded in August 1995 to carry forward the peace process.

Regular Ceasefire Violations Committees, chaired by UNOMIL and comprising of representatives of ECOMOG, LNTG and the factions, were held to review plans for monitoring the ceasefire and issues related to disarmament and demobilisation. However, these meetings were very vocal and full of rhetoric by faction leaders with meagre or no effect on ground. The Task Force on Demobilization and Reintegration was chaired by the Humanitarian Assistance and Coordinating Office (HACO) and comprised of UNOMIL, UN agencies, ECOMOG, Liberian National Disarmament and Demobilization Commission, representatives of the EU, USAID, and international and national NGOs. The demobilisation plan envisaged disarmament, registration and counselling. Subsequently those with no immediate means of livelihood were to be trained to empower them for subsequent employment. NGOs like MSF, Oxfam and World Vision International, also played a major part in humanitarian activities in Liberia.

Major fighting broke out between various factions in April 1996 which led to the complete breakdown of law and order in Liberia. Fighters from all factions systematically looted Monrovia as well as the UN offices and stores. The author was present at the UNOMIL HQ with ten other MILOBS when it was surrounded and attacked by the fighters. It took a lot of tact and tough negotiations with the fighters to gain a passage from the UNOMIL HQ to the US Embassy about 500 metres away. MILOBS were systematically searched and their belongings taken away. Most of the serviceable vehicles including UN vehicles were

commandeered by the fighters. Many civilians were caught and killed in the crossfire between various factions. The author witnessed scores of bodies along the roads which were not cleared or buried for days at end; slowly turning into skeletons where they fell. Certain stretches of roads were littered with fired cartridge cases to the extent that it was difficult to walk without treading on them. A majority of citizens of Monrovia were displaced and many gathered at safe locations to escape the fighting. The UN agencies were forced to relocate all non-essential personnel to neighbouring countries or to repatriate them. UNOMIL relocated 88 of the 93 military observers to Sierra Leone and Senegal, with the assistance of the US Embassy. Later, most of these observers so relocated were repatriated back to their countries. The author was amongst the five who were nominated to stay back in Liberia. There was little that UNOMIL could accomplish with respect to implementing its original mandate due to intense fighting and lack of security from ECOMOG. The situation slowly limped back to normalcy by November 1996.

By January 1997, the strength of UNOMIL military observers was again built up to 92 and that of ECOMOG grew up to 10000. UNOMIL deployed teams at 12 designated sites. During the promulgated disarmament period between November 1996 and February 1997, approximately 20,500 fighters (62 per cent of the total estimated fighters) were disarmed under UNOMIL supervision, while 21,000 fighters, including 4,300 child-fighters were demobilised by HACO. Approximately 10,000 weapons and large amounts of ammunition were surrendered by the fighters. However, pockets of armed fighters continued to remain in inaccessible areas.

This process finally led to the elections in July 1997. The electoral process was organised and conducted by the Liberian Independent Elections Commission, UNOMIL, ECOMOG, the EU and the International Foundation for Electoral Systems. The role played by UNOMIL was significant and went beyond its mandate by working alongside ECOWAS to ensure coordination of the election process. UNOMIL's logistic assets and resources were to be utilised extensively for supporting registration and polling process. The elections gave Charles Ghankay Taylor's National Patriotic Party (NPP) a decisive mandate. With the popular government in place, the mandate was terminated on 30 September 1997.

The entire process concluding with the elections took about four years of combined efforts of UNOMIL and ECOMOG. Notwithstanding

the successful conduct of elections, the entire period was punctuated by killings and human rights abuses by all factions. However, the peace was shortlived, as two years later another devastating civil war, the Second Liberian Civil War broke out. UN returned to Liberia in 2003 in the form of UNMIL⁶, now a fully armed peacekeeping force but sans ECOMOG. Peace was finally established in 2016 and UNMIL's mandate was terminated in September 2018. Charles Taylor was convicted by an international court and is serving a sentence in the United Kingdom. It was obvious that the efforts of UNOMIL and ECOMOG were in vain, or were they?

