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**The Roles of Peace Envoy in Liberian Conflict
Management**

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.Abstract

In the recent past, Liberia and Africa at large have been in the news mainly in the light of several disorder which ranges from intra-state and inter-state conflict and civil wars. Civil wars resulted to wanton, killing, kidnapping, genocide, and destruction of property as well as the increase in the refugees and internally displaced persons. Also, the prolonged Liberian conflict led to violation of human rights, particularly atrocities against civilian populations, including widespread sexual violation against women and children and underage, etc. The situation has continued to constitute threat to international peace and security in the region, to stability in West Africa sub-region, and to the peace process for Liberia. The method and sources of information adopted was through secondary sources.

The study considered the overview of the Liberian civil war and its return to democratic society and the emergency of the first woman president in Africa in the year 2006. The roles played by the peace envoys in managing the Liberian conflicts with the particular reference to the UN, ECOWAS and Nigeria (ECOMOG) for its leadership roles and the way forward on research on the roles of peace envoy in conflict management in Liberia and Africa at large. Problems faced by these envoys were also looked at.

Key words: civil war, conflict, peace envoy, genocide, security.

Introduction

The regulatory of conflicts in Africa, has become one of the distinct feature of the continent, conflicts are most often in forms of intra-state wars. While inter-state conflicts are usually caused by boarder claims due to the presence of economic resources in the disputed areas, ideological differences and leadership misconception, among other factors, intra-state instability is often ignited by rivalry prompted by ethnic or sectional marginalization and exclusion from political power. The Liberian conflicts are better expressed as intra-elite class completion (Osaghae; 1996).

Aremu (2007) asserts that the major crises that runs through Africa from west to east, south to north and central is conflict and war. Since 1960s, series of wars had taken place in Africa. These includes: Sudan (1995-1990), Burundi: Burma and Sierra Leone (1991-2000) and lastly, Liberia conflict between 1980 -2003.

Peace envoys work to keep tensions from escalating among opposing groups by connecting data, assisting in creating opportunities for negotiations, leading negotiations to a solution that emphasizes peaceful methods. Helping to create peace accords and envoys rarely keep volatile situations from worsening for very long solely through their own efforts, rather, interventions such as observer mission, economic assistance and democracy building. The envoys' effectiveness requires that third parties move from community to

further development of troubled areas, and then the envoys' visits are completed (Barely: 1993-1995). Also, Garry (2006) observes that most peace envoys who are appointed to deal with specific locale and work for limited times, as determined by commissioners; occupy permanent positions filled by different people over time.

Jemilohun (2007) opined that conflict is present when two or more parties perceived that their interest are incompatible, expressed hostile attitude or are pursuing their interests through actions that damage the other parties. These parties may be individuals, small or large group, even a nation or state.

Liberian Civil War

Liberia is a republic in Western Africa, bounded on the north by Sierra Leone and Cote d'Ivoire, and the Guinea on the south. Freed American slaves founded Liberia in the early 1800s; Monrovia is the capital and largest city. In December 1989, a group of rebels sum up an uprising against the government. The National Patriotic Front of Liberia (NPFL) led by Charles Taylor soon controlled much of the countryside. The ECOWAS Monitoring Group (ECOMOG) intervened in the crisis but failed to halt the fighting. Samuel Doe was captured and executed by a splinter group of the NPFL in September 1990.

The war spread through Liberia army, and the NPFL battled ECOMOG, the Liberian army, their splinter group, the Independent National Patriotic Front of Liberia (INPFL) and the United Liberation Movement of Liberia for Democracy (ULIMO), composed of former allies of Doe by early 1991; ECOMOG held Monrovia and the NPFL controlled the rest of the country. In October 1991, ECOWAS and the NPFL agree to disarm and established an interim government in early 1992, which clashed with ECOMOG force and in August, was attacked by ILIMO from Sierra Leone.

