The ECOMOG High Command: Implications for the Socioeconomic Development of the West African Sub- Region

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Abstract

Political instability is a harbinger to economic instability. This is to say that the absence of peace stifles economic activity, investment, growth and development. It underscores the need for a formidable force (defense/ security outfit) in any nation, region and the globe. Thus, the existence of the UN peacekeeping force, the AU peace force and the ECOWAS peace- keepers popularly referred to as peace monitoring group of the economic community of West African State (ECOMOG). ECOMOG is not a standing force. Rather, it is raised whenever the need arises through the contribution of troops by member states of the sub-region. Often times, things deteriorate so badly before the force is assembled. Its command structure is irregular and not defined which affects its efficiency and responsiveness. This study examined the ECOMOG high command, its effectiveness, successes and failures as well as the implications on the socioeconomic development of the sub- region. Data is sourced from secondary materials - books, magazines, journals, periodicals, the internet, etc. the methodology revolves around content analysis while Gametheory (Neumann & Morgenstern, 1940) was adopted as its theoretical framework. The paper is structured along the times of introduction, problem statement, literature review, theoretical framework, methodology, findings, recommendations and conclusion. The study revealed that the irregularity of the ECOMOG force has slowed down the progress of the sub- region. citing Liberia and Sierra Leone as examples.

Keywords: *ECOMOG High Command, Socioeconomic development, Peace Keepers, West African Sub- region, and the Game theory in the real world.*

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Background to the Study

Conflict is an inherent feature of the human society. This explains the preponderance of conflict spots which dot the length and breadth of the globe – a global community cohabited by peoples of diverse social, political and ethnic background. This is to say that conflicts arising from interactions amongst peoples may be traced to racial, religious, ethnic and political differences. Over the years, such conflicts which may be local or cross- border had been prosecuted with strong hatred and sustained with most sophisticated weaponry resulting in colossal human wastage, horrendous destruction of property, as well as displacement of persons. The world is littered with states carrying the burden of artificial boundaries. Akinyemi (2001: 3-2; Coles, 1981) observe that , "indeed, only a few states, like Australia, new Zealand and a few island states, are immune from the traditional problems of artificial boundaries". It stands to reason therefore that most states in the world are multinational in composition. Europe, Asia, the Americas and Africa are classified examples of multinational states. Specific country examples include the United States, the United Kingdom, Spain, France, India, Switzerland, Pakistan, and Sri-lanka, the old Russian state, china, Nigeria, Liberia and Ghana. The traditional socioeconomic, ethnic and political problems generated by the multinational and multilingual nature of states, combine to serve as source of friction amongst peoples, when cognizance is not taken of such variables by the statecraft(Mohammed, n.d). Thus, the cumulative effect of the neglect of the socioeconomic differences amongst the people by the drivers of the state enterprise is conflict, which often leads to full blown wars with its attendant consequences. . This societal scenario has necessitated the establishment of global (U.N), continental (A.U, EU, etc), regional and sub regional (ECOWAS, etc), as well as national bodies to stem the frequency in the occurrence of such conflicts. The above background provides justification for the introduction of military wings of these bodies to provide for forceful resolution and containment of these ugly situations. At the sub- Saharan regional level, the peace monitoring group of the Economic Community of the West African States is established.

ECOMOG is a regional military force created by ECOWAS in 1990 to serve as a regional peacekeeping force in West Africa. The direct deployment of regional forces by ECOMOG in Liberia constituted a fundamental change in how African forces dealt with the question of the suppression of war. Before the Liberia was, African forces, under the leadership of OAU (as was then known), practiced UN-styled peace-keeping rather than intervention to restore or create peace. "The formation of the "Group" was unique in the annals of multilateral peacekeeping mainly because it represented the first peacekeeping force to be constituted by a sub-regional economic integration. There were, however, some initial hurdles"(Mohammed,n.d).

First, "there was the fear of domination on the part of the Francophone states for which they opposed the formation. Next were issues bordering on the nature of the mandate that was to be given to ECOMOG. Finally, there was the objective of creating a calm environment for free and fair elections. The operational role of the force was not specific and clear as it fulfilled both traditional peacekeeping and peace enforcement tasks. This duality of roles was the source of further differences between the Anglophone countries, which were in favour of the peace enforcement strategy and the Francophone of the more moderate approach. The third conflicting issue was on the legitimacy of the mission as both the Charters of the United Nations, the African Union and ECOWAS prohibit the interference in the internal affairs of member states. Nonetheless, a justification was found in the internationally accepted norms of humanitarian interventions in cases of severe conflicts and human rights abuses. The fourth

controversy emerged around the question of neutrality of ECOMOG. Interestingly, the "Group" (mission) has come to stay and has contributed to the peace, economic, political and socio-economic development of the sub-region". The role constitutes the major interest of this investigation.