MAJOR ISSUES IN THE PARTNERSHIP MODEL

UNOMIL and ECOMOG struggled with their mandates in Liberia for over four years. Even during this extended mandate, the killings and unrest continued in Liberia. Why was the deployment of UNOMIL and ECOMOG unduly prolonged? Was this model successful? On face value it should be, since it led to elections and installation of an 'elected' government. But then, why did the peace breakdown and led to yet another protracted civil war with a prolonged deployment of UN, this time without ECOWAS? Ironically, Charles Taylor who was elected in July 1997 by the elections conducted by the UN and ECOWAS was convicted for war crimes in 2012 with the court remarking 'The accused has been found responsible for aiding and abetting as well as planning some of the most heinous and brutal crimes in recorded human history'.⁷ Obviously, the mode of peacekeeping during the first Liberian Civil War was awry and deserves critical analysis. Clearly, the implementation of this partnership model was flawed. The basic thought process behind this model was logical, but it failed to appreciate several factors which invariably crop in such an approach. The objective of all peace agreements was the same, i.e., warring factions were to cooperate with LNTG till general elections were held. But, disarmament persisted as the key obstacle, as the factions were always wary of each other and hesitant to disarm before the others. All this required the Liberians to have confidence in ECOMOG, a dream which remained elusive.

A major drawback appeared to be lack of diversification of nationalities in ECOMOG. It was composed of players of unequal economic and military capacities which skewed the peacekeeping operations to fit into the agenda of dominant players. The larger players appeared to have their own game-plan thus impinging on the objectives of the mission. Nigeria

was significant as the most influential component and donor for troops for ECOMOG. At various junctures, ECOWAS was encouraged to consider strengthening ECOMOG by restructuring it to achieve a wholesome balance of troops by diversifying its composition and including troops from other African countries even beyond ECOWAS. The US even sought brief commitments from other countries like Tanzania, Senegal and Uganda but it was for a short period. Sadly, these efforts could not significantly dilute the heavy Nigerian presence in ECOMOG. It is but natural that its regional and national interests would predominate in its conduct and focus on Liberia. The Nigerians got an opportunity to implement their agenda both at national and functional levels. Some of the ECOWAS members had a token presence in ECOMOG, nonetheless they legitimised the ECOMOG although they had no control over its activities. The smaller countries just did not possess the required economic and military strength to be equal partners in the peacekeeping operations.

To complicate the issue further, NPFL grossly mistrusted ECOMOG. In Charles Taylor's perception, Nigeria was heavily prejudiced against him and NPFL⁸, which significantly undermined the negotiation process. It was also obvious the ECOWAS was not able to obtain support from all members of the ECOWAS, particularly Burkina Faso and Cote de Ivoire. The peacekeeping operations as such appeared to be an extension of Nigerian Policy rather than a combined effort. ECOMOG thus served Nigerian interests and personal profits of individuals at lower levels. There were also reports that Nigerian troops engaged in commercial ventures involving rubber and timber trade with anti-NPFL factions on the Liberian borders. It unfolded that Nigerians held key positions in logistics and other material services in ECOMOG and there were reports that they favoured their troops causing discontent in other contingents. The situation became further complicated when some countries like Ghana, tired of the long deployment, sought to seek compromise with NPFL possibly to seek a way out of the impasse. ECOMOG credentials as an honest peace-broker were thus blurred.

Most factions complained that that ECOMOG had lost its impartiality and had vested interests in the conflict. The NPFL alleged collusion between elements of ECOMOG and AFL in supporting LPC with warlike material. Venting their dislike, some factions abducted soldiers of the Nigerian and some other contingents, and held them in captivity before releasing them. All these assertions and actions impeded

ECOMOG's ability to carry out its peacekeeping responsibilities. Scepticism led to hostility because of which the factions refused to disarm or give up territory despite the efforts of ECOMOG and UNOMIL.

Nigerian clout in ECOMOG would have been less had the international community rendered their participation at the outset of the conflict. UNOMIL attempted to restore neutrality and legitimacy of ECOWAS by its presence. However, the relations between ECOMOG and UNOMIL never matured to deliver desired outcomes. On the contrary, the factions started mistrusting even UNOMIL due to their association with ECOMOG.

The peacekeeping model depended upon ECOMOG for security within which UNOMIL and other agencies were to operate. Although in November 1993 the UN concluded a formal agreement⁹ defining the relationship between UNOMIL and ECOMOG, its extension at functional levels was not effective. There were two parallel structures, UNOMIL and ECOMOG each reporting to different agencies. The link between the two was informal and based on cooperation, and such a model rarely succeeds particularly in a country ravaged by civil war while in order to work, such a model requires immense cooperation, quick decision-making and action. Though UNOMIL and ECOMOG maintained cordial relations, on numerous occasions, particularly when connected with the movement and deployment of troops, the parallel channels of command-and-control led to complications and avoidable delays. The UNOMIL and ECOMOG relations did not reflect the urgency and efficiency demanded in the scenario prevailing in Liberia at that time. UNOMIL thus could not carry out operations as it desired.