In September, the NPFL launched an all-out assault on ECOMOG Force in Monrovia, recruiting boys as young as eight to fight and

executing civilians who refused to join. The siege temporarily shut down all transportation in and out of the capital and killed thousands of civilians in the gross fire. ECOMOG succeeded in sending the NPFL back into the country side by January, 1993. ULIMO had captured much of Western Liberia, but had split along ethnic lines into two warring factions which were ULIMO-T and ULIMO-K.

At a peace conference in July 1993, the leaders of IGNU, NPFL and ULIMO-K drew up a plan for a Liberian National Transitional Government, led by five member council of a state consistency of one NPFL leader, one ULIMO-K member, one IGNU representative and two other civilians. A ceasefire was implemented but progress towards lasting peace was hampered by the appearance of a new-armed group, the Liberian peace Council (LPC) and by the refusal of ULIMO-J to disarm. By mid-1994, the ceasefire had completely failed and fight ensued between the LPC and NPF, between ULIMO-J and ULIMO-K, and between ULIMO-J and ECOMOG. The United Nations observer in Liberia (UNNOMIL) was deployed to cooperate with ECOMOG in March. At this time, the United States issued a report condemning wide spread human right violation in Liberia. The leader of the factions secretly met in August 1994, and negotiated a time for disarmament and the institution of Council of States based on the 1993 plan, but with six members. A ceasefire in December was interrupted by skirmishes until a formed peace accord was signed in August 1995. The peace was broken in April 1996 when an uprising by ULIMO-J in the outskirts of Monrovia quickly spread in to the capital, sparking street to street fighting and looting. Another ceasefire was declared in August, and ECOMOG Forces reclaimed Monrovia. In all, more than 150,000 Liberians died in the seventh civil war, and well over 1 million people were displaced.

Return to Democracy

ECOMOG disarmament was initiated under the August 1996 peace agreement¹. Despite some minor skirmishes and assassination attempt on Taylor, the disarmament proceeded relatively smoothly.

ECOMOG forces cleared lands mines and re-opened the country's roads, allowing refugees to begin to return from neighbouring countries. The disarmament programme was declared a success in January 1997. Under considerable international security, presidential and legislative elections were held in July. Charles Taylor, the man who instigated the Liberian civil war eight years earlier was elected president by a landslide, and his political party, the National Patriotic Party, won a majority of seats in the National Assembly. The elections were judged free and fair by the international observers.

Taylor pledged to forge national reconciliation and appointed leaders of rival factions to various government positions. After the last ECOMOG forces withdrew from Liberia in 1999, Taylor's security forces were criticized by International groups of alleged human rights abuses against members of the opposition. Beginning in year 2000, government forces shut down several independent newspapers and radio stations.

In 2001, the UN imposed economic sanctions against Liberia for aiding rebel groups in neighbouring Sierra Leone. Taylor's administration also allegedly aided rebels in both Guinea and Cote d'Ivoire. Taylor accused Guinea of supporting a new Liberian rebel group called Liberian United for Reconciliation and Democracy (LURD) and retaliated with several attacks on Guinea Border Towns. LURD rebels gained control over significant amount of northern Liberia by 2002, soon limiting Taylor's authority to little more than Monrovia. After months of fighting and international pressure (notably, from the United States) Taylor agreed to step down in August 2003 and went into exile in Nigeria. People then returned to the war torn country, given way to the emergence of the First Woman President in Africa in 2006.

The Peace Envoy in Liberia

The implication of the conflict situation in Liberia include wanton destruction of personal assets, infrastructure and refugee crisis. The destructive aspects of the conflict, therefore, make the need for

conflict management and resolution important. Since most states in Africa are undemocratic, constitutional in-built mechanisms for conflict management were therefore lacking. Peace envoys' involvement in managing the crisis consequently becomes an attractive option.

