

ECOWAS and West African Security

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The Economic Community of West African States (ECOWAS), established in 1975, has played an important role in subregional security. Two protocols relating to security were signed by the ECOWAS member states in the late 1970s and the early 1980s, while no serious attempt was made to realize the intentions expressed in any of the multilateral security agreements until the end of the Cold War. In the 1990s West African states, who faced a challenge to create a new instrument to respond to civil wars in the subregion, established an ad hoc multinational force called the ECOWAS Cease-fire Monitoring Group (ECOMOG). Today ECOWAS is building up a mechanism for conflict response and subregional security. The aim of this article is to examine the historical development of the ECOWAS' efforts for subregional security.

Introduction

West Africa was the most “peaceful” subregion in Africa until the end of the 1980s. Although the other African subregions faced devastating civil wars and severe interstate conflicts, during the Cold War era, apart from the Nigerian civil war, West Africa underwent neither large-scale international conflicts nor prolonged civil wars that threatened subregional se-

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curity. In the subregion, small-scale interstate border disputes frequently occurred, but they did not lead to large-scale interstate conflicts. However, this starkly contrasted with widespread internal violence and military coups d'état in West African countries. Nearly a half of successful coups in independent Africa occurred in the subregion. In this sense, West African "peace" in the Cold War era can be characterized by limited and superficial stability with domestic political uncertainty.

However, the subregional "peace" was broken by the eruption of civil wars in Liberia, Sierra Leone, and Guinea-Bissau. The Economic Community of West African States (ECOWAS) has played a leading role in the resolution of the conflicts, by establishing a subregional force at its own initiative and militarily intervening in them.

The aim of this article is to examine the historical development of the ECOWAS' efforts for subregional security.

ECOWAS : a subregional security framework

In May 1975 the Treaty of Lagos, establishing ECOWAS, was signed by representatives of fifteen West African countries: Benin, Côte d'Ivoire, the Gambia, Ghana, Guinea, Guinea-Bissau, Liberia, Mali, Mauritania, Niger, Nigeria, Senegal, Sierra Leone, Togo, and Upper Volta (now Burkina Faso). Cape Verde joined in 1977, but Mauritania announced its withdrawal in 2000, citing the ECOWAS summit agreement for the introduction of a single common currency by 2004 as its reason for the pullout.

According to the Revised Treaty, signed in July 1993, a main aim of ECOWAS is to promote cooperation and integration leading to the establishment of an economic union in West Africa. In order to achieve the aim, the member states are to take such actions as harmonizing and coordinating national policies, promoting the establishment of joint production enterprises, and establishing a common market and an economic

union.¹ ECOWAS has obtained a few modest results in economic, transport, and travel sectors, such as the introduction of the ECOWAS traveler's cheque and the "Brown Card," a regional motor insurance, the construction of the Trans-coastal and Trans-Sahelian roads, and the legalization of the free movement of persons and goods in the subregion. However, progress toward economic integration has been often hampered by persistent tensions between Anglophone and Francophone states, as well as the lack of political wills to implement agreements. It can be said that the major economic objectives of ECOWAS have been hardly achieved.

Although ECOWAS was founded as an economic community modeled after the European Economic Community (EEC), it was also initially expected to work as an inter-governmental organization that would contribute to subregional peace and security. In the late 1960s and early 1970s West Africa was politically and militarily quite unstable, facing external and internal threats. For instance, in 1967 the Nigerian civil war erupted. France provided considerable economic, military, and diplomatic assistance to the Biafran secessionists and moreover mobilized its former colonies, such as Côte d'Ivoire and Gabon, in support of the breakup of Nigeria. Tanzania and Zambia, key Anglophone African countries, gave official recognition to the Biafran side. In November 1970 Guinea experienced an attempted invasion by Portuguese-led mercenaries. French military interventions and the presence of French troops in and around the subregion also proved a serious menace to some West African states. In addition to these external threats, as mentioned earlier, West African states faced internal security upheavals, such as the activities of dissidents and military coups. In the twelve years 1963–74, more than fifteen successful coups occurred in West Africa, and several political leaders were assassinated in office or executed following the coups.