Because of insecurity and logistic difficulties, for most of the time ECOMOG was deployed in less than 15 per cent of the country which significantly limited the ability of UNOMIL to perform its mandate. In fact ECOMOG's deployment remained restricted to Central and Western Liberia for most of the time. On 9 September 1993, NPFL elements detained 43 UNOMIL observers and six NGO personnel at nine sites in the northern and eastern regions, apparently with the aim of commandeering UNOMIL's transport and communication equipment. Later in April 1996, a Kenyan Military Observer was abducted by ULIMO (J) which then demanded release of its leader Roosevelt. He was released after lengthy negotiations with UNOMIL in which the author was also involved. With recurrent interruptions in the ceasefire and the incapacity of ECOMOG to provide security for UNOMIL observers,

UNOMIL was unable to conduct many of its mandated activities. Owing to deteriorating situations, the strength of UNOMIL military personnel was reduced drastically on two occasions. The absence of ECOMOG from major points along the borders allowed war material to flow in unhindered. In fact, ECOMOG reached full strength only after the demobilisation and disarmament was completed in February 1997 by which point there were only 15 sites where they were co-located with ECOMOG.

Although financing ECOMOG troops was not the responsibility of the UN, a trust fund was established by member countries to provide financial and material assistance to member countries of ECOMOG.¹⁰ The allowances of ECOMOG troops were much lesser than those of UN troops. It was a major demotivating factor and led to dissatisfaction among the ECOMOG troops. Quite often during informal interactions, these troops would complain to MILOBS on this issue and urge them for a better deal through their principals. This often led their troops to indulge in undesirable activities like smuggling and intimidating locals for petty gains.

The state of properly equipping ECOMOG was far from desirable. There was a dire need to provide it with sufficient resources to enable it to accomplish its responsibilities effectively. It had a reasonable number of Infantry Combat Vehicles (ICVs) but they did not possess light bulletproof or mine-proof vehicles. They had many advanced artillery pieces like 155mm How FH77 Bofors and 122 mm How which had limited utility in such a scenario. These were not deployed in typical indirect roles but used in direct roles even for protection of their camps and HQs—a tactic bordering on misuse. Many of these pieces were destroyed by the fighters (see Figures 2 and 3). However, they used the 23 mm Schilka to favourable effect in urban areas. It was surprising that the entire force had only one Medium Lift Helicopter to support its operations. This led to severe constraints in movement of troops and reactions to unforeseen situations. In contrast, UNOMIL with much lesser personnel had three Mi8 helicopters and one light helicopter for their operations. Despite the long coastline, they had only a few light naval vessels for its support. ECOMOG troops did not possess proper living and sanitary standards and were housed in large sheds. On several occasions, ECOMOG utilised UN Logistics and other resources but did not reciprocate. It was obvious that ECOWAS underestimated the troop strength and logistics required for the purpose. Lack of an organisation



Figure 2 FH77 Bofors Gun of Nigerian Contingent of ECOMOG Destroyed by Fighters in Tubmanburg in April 1996

Photo by Author



Figure 3 ECOMOG Transport Destroyed by Fighters in Tubmanburg in April 1996

Photo by Author

like Department of Peace Operations (DPO)¹¹ in ECOWAS possibly led to such planning shortfalls.

It appeared that ECOMOG was not geared to operate in a typical guerrilla environment. Their reactions to situations ranged from inaction to sub-optimal reactions resulting in avoidable casualties. Their troops were not put through pre-induction training before assignment to operations. Lack of motivation further reduced their effectiveness. ULIMO-J fighters attacked ECOMOG garrison at Tubmanburg in December 1995, ECOMOG suffered several casualties due to lack of clear instructions and training. Their actions did not conform to normal tactical drills and procedures. As a case in point, during the unrest in April 1996 a staff officer of ECOMOG was moving around in an ICV in Monrovia and dropping off troops at various places in small numbers, whereas this should have been the prerogative of battalion or company commanders. During April 1996, ten-armed ECOMOG soldiers assigned for the protection of UN HQ were mute spectators when the fighters ransacked it.