The UN Peace Envoy

The United Nation is the guarantor of global peace and security. The United Nations peace envoy contributed tremendously to the World peace, especially in Liberia. It was apt that the initiation of the Secretary General to transfer the major roles performed by UNO to the United Nation mission in Liberia continues to constitute a threat to international peace and security in the region and to the peace process for Liberia. The UN while acting under chapter III of the United Nations established the United Nations Mission in Liberia (UNMIL). The stabilisation force called for resolution 1497 in (2003) for a period of 12 months, and required the Secretary General to transfer authority from the ECOWAS led ECOMIL Force to UNMIL on October 1st, 2003 and further decided that UNMIL will constitute up to 15,000 United Nation military personnel, including up to 250 military observers and 160 staff officers, and up to 1,115 civilians police staff officers, including formed units to assist in the peace process, in maintenance of law and order throughout Liberia and the appropriate civilian component. The Secretary General appreciated the appointment of his peace envoy for Liberia to direct the operations of UNMIL and coordinate all United Nation activities in Liberia. The mandates given United Nations mission include the following:

- To observe and monitor the implementation of the ceasefire agreement as well as to investigate violation of the ceasefire.
- It also establishes and maintain continuous liaison with the fiscal headquarters of all the parties military forces.
- They assisted development cantonment of military forces of all the parties.

The United Nations encouraged UMMIL, without capability and areas of deployment to support the voluntary return of refugees and internally displaced persons. It also requested the Liberian government with the Secretary General within 30 days to adopt the resolution, pending the conclusion agreement dated 9th October, 1999.

The UN demanded that the Liberian parties ceased hostility throughout Liberia and fulfil their obligations under Comprehensive Peace Agreement and the ceasefire agreement including cooperation in the formation of the JME established under the ceasefire agreement.

The United Nation Missions in Liberia (UNMIL) assisted in the capabilities and areas of deployment to support voluntary returns of refugees and internally displaced persons. It also reaffirmed the importance of gender perspective in peace operation and post conflict peace building in accordance with resolution 1325 (2002). It also addressed violence against women and girls as a tool of warfare, and encouraged UNMIL as well as Liberian parties to actively address these issues. The United Nation peace envoys also called upon the transitional community to consider how it might help future economic development in Liberia and improve the welfare of its people. In Liberia, the UN is represented by UN mission in Liberia (UNMIL) as well as 16 specialised agencies, fund, programmes and World Bank.

The UN programme in Liberia are assigned with the national poverty eradication strategies (PES), UN envoy's Secretary General on Sexual Violence in Conflict, Madam Wallstorm visited Liberia to discuss efforts to end rape and other forms of sexual violence against women and girls during and after armed conflict.

Although Liberia is a post conflict country, Madam Wallstorm's visit was aimed at better understanding of the dynamics of the high act of sexual violence and rape, which was still the most reported crime in Liberia and to see what could be done to prevent it. She discussed ways in which the office of the UN peace envoy can contribute to strengthening the rule of law response and support anti-rape

campaign. In her words: “You can’t prevent what you don’t fully understand, so we want to meet the survivors of sexual violence, understand more about perpetrators, and analyse how society deals with these crimes” (Newspaper of the United Nation in Liberia, 2010).

The United Nations Development programme through its community security and social cohesion unit (CSSC) conducted a ground breaking ceremony for the construction of a headquarters building for the Women and Child Protection Unit (WACPU) of the Liberian National Police. This building was constructed by the UN office for Project Services (UNOPS). The project was founded by the Government of Norway under its support to the security sector reform initiative. The Norwegian government through UNDP has founded the construction of two countries police headquarters with women and child protection units at different locations across the country (Liberia) allowing rural women and children easy access to protection and justice.

However, this project forms part of a boarder initiative of the government of Liberia to address issues related to the prevention of gender based conflict, security and safety of women and children (Newsletter UN in Liberia, 2010). On the other hand, four days international conference held in Liberia capital, Monrovia in April 2010, reiterated the need for strong partnership and political goodwill by member state governments, the UN and the other state holders to integrate gender perspective in conflict management, resolution, peacemaking and peace building process.