Many political leaders in West Africa greatly worried over these external and internal threats. While the Treaty of Lagos did not include any provisions relating to subregional peace

and security, the founding fathers of ECOWAS expected the Community to work not only as an organization for economic cooperation but also as a multilateral framework to discuss and build a collective defense mechanism that would contribute to subregional security. In 1973, even before the official establishment of ECOWAS, Togo and Senegal submitted the “Proposals on Agreement on Non-Aggression and Assistance on Defense Matters between the Member States of ECOWAS” and the “Proposals on Protocol of Assistance on the Defense of the Economic Community of West African States,” respectively. In April 1978 the ECOWAS member states signed the “Protocol on Non-Aggression,” which was drawn up as a result of the harmonization of both the Togolese and Senegalese proposals.² In addition, the “Protocol Relating to Mutual Assistance on Defense” was signed by the ECOWAS members in May 1981.

The Non-Aggression Protocol expresses the understanding that security is a necessary condition for ECOWAS to obtain economic development and provides that member states refrain from the threat or use of force or aggression against the territorial integrity of political independence of other member states; refrain from committing, encouraging, or condoning acts of subversion, hostility, or aggression against other member states; undertake to prevent foreigners resident on its territory from committing the acts; and undertake to prevent non-resident foreigners from using its territory as a base for committing such acts.³

While the Non-Aggression Protocol deals with interstate hostile relations only, the Mutual Assistance Protocol of 1981 provides that, if necessary, ECOWAS establishes the Allied Armed Forces of the Community (AAFC) for collective intervention in the following cases: an external threat or aggression directed against a member state; an interstate conflict within ECOWAS; and an internal conflict in a member state maintained and sustained from outside.⁴

The principal aim of the Mutual Assistance Protocol was to establish a collective defense system that mainly responds to

external threats. As mentioned earlier, extra-subregional security challenges, such as the attempted invasion by mercenaries in Guinea in 1970, greatly threatened West African political leaders in power. In January 1977 another mercenary assault occurred in Benin. The presence of the apartheid regime in South Africa proved an external security challenge to them as well. However, the political leaders were also facing internal security challenges, such as riots and coups, that were often more serious problems to the survival of their regimes than external ones, and the internal threats were included in de facto targets of a collective defense system that the protocol aimed at building.

The protocol prohibits ECOWAS from militarily intervening in purely internal conflicts, following the principle of non-interference in domestic affairs in the Charter of the Organization of African Unity (OAU). Nevertheless, the protocol represented a turning point in the ECOWAS' efforts for subregional security in the sense that it officially provided a legal base for ECOWAS to collectively intervene in an internal conflict in a member state even on condition that the conflict was sustained and supported from without the community. The de jure principal concern of the protocol is national security of each ECOWAS member state against external threats. However, one of the de facto principal concerns is regime security against internal threats as well as external ones. Thus, it can be said that the protocol was a process for West African regimes, facing severe external and internal threats, to seek a sort of "security regime for regime security."

During the period of limited subregional peace, West African political leaders had three broad options to defend their regimes against external and internal threats. The first option was the development of multilateral security pacts with other West African states. The ECOWAS protocols are typical examples of the first option. The other example of the option in West Africa was *L'Accord de Non-Agression et d'Assistance en Matière de Defense (ANAD)*, signed by seven Francophone states in 1977. However, these multilateral security

agreements existed only on paper. Until the end of the 1980s no serious attempt was made to prepare any program for joint defense action to realize the intentions expressed in any of these multilateral security agreements.

The second option was reliance on extra-subregional military powers. It seems that this option was the most economical way of dealing with regime security problems. All of the Francophone West African states, except Guinea, signed military assistance agreements with France, and Côte d'Ivoire, Senegal, and Togo have entered into defense agreements also. There are French military bases in Côte d'Ivoire and Senegal. France has militarily intervened in the domestic affairs of West African states, usually at the request of favored West African leaders to maintain the status quo. Among the countries in which France has intervened are Senegal in 1962, to back up President Léopold Sédar Senghor against an attempted coup; Togo in 1986, to support President Gnassingbe Eyadéma against an attempted coup; and Côte d'Ivoire on a number of occasions, to help President Félix Houphouët-Boigny to withstand political unrest. French military assistance and intervention would seem to be of paramount importance in explaining why, until December 1999, Côte d'Ivoire could avoid a successful coup, and also why Francophone West African military and civilian regimes generally proved more stable than Anglophone regimes in the subregion.⁵

The third option for West African leaders to deal with regime security problems was the development of bilateral military assistance. In West Africa there are several bilateral military cooperation agreements, for instance between Senegal and the Gambia, between Guinea and Sierra Leone, and between Nigeria and Sierra Leone. It has been said sometimes that the bilateral military agreements between West African states are relatively ineffective in providing needy partners with aid to withstand external threats. Yet they have played a moderate role in consolidating partners' regime security against internal political unrest, by providing small-scale

troops and arms for training, presidential guard, and suppression of riots.