The narrative of the first civil war would be incomplete without the mention of the role of the US through its Embassy in Liberia as observed from functional levels. During the entire period, the US Embassy continued to function in Liberia and provided immense help in mediation with factions and evacuation of civilians and UN personnel. The role of the US Embassy was significant in a cloudy and ambiguous political set-up in Liberia. It wielded considerable influence on the factions and LNTG due to its clout and the military force it could muster at short notice. The US Ambassador conducted many reconciliatory meetings on its premises, some of which were also attended by the author. The US also dispatched two naval vessels of the coast of Liberia near the embassy as a visible deterrent and show of force. The author was in US Embassy when they inducted almost 800 troops and equipment from Sierra Leone (ex-Germany) into the embassy by means of heavy lift helicopters. Many civilians and UN personnel were evacuated through the US Embassy. In fact, when surrounded by the fighters, UNOMIL personnel including MILOBS had to seek refuge in the embassy for 3–7 days before they could be evacuated. On more than two occasions, US troops had to open fire and kill fighters who attempted to scale the boundary fence of the US Embassy. This Embassy was in fact an island of order and security in entire Liberia at that point of time. Their actions illustrate the stellar role that a country can play in such chaotic times if it has adequate

resources at its disposal. Its role was indeed commendable and resulted in saving many lives. Its liaison with ECOMOG was also admirable; using ECOMOG ICVs most of the US citizens in Liberia were shifted to the US Embassy and finally evacuated outside the country using military helicopters. It is to their credit that no US citizen was left at the mercy of fighters during this period.

CONCLUSION

After protracted efforts over four years, UNOMIL and ECOWAS were able to conduct elections successfully. However, the peace was shortlived with the Second Liberian Civil War breaking out in 1999. Subsequently, UN had to deploy another mission, UNMIL for a protracted period of 13 years. This time it was a pure UN Mission and catered for its own security. It was evident that the experiment with dual control or partnership between UN and ECOWAS had not succeeded. The experiment was engendered possibly by the need to reduce UN deployment and involve regional players into peacekeeping efforts. But, regional players have their own regional interests and often lack resources and experience to conduct such operations. The loose and heterogeneous nature of UN missions were further complicated by involving another heterogeneous grouping with ambiguous interfaces and coordination mechanisms and having vested interests in Liberia.

A significant lesson is that regional groupings may succeed in military alliances, economic and humanitarian issues, but, peacekeeping operations are a different ballgame since they provide easily exploitable loopholes for dominant regional powers. In this case, not only was the ECOWAS deficient in resources, there was also a vast difference in the military and economic capacity within the ECOWAS states. The dominant powers which formed major component of ECOMOG tried to capitalise on the situation. ECOWAS does not have an organisation like DPO and per se lacks experience in peacekeeping operations. Thus, the inherent expertise in the field of peacekeeping was limited. Possibly the partnership was engendered by Mr Kofee Anan (from Ghana which is a member of ECOWAS) who was the Under Secretary-General at the UNHQ and headed the peacekeeping operations.¹² It is to his credit that the model was implemented which subsequently led to other similar ventures. As a trend, the UN instils greater confidence amongst the local population than a regional entity that invariably competes with partners or may even be hostile. Being a truly international organisation, it is

held in greater awe and is considered an epitome of impartiality by local population. A regional or sub-regional organisation has to struggle to meet these credentials.

To be fair, ECOMOG undertook operations with no precedent and drew on its own limited resources. Over the period, the ECOWAS nations developed skills in peacekeeping and counter-insurgency operations. A major advantage was that ECOMOG being a regional force could communicate with factions and bring them to the conference table on several occasions. It is thus possible to benefit from local familiarity with political issues, geography, and the desire for a stable region. Having stated this, it should be clear that regional/sub-regional peacekeeping operations are by no means sole answer to numerous unrests in Africa. ECOWAS would have been aware that the civil war in Liberia was due to larger social issues and to being ruled by an elite not accountable to its people. However, they chose to address the issue from a symptomatic angle without addressing the core cause of the conflict. The international community could have supported and guided ECOWAS to ensure they fielded a more effective and diversified force.