The peace envoy Secretary General (SRSG), Ellen Loj has strolled Nigerian personnel serving with United Nation mission in Liberia (UNMIL). Not quiet long, Loj awarded over 1,648 Nigerians UNMIL military officers, 72 of whom were women, UN peace envoy medals for their contribution to the Liberia’s stability. According to Loj, “You have indeed performed your duties honourably and I know that it has not been easy” she told the Nigerian Peace Envoy. She also reminded them of formidable roles they should continue to play in maintenance of peace and stability. The UN envoy spoke of the protection of life

and property, including Nigeria's assistance being given to almost one half of Liberian population. Loj expressed optimism that the goal of consolidation of peace in Liberia will be accomplished as a result of collaboration between UN, Liberians and other partners. This "collaboration" Loj emphasized "will help in taking security and rule of law challenges, the prevalence of arm robbery, rape and trafficking." The UN envoys asserted that ultimately Liberia's future rests firmly on Liberian shoulder; Liberians have the opportunity to build a new country today.

Liberian president Ellen Johnson Sirleaf said that six years ago, most aid to Liberia was in the form of emergency humanitarian assistance, which was in response to Liberian's need for the most bases of necessities. The UN deputy special representative for recovery government, seeking ownership over the coordination of aid recovery describes ... "Further evidence of the government to strive to lift Liberia on to a path of sustainable long-term development".

The Liberian government says, it has involved the 2005 party declaration on aid effectiveness as its guiding principle. Minister of Planning and Economic Affairs, Amara Koneh said that between 2003 and 2008, Liberia had aid boom from the UN and other regional peace envoys ("Newsletter of the Liberian July, 2010).

Nigerian/ ECOMOG Peace Envoy

Nigeria's leadership role in the ECOMOG Peace operation in Liberia is understandable from many perspectives. Rather than wait, without appropriate responses from either OAU now AU, or the United Nations, ECOWAS has tried hard to mobilize and harmonize political will of members states to respond as fitting to cases of armed conflicts in West Africa. Desperate to fill the security void, ECOMOG turned up for sizeable peace mission in Liberia.

Incidentally, the ECOMOG intervention was supported and applauded by the (OAU) now (AU), the UN, United State, and domestic populace in Sierra Leone. The American support can be

understood from two angles. United States is acclaimed leader of the Democratic world. It has played such enviable interventionist roles in Haghit and Grenada when their respective constitutional governments were overthrown. The UN Security Council not only approved the military intervention but imposed a wide range of economic sanctions including embargo on traffic, oil, food and weapons until the Junta addicted power to the democratic regime of Kabbah (The Guardian 1997:1).

ECOMOG attained the sub-regional goal of maintaining peacekeeping, peace building and returning normalcy to Liberia after brokering many peace accords between the warring factions until the Abuja accord of August, 1996. Nigeria towering role in ECOMOG manifested in the area of troop composition. At the peak of the conflict, ECOMOG's strength was about 20,000 envoys. At any time of the operations of ECOMOG in Liberia, Nigeria alone accounted for between 70-90% of the troops, while it provided the bank of logistic needs, arms and ammunitions.

In history of power and strategic relations, Nigeria peace envoy's commitment to International Peacekeeping in Africa and abroad has pointed to being an asset to ECOWAS, rather than liability. Overating the divisive sub regional politics, ECOWAS managed to deploy three ECOWAS ceasefire' Peace Envoys. In terms of the classical conception of preventive diplomacy, the ECOMOG experiment was a costly misadventure (Basse; 2005 177). The fault was not on the objective per se, but the modus operandi by conflict management envoys. However, the deployment of peace envoy into Liberia was a response to the civil disorder which arose in 1989 as an insurgent revolt by Charles Taylor against maladministration of Samuel Doe. A ranking civil war fastened by two conflicts or contending parties were as follow: Taylor's National Patriotic Front Liberia (NPFL). Johnson's Independent National Patriotic Front of Liberia (INPFL). By 1990, no less than 5,000 lives was lost, apart from the destruction of economic infrastructure as well as the reproduction of one million

Liberians as refugees (Anim: 1990) and Daily Champion August 8, 1991).