During the period of limited peace until the end of the 1980s, in order to consolidate regime security, West African leaders manipulated the development of the ECOWAS security agreements, assistance of extra-subregional big powers, and small-scale bilateral military assistance among them. However, limited subregional peace was broken by the outbreak of the Liberian civil war in 1989. The ECOWAS security agreements, existing only on paper, and small-scale bilateral military assistance among West African states became increasingly insufficient to respond to the new large-scale security crisis. There was little prospect that extra-subregional powers, like France and the United States, would militarily intervene in the civil war, mainly because West Africa, and rather Africa in general, lost strategic importance to them in the post – Cold War period. West African states faced a challenge to create a new instrument to respond to the civil war that threatened subregional security. In August 1990 an ad hoc multinational force called the ECOWAS Cease-fire Monitoring Group (ECOMOG) was established by ECOWAS for the peacekeeping operation in Liberia.

ECOMOG: a subregional peacekeeping force?

In December 1989, soon after the U.S. and Soviet leaders officially announced the end of the Cold War, a small group of the National Patriotic Front of Liberia (NPFL), a previously unknown Liberian guerrilla movement led by Charles Taylor and supported by Burkina Faso and Côte d'Ivoire, crossed the border from Côte d'Ivoire into the eastern part of Liberia, sparking off a civil war that would eventually last for the next seven years.

Although the ECOWAS summit of May 1990 in Banjul did not adopt any resolutions directly relating to the Liberian civil war, a Standing Mediation Committee (SMC) was

established by the summit for the settlement of a dispute or conflict breaking out between member states. The Gambia, Ghana, Mali, Nigeria, and Togo were appointed as the members of the SMC. Despite the fact that the SMC was not authorized to interfere in member states' internal conflicts, the committee positively responded to the Liberian crisis. In July 1990 Liberian President Samuel Doe addressed a letter to the members of a ministerial meeting of the SMC, commending the committee for its initiative in having begun to mediate in the war. He concluded his letter by indicating that "it would seem most expedient at this time to introduce an ECOWAS Peace-keeping Force into Liberia to forestall increasing terror and tension and to assure a peaceful transitional environment."⁶ Early in August the SMC decided to establish ECOMOG to be composed of military contingents drawn from the member states of the SMC as well as Guinea and Sierra Leone.

The main mission of ECOMOG was to monitor a cease-fire, restoring law and order to create the necessary conditions for free and fair elections to be held in Liberia.⁷ The NPFL offered opposition to the intervention of ECOMOG, saying that there would be no cease-fire in Liberia until President Doe resigned and that the peacekeeping force must have the prior commitment of all the parties to a cease-fire or else it could exacerbate rather than resolve the problems.⁸ Burkinabe leader Blaise Compaoré declared his total disagreement with the SMC decision to intervene in Liberia, saying that the SMC had no competence to interfere in internal conflicts in member states.⁹ Togo and Mali, which were SMC members, agreed to establish ECOMOG but did not contribute their troops to it, being repelled by the leadership of Anglophone states, in particular Nigeria, a subregional military power. Also, Côte d'Ivoire and Senegal, key Francophone states in the subregion, expressed their objections to the ECOMOG intervention in Liberia. Despite these oppositions from the NPFL and several Francophone member states, late in August ECOMOG, eventually composed of troops from Ghana, the Gambia, Guinea, Nigeria, and Sierra Leone, left Freetown, traveled mainly in a

Ghanaian merchant ship and a Nigerian navy ship, and landed at Monrovia.