Notwithstanding its flaws, the partnership in the First Liberian War was a bold step and a well-considered model with good intentions. Ideally, the Sub-Regional and Regional Groupings should be able to resolve conflicts within their respective areas rather than leave everything to the UN, which has too many issues on its agenda and is also cash-strapped with many countries not making their share of contributions. Regional countries have a good grasp of the local political issues, and local geography; and have higher stakes in stability of the region. However, the crux of any peacekeeping operation is impartiality and earning the trust of all the stakeholders. Without this underlying factor, a peacekeeping mission is doomed to be a failure. To cover this aspect, it must be ensured that the regional peacekeeping force has adequate diversification through a balanced composition of all stakeholders. A Regional Grouping should have an effective organisation to plan, finance, and conduct such operations. If a sub-regional grouping is unable to meet these requirements, such operations are doomed to failure and lead to loss of numerous lives, human rights abuses and wasteful expenditure. If required, international support should be garnered to support these regional operations through the UN. Needless to emphasise that if the above considerations are not met, the ultimate answer is to deploy a UN Mission at the earliest before further deterioration of situation and loss of lives. There is a case for UN

funding and equipping, organising the regional force, and conducting these operations under its close monitoring. This provision should be incorporated into its charter. Such steps would lead to more meaningful operations without direct involvement of the UN. Conflict is in the DNA of mankind and leads to widespread suffering and misery and in times to come there will be a need to evolve different models for peacekeeping operations on a case-to-case basis for different regions.

The Liberian experiment was precursor to several regional experiments particularly by the AU. The first AU peace support mission was in Burundi in 2003, which proved to be successful. With this confidence, the AU mandated other missions in countries such as Sudan, Mali and the Central African Republic. All these peace support missions faced similar challenges of funding difficulties and logistical inadequacies. However, AU has garnered some success (though limited) to prevent the outbreak of conflicts. This bold experiment was required and has brought forth useful lessons and experience both for the UN and for ECOWAS and would aid pragmatic planning and analysis for deployment in future peacekeeping operations.

NOTES

1. ECOWAS (Economic Community of West African States) is a 15-member regional group with a mandate of promoting economic integration in all fields of activity of the constituting countries. Member countries making up ECOWAS are Benin, Burkina Faso, Cape Verde, Cote d' Ivoire, The Gambia, Ghana, Guinea, Guinea Bissau, Liberia, Mali, Niger, Nigeria, Sierra Leone, Senegal, and Togo. See <https://ecowas.int/about-ecowas/basic-information/>
2. ECOMOG was a West African multilateral armed force established by ECOWAS. ECOMOG was a formal arrangement for separate armies to work together. It was largely supported by personnel and resources of the Nigerian Armed Forces, with sub-battalion strength units contributed by other ECOWAS members—Ghana, Guinea, Sierra Leone, The Gambia, Liberia, Mali, Burkina Faso, Niger, and others.
3. Security Council Resolution S/RES/866(1993), dated 22 September 1993, available at <https://digitallibrary.un.org/record/173063?ln=en>
4. The essence was drawn from the Security Council Resolution 866 (1993), available at <https://digitallibrary.un.org/record/173063?ln=en>
5. UNOMIL also facilitated discussions on the evacuation of wounded, exchange of prisoners and release of the bodies of soldiers killed in fighting.

6. UNMIL (United Nations Mission in Liberia) was established vide UNSC Resolution 1509 (2003). The planned staff was almost 15,000 military personnel. The authority from ECOWAS was transferred to UNMIL on 1 October 2003.
7. Ben Brumfield, 'Charles Taylor Sentenced to 50 years for War Crimes', *CNN*, 31 May 2012, available at <http://edition.cnn.com/2012/05/30/world/africa/netherlands-taylor-sentencing/index.html>
8. Terrence Lyons, 'Liberia's Path from Anarchy to Elections', *Brookings*, 1 May 1998, available at <https://www.brookings.edu/articles/liberias-path-from-anarchy-to-elections/>
9. This is mandated in Para 4 of UNSC Resolution 866(1993), available at <https://digitallibrary.un.org/record/173063?ln=en>
10. UNSC vide their Press Release S/PRST/1994/9 appealed to all member countries to contribute financial and logistical resources to ECOMOG.
11. DPO (Department of Peace Operations) is part of UNHQ and provides political and executive direction to UN peacekeeping operations around the world and maintains contact with the Security Council, troop and financial contributors, and parties to the conflict in the implementation of Security Council mandates. See <https://peacekeeping.un.org/en/department-of-peace-operations>
12. Immediately before being appointed as Secretary-General, he (Kofi Annan) was Under-Secretary-General for Peacekeeping. At his initiative, UN peacekeeping was strengthened in ways that enabled the UN to cope with a rapid rise in the number of operations and personnel. Later in 2005 it was at his behest that two new intergovernmental bodies: the Peace-building Commission and the Human Rights Council were established. See <https://www.un.org/sg/en/content/kofi-annan>.