Rather than building consents and strengthening solidarity among ECOWAS member states, these missions ill-operationalized in such a way that underscored and exacerbated sub-regional tensions. More seriously too, ECOWAS peace envoys suffered from financial institution and operational constraints (Aja and Benham). The three dominants conflict actors were Doe, Taylor and Johnson.

It was against the immoral tale of atrocities that the ECOWAS peace envoys, comprising Nigeria, Ghana, Mali and Togo made very important decision to establish ECOMOG to seal off the basis of a more durable management or settlement (Bassey; 2005: 178-80). It meant an attempt at separating warring factions and putting in place national conference of all Liberian political parties. In practice, ECOWAS peace support mission shifted to enforce in the face of Taylor's intransigence. Suspicious of the ulterior motive of ECOWAS management or mediation committee, Taylor and his NPEL issued a precondition for ceasefire.

Inclusion of Taylor in any interim government since the NPEL had effective control of virtually all of the country and the immediate exist of Doe from Liberia broadening the membership of the mediating committee of ECOWAS and the effective participation of the OAU. However, to support peace in Liberia, ECOWAS held a number of diplomatic summits in Yamoussoukro, Banju and Lagos. The summit was initiated by Nigeria to assist the country push through possibly a functioning security framework.

The deployment of an ECOMOG peace envoy compromised almost entirely of Anglophone member states. It underscored the political division within ECOWAS and made a collective security mechanism difficult to apply. Even by diplomatic mechanism, lack of consensus worked against progress. The francophone members of the standing mediation committee -Mali and Togo rescinded their initial offers to contribute envoys.

All four of Liberia's Anglophone counterparts in ECOWAS participated: The Gambia, Ghana, Nigeria and Sierra Leone. The only participatory francophone was Guinea, who initially suffered limitation due to a massive influx of refugees since the outbreak of war in Liberia (Bassey; op cit 89).

Nigeria was drawn into the Liberian crisis out of the sub-region rather than a strategically conceived national interest considerations in Liberia and its neighbours. Whatever the criticisms of the Nigerian led- ECOWAS peace envoy in Liberia, it was better than allow a security vacuum for Liberia and western interest to exploit. On the other hand, if the Liberian conflict had degenerated uncontrollably, Nigeria's national security and defence would have been under threat too.

Part of the dilemma of Nigeria led ECOWA's peace support in Liberia was how to avoid any misperception of partiality, at least, to avoid long last experience. In 1995, it was obvious that stability in Liberia was function of finding on acceptable political framework to parties. The failure of Taylor's "operational octopus" convinced the NPEL about the futility of armed struggle against the determination of ECOWAS peace envoy to use its mandate. It created the eventual atmosphere for the implementation of the Yamoussoukro accord in 1997; the transition from war to conflict through an International supervised general election. In the process, Taylor miraculously initiated a programme of democratic governance based on the very ideals the International Community propagated for post-conflict building in Liberia. On accession to power in 1997, Taylor treated with gross contempt post-conflict peace building process (Bassey, 2005).