Before ECOMOG left Freetown, its force commander, Ghanaian Lt.-Gen. Arnold Quainoo, had said that he estimated that its peacekeeping task would last about six months.¹⁰ Lt.-Gen. Quainoo, a soldier brought up under the U.N. peacekeeping operations, considered his role that of neutral and short-time peacekeeper, rather than peace enforcer. However, ECOMOG was viewed by Taylor not as a neutral peacekeeping force but as a force designed to support Doe's regime and promote Nigerian subregional hegemonic interests. Consequently ECOMOG came under immediate attack from the NPFL. In September 1990, at the ECOMOG headquarters Doe was captured by the Independent National Patriotic Front of Liberia (INPFL), a guerrilla group that had split from the NPFL, and was then murdered nearby.

Nigeria worried that ECOMOG might not survive and persuaded Gambian President Dawda Kairaba Jawara, who was the chairman of the ECOWAS Authority of Heads of State and Government, to replace Quainoo with Nigerian Major-General Joshua Dogonyaro. With additional reinforcements of troops and arms from Nigeria and Ghana, Dogonyaro shifted ECOMOG's role from peacekeeper to peace enforcer and adopted the "limited offensive" strategy, in which Nigerian-led ECOMOG took an aggressive posture. This was not a legal move authorized by the ECOWAS Authority but a political decision reached by the Nigerian sponsors of the ECOMOG mission. ECOMOG, led more openly by Nigeria, identified the NPFL as the clear enemy, and heavy fighting between ECOMOG and NPFL intermittently continued. In order to make the war situation turn to their advantage, ECOMOG provided the United Liberation Movement for Democracy in Liberia (ULIMO) and Liberian Peace Council (LPC), which were anti-NPFL warring parties, with arms, ammunition, intelligence, and transport.¹¹ ECOMOG became a main combatant of the Liberian civil war rather than a neutral peacekeeping force. In August 1996 the Abuja II Accord, the

fifteenth peace agreement on the Liberian civil war, was signed, and, following the agreement, all the warring parties were disarmed. The election was held in July 1997, and Charles Taylor was elected as new president, polling 75.3% of the total votes.

In March 1991 another civil war occurred in neighboring Sierra Leone. The Revolutionary United Front of Sierra Leone (RUF/SL), a small guerrilla movement led by Foday Saybana Sankoh, entered the eastern and southern parts of Sierra Leone from the NPFL-controlled Liberian territory, receiving military assistance from NPFL and Burkina Faso. Although ECOWAS did not intervene in the war immediately, Nigeria and Guinea sent troops to Sierra Leone to support President Joseph Saidu Momoh, following bilateral military agreements with the country. In May 1997 a coup occurred, and Ahmed Tejan Kabbah, the Sierra Leonean president newly elected in 1996, was overthrown by pro-RUF/SL soldiers. He was forced to flee to neighboring Guinea. Worrying that the Liberian peace process might be disturbed by the coup and being greatly repelled by an incident where more than twenty Nigerian soldiers were murdered in the coup, Nigeria sent thousands of troops to Sierra Leone to restore Kabbah to power by force. Ghana and Guinea joined, and this multinational force carried out all their operations in the name of ECOMOG.

Former ECOWAS Executive Secretary Abbas Bundu denies that it was ECOMOG, saying that “no consultation apparently took place before Nigerian troops bombarded Freetown on June 2, 1997. Not until August 28, nearly three months later, was the ECOWAS Authority able to meet and become seized of the situation for the first time.”¹² Yet the OAU and United Nations expressed support for the intervention of Nigerian-led ECOMOG in Sierra Leone, and the ECOWAS Authority also gave a retroactive approval to ECOMOG. Although in October 1997 the Sierra Leonean military junta signed a peace agreement with ECOWAS and pledged to restore civilian rule in April 1998, Nigeria treated

the leadership of the junta with great scepticism. This is partly because there was a rumor that the junta was stockpiling arms and ammunition to effectively prosecute a war against ECOMOG even after the signing of the peace agreement. In February 1998 ECOMOG, supported by Sierra Leonean militias called Kamajors, ousted the junta from office by force after heavy fighting and restored President Kabbah to power next month.

While Liberia and some Francophone states were against the use of force to resolve the conflict in Sierra Leone, the international community expressed gratitude to Nigerian-led ECOMOG for driving the junta out of office and facilitating the country's return to democracy. In July 1999 a peace agreement was signed between President Kabbah and the RUF/SL leader Sankoh through the mediation of Togolese President Eyadema, who was the chairman of the ECOWAS Authority. Yet, in May 2000, an incident when about 500 U.N. peacekeepers were detained by the RUF/SL occurred, and the Sierra Leonean peace process suffered a great setback. Although ECOMOG contributed to the settlement of the conflict in Sierra Leone, this strange case of collective intervention exposed some problems, such as insufficient legal basis for intervention and the Nigerian dominance in ECOMOG.

In Guinea-Bissau a military mutiny, which began in early June 1998, escalated into heavy fighting between government troops, supported by Senegal and Guinea, and rebels. The mutiny began after General Ansumane Mane was dismissed by President João Bernardo Vieira from the office of the army chief of staff in January 1998, for his alleged involvement in smuggling arms to the Casamance separatists in Senegal. In December 1998 a neutral ECOMOG force composed of Togolese troops was deployed in Guinea-Bissau to replace non-neutral Senegalese and Guinean troops that had been sent in to protect President Vieira when fighting broke out. However, rebels eventually overthrew Vieira's regime by force in May 1999. The impotence of ECOMOG, to which Nigeria did not contribute troops, was revealed by the incident. When the

May fighting broke out, the 600 troops of ECOMOG could only stand back, watch, and then condemn the breaking-down of the cease-fire.

ECOMOG was labeled by ECOWAS as its subregional peacekeeping force. However, the Liberian and Sierra Leonean cases of ECOMOG clearly show that it was not. In the case of Liberia, for instance, ECOMOG was established by the SMC. Although the ECOWAS Authority gave its retroactive approval to the decision of the SMC on the establishment of ECOMOG three months later, it obviously exceeded the committee's initial competence. Furthermore, ECOMOG was dispatched to Liberia without the consent of all the warring parties to the cease-fire. In a letter of August 1990 addressed to the U.N. secretary-general, the permanent representative of Nigeria to the United Nations said, "I must emphasise that the ECOWAS Monitoring Group (ECOMOG) is going to Liberia first and foremost to stop the senseless killing of innocent civilian nationals and foreigners, and to help the Liberian people to restore their democratic institutions. ECOWAS intervention is in no way designed to save one part or push another."¹³

However, soon after the intervention ECOMOG shifted its role from that of peacekeeper to peace enforcer without any authorization by the ECOWAS Authority and intermittently battled with a certain faction, providing military assistance to other guerrilla movements. It is not the ECOWAS Authority but Nigerian presidency that actually had an influential voice on ECOMOG's missions and strategies in Liberia.

In the case of Sierra Leone, the situation was much worse. Nigeria, the chair of the ECOWAS Authority, dispatched its troops to Sierra Leone soon after the occurrence of a military coup in May 1997. The ECOWAS Secretariat was not informed by the Nigerian government of the dispatch of its troops to Sierra Leone in advance. During the conflict, neither the ECOWAS chairman (apart from the Nigerian president) nor the ECOWAS Secretariat exercised any authority and control over Nigerian-led ECOMOG in Sierra Leone. The troops were answerable not to ECOWAS but only to their own

countries, although they operated in the name of ECOMOG.¹⁴ ECO-MOG, except in the case of Guinea-Bissau, lacked legality, neutrality, and fairness, which would have been required in the U.N. peacekeeping operations. These facts reveal that it was not a subregional peacekeeping force under the full control of ECOWAS.

The author believes that ECOMOG is rooted in the tradition of “armies on loan,” which are one form of the use of military power in interstate relations of independent Africa. Arnold Hughes and Roy May examined twenty-nine cases of transnational military intervention in Black Africa between 1960 and 1985. Out of the twenty-nine cases of (mostly bilateral) “armies on loan,” they identified eighteen cases as regime-supportive intervention, whose purpose was to provide military assistance, including troops and arms, to a threatened regime or government. Six cases were identified as regime-opposing intervention, which sought the overthrow or destabilization of a regime or government, and five cases as state-supportive intervention, whose purpose was to ensure the survival of the state itself in the face of internal and external threats. As Hughes and May point out, African states have often deployed elements of the armed forces in open support of foreign policy objectives on other African countries.¹⁵