Difficulties Encountered by the Peace Envoys in Liberia

The peace envoys e.g. ECOWAS, OAU (AU) and UN as well as other individual states like Nigeria (ECOMOG) did not have it all easy in Liberia. In summary, the shortcoming includes:

- Political polarisation in the political system of Liberia.
- The lack of a clear consensus between the Anglophone and Francophone member states on agreed framework for conflict management.
- The lack of burden sharing in peace operation as Nigeria had the lives shares of finance, troops and causality rates of the war.
- Indecisive peace support of the United Nations, the USA and western pioneers particularly the last two have highly valued strategic interest at stake.
- Operational and logistic difficulties due to financial constraints limited the ECOWAS office from accomplishing its missions and mandate. Most of the heavy weapons, military aircrafts and naval vehicles as well as the oil products for the peace operations were provided by Nigeria.
- Lack of political office side by side, which limited a clear political directive to guide operations. As Liberian interim president Amos Sawyer observed in 1994; the Force Commander is saddled with enormous responsibilities. The ECOWAS Executives Secretary made infrequent visits to Liberia.
- Another point is lack of accountability and unclear legal status, political and legal advisory positions in peace envoy and its operations were most filled with financial constraints, particularly in the later part of the peace operations.

These difficulties apart, peace envoys had the credit of managing a successfully (internationally) supervised elections to end the bloody Liberian war. It was applause for ECOWAS-ECOMOG under the Nigerian costly commando. Strategic lessons of peace envoys in Liberia are there to guide and enhance African capacity building for peace operations or initiations in Africa.

Summary

This paper is on conflict management, historical overview of Liberian conflicts. The roles played by the Peace Envoys such as UN, OAU (AU), ECOWAS as well as individual states; e.g. Nigeria in its leadership role in the Liberian conflict management and peace missions or operations. It is very apt that there have been frequent conflicts in Liberia led to much destruction of lives and property, distrust and loss of confidence and different factions; this aroused the interest of the international communities.

Nwosile (1992:58) opined that... the continued effect of kidnapping, holding hostage and killing of foreign nationals, as war progressed, and hardship increased, discipline broke down among armed forces of Liberia and rebel troops which began kidnapping foreign citizens indiscriminately. So, the ethnic war in Liberia had its contagious effect on Sierra Leone where a seemingly ethnic strife raged over six years with over 150, 000 casualties (the Guardian; 1996:7).

Conclusion

Aptly, peace and security including stability are essential to socio-economic development and a civil war in a country not only destroys that country's economy but also has adverse effects on the neighbouring countries. Despite ECOWAS success in Liberia, one has reason to doubt that such a body or the "procedure for the presentations of conflict management adopted by ECOWAS Heads of States during one of its summits are real answers to West Africa for peace.

The UN security council at its 4830th meeting on 19th September, 2003 retreated its support for the efforts of the ECOWAS, particularly organisation chairman and president of Ghana, John Kufor, Executive Secretary, Muhammed Ibn, chambers and mediator, Gen. Abdul Salam Abubakar, as well as those of Nigeria's president, Rtd Gen. Olusegun Obasanjo to bringing peace to Liberia and recognising the

critically important roles they continued to play in the Liberia peace process.

Reflecting on Nigeria's role to peace operation or missions, they said Nigeria had exemplified the leadership and generous disposition through the unmatched record in peace mission and conflict management in Africa and globally. She extended appreciation to the government and people of Nigeria for their unflinching commitment and support to peace, especially in Liberia.

Conflict management has an advantage over the legal approach per se. This is found in the capacity management mechanism to introduce remedies either to prevent undesirable conflict behaviour; hostile attitudes and actions, or to prevent a degeneration of conflict tendencies in the post conflict phase. "Remedy" works at every conflict phase because concessions and humanitarians concerns are ingredient of conflict management. Without conflict management strategist would delay (perhaps dangerously) the process of mutual dialogue, reconciliation and mutual concessions. More important is the need for an institutional mechanism to work out strategies and mechanism for promoting peace, more of collaborative behaviour and attitude than discord and hostility. Quiet fundamental is that conflict management may operate through any of the following or combination of them:

- United Nations initiatives.
- Multilateral initiatives
- Regional initiatives
- Sub-regional initiatives
- Inter-state (bilateral), and
- Non-governmental organisation initiatives

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