ECOMOG is not a so-called peacekeeping force but rather multinational “armies on loan” whose purpose is to support the security of a threatened regime or government. During the period of limited peace in West Africa, as discussed earlier, multilateral security pacts, military assistance from extra-subregional powers, such as France, and bilateral military assistance (or “armies on loan”) between West African states were used by political leaders to respond to external and internal threats. However, they became increasingly insufficient to respond to the large-scale crises in the post – Cold War era, such as the Liberian and Sierra Leonean civil wars. West African political leaders needed a new form of military assistance that was more effective than multilateral security pacts existing only on paper, not reliant on extra – West African

powers but self-reliant, and more large-scale than bilateral loaning of armies. This necessity produced ECOMOG.¹⁶

ECOWAS Mechanism

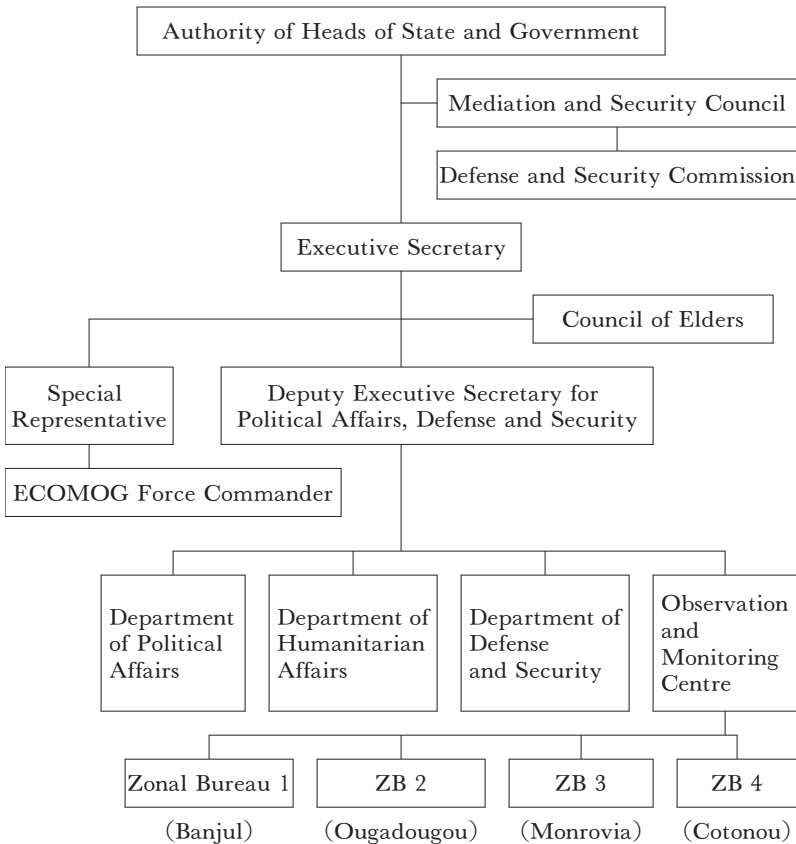
In December 1997 the ECOWAS extraordinary summit in Lomé approved the establishment of a mechanism for conflict management. In line with this directive, a “Draft Mechanism: ECOWAS Mechanism for Conflict Prevention, Management, Resolution, Peace-keeping and Security,” prepared by the Meeting of Experts, was approved at the Meeting of Ministers of Defense, Internal Affairs and Security in Banjul in July 1998. The “Protocol Relating to the Mechanism for Conflict Prevention, Management, Resolution, Peace-keeping and Security” was signed by the ECOWAS member states in December 1999.

According to the protocol, the main aim of the mechanism is to provide ECOWAS with the capacity to operate effectively in the areas of conflict prevention, conflict management, conflict resolution, peacekeeping, humanitarian support, peace building, and subregional security. The mechanism establishes linkage for effective decision-making with the various institutions and organs of ECOWAS. These institutions and organs include the Authority, Mediation and Security Council, Defense and Security Commission, Executive Secretary, Council of Elders, Deputy Executive Secretary for Political Affairs, Defense and Security, ECOMOG, and Observation and Monitoring Centre (see Figure 1).¹⁷

The mechanism is built around the Mediation and Security Council (MSC), empowered to take decisions on issues of subregional peace and security on behalf of the ECOWAS Authority. The council consists of nine member states. Meetings of the MSC are regularly held at three levels: heads of state and government, ministerial, and ambassadorial levels.¹⁸

The Defense and Security Commission (DSC), which consists of representatives from member states, such as the chiefs

Figure 1: The ECOWAS Mechanism for Conflict Prevention, Management, Resolution, Peace-keeping and Security



Source: *Draft Mechanism: ECOWAS Mechanism for Conflict Prevention, Management, Resolution, Peace-keeping and Security*, adopted at the ECOWAS Meeting of Ministers of Defense, Internal Affairs and Security in Banjul in July 1998; *The Protocol Relating to the Mechanism for Conflict Prevention, Management, Resolution, Peace-keeping and Security*, signed by the ECOWAS Heads of States and Government in December 1999.

of staff, police chiefs, and experts from Foreign Ministries, examines the technical aspects of defense matters and advises the MSC on the formulation of mandates, terms of reference, and appointment of the force commander, as well as the requirement of the administration and logistic support for peacekeeping operations.¹⁹

Following African traditional practice, the Council of Elders (CE), which consists of eminent personalities from within and without the subregion, is established. The CE is not a standing council, but members would be appointed from the database prepared by the executive secretary on an ad hoc basis. The CE's role is as mediator, conciliator and facilitator.²⁰

The executive secretary is empowered to initiate actions in the effective prevention and management of conflicts. The roles of the executive secretary are to recommend the appointment of the special representative and the force commander for approval by the MSC; to appoint members of the CE; to be responsible for the political, administrative, and operational activities and provide logistic support for the mission; to issue periodic reports on the activities of the mechanism; to deploy fact-finding and mediation missions; to convene all meetings of the MSC, CE, and DSC; and to implement all decisions of the MSC.²¹

The office of the deputy executive secretary for political affairs, defense, and security is newly created to enable the Secretariat to develop the institutional facilities to manage various field operations. The deputy executive secretary has under his supervision appropriate departments, including the Department of Political Affairs, the Department of Humanitarian Affairs, the Department of Defense and Security, the Observation and Monitoring Centre, and other departments as may be established by the Council of Ministers on the recommendation of the MSC.²²

An early warning system (EWS) is built within the framework of the mechanism. The subregion is divided into four Observation and Monitoring Zones (OMZ): Zone 1 (Cape Verde, the Gambia, Guinea-Bissau, and Senegal); Zone 2

Map 1: Four Observation and Monitoring Zones



(Burkina Faso, Côte d'Ivoire, Niger, and Mali); Zone 3 (Guinea, Sierra Leone, Liberia, and Ghana); and Zone 4 (Benin, Nigeria, and Togo) (see Map 1). Each OMZ has a Zonal Bureau at a zonal capital to collect information on security matters, and these Zonal Bureaux channel their reports to the Observation and Monitoring Centre at the headquarters in Abuja.²³

Furthermore, the protocol provides that the mechanism has ECOMOG, a structure composed of several standby multipurpose modules in their countries of origin and ready for immediate deployment. The roles of ECOMOG include observation and monitoring, peacekeeping, enforcement of sanctions, and policing activities.²⁴

Conclusion

In May 2000 West African leaders gathered in Abuja for a summit marking the 25th anniversary of ECOWAS. At the summit, they considered the security crisis in Sierra Leone, where the U.N. peacekeeping operation suffered a great setback due to the taking hostage of some 500 U.N. soldiers by the RUF/SL. It endorsed a proposal made by ECOWAS defense ministers and chiefs of staff that would send an additional 3,000 troops to the country in order to support the peace process under the U.N. initiative.

Soon after the hostage incident occurred, U.N. Secretary-General Kofi Annan called for the dispatch of a rapid reaction force to Sierra Leone. Britain sent troops to secure an international airport near Freetown and evacuate British, EU, and Commonwealth nationals from Sierra Leone, and the United States and Russia offered to transport and provide logistical support for the U.N. force. Yet no Security Council members positively responded to the secretary-general's calls for the rapid reaction Force.

Today, apart from the cases of humanitarian intervention and rescue operations, it is increasingly unlikely for Western countries, who have no significant national interests in Africa, to militarily intervene in African conflicts on a large scale. The post – Cold War period is an era for African nations to respond to internal and external security challenges by themselves. The ECOWAS mechanism, which is currently under construction, is a self-help effort of West African countries for subregional security, and the international community, including Japan, is expected to financially and technically support the ECOWAS initiative.

Notes

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 24. *Ibid.*, Art. 21–22.

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