Statement of the Research Problem

There is irregularity in the structure of ECOMOG command and control. It is noted that:

> In the circumstance that the force was launched into operation, the Force Commander (FC), did not have the benefit of a clearly defined command, control and communication structure. More seriously, he lacked a firm political direction in the fieldNational contingents operated almost independently and force packaging in terms of capability to achieve required combat power was absent (Mohammed,nd).

This had far reaching implications which constitute the focus of this study. This investigation therefore intends to assess the socio-economic implications of the ECOMOG, control and command structure in the execution of its mandate in member states of West Africa.

Objectives of the Study

This study has as its broad objective, the assessment of the implications of the ECOMOG command structure on the socio-economic development of the West African member states. Specifically, the study seeks to:

1. Ascertain the implication of the mission's command structure on the political stability of member states of ECOWAS.
2. Determine the implications of the structure on the well-being of the citizens of the community.

Research Questions

The study will provide answers to questions such as:

1. What is the implication of the command structure on the political stability of the sub-region vis-à-vis its member states?
2. How does the command structure impact on the well-being of the citizens of member states?

Literature Review
Conceptual Review

Military High Command: Fighting force of any military which in the case of the United States, represents one of the elite combat branches like the US marine corps and the US Airborne, while maintaining a more intense training programs reception battalion (RECBN – 2012). The supreme Headquarters of a military force; the most powerful leaders of an organization (/HAGRITAGE Dictionary).

Concept of Peace: Galtung (1967), believes that "peace seems to be an "umbrella concept", a general expression of human desires of that which is ultimately to be personal". It is wrong to define peace as simply the absence of was. Limited as this is, Oputa (n.d) aptly puts it that: "more than an end to war, true peace aims at the end to the beginning of war".

Socio-Economic Development: The process of social and economic development in a society. Socio-economic development is measured with indicators, such as GDP, life expectancy, literacy and levels of employment, changes in less tangible factors are also considered, such as personal dignity, freedom of association, personal safety and freedom from fear of physical harm, and the extent of participation in civil society. It may be defined as the overall improvement of every sphere of life with a view to raising the stand of living.

Conflict: Closer (1956), provides one of the commonest definitions of conflict as " a struggle over values and claims to scarce status, power and resources". Mitchell (1981) defines conflict as "any situation in which two or more social entities or parties …. Perceive that they possess mutually incompatible goals".

Conflict Resolution: The resolution of conflict depends on recognizing the concerns of the parties. This "conflict resolution depends on a recognition that parties have at least some interest in the conflict, even though they may also be caught up in it in ways beyond their interest, and that those interests need to be met, outweighed, and reduced in order to be reconciled" (Udaby 1995; Zartman, 1956). Conflict resolution is everybody's business.

Theoretical Framework

Game Theory (Neumann & Morgenstern, 1940): The game theory provides analytical tools for examining strategic interactions among two or more participants. By using simple, often numerical models to study simplex social relations, game theory can illustrate the potential for, and risks associated with, cooperative behaviour among distrustful participants. Though less familiar than typical board or video games, the lessons from these more abstract or hypothetical games are applicable to a wider array of social institutions.

Games employed in stimulating real-life situations usually include five elements listed below:
a)   Players, or decision makers;
b)   Strategies available to each player;
c)   Rules governing players' behaviour;
d)   Outcomes, each of which is a result of particular choices made by players at a given point in the game; and
e)   Payoff accrued by each player as a result of each possible outcome.

These games assume that each player will pursue the strategies that help him or her to achieve the most profitable outcome in every situation. Real life is full of situations where people-knowingly or unknowingly – pursue their selfish interests at the expense of others which lead to conflict situations. Games used to illustrate these relationships often place the interests of two players in direct opposition: the greater the pay-off for one player, the less for the other. To achieve mutually productive outcome, the players must coordinate their strategies because of each player pursues his/her greatest potential payoffs, the shared outcome is unproductive. The concept of payoffs in this context is best expressed using the Prisoner's Dilemma Game. The ECOMOG operations were not coordinated owing to contingents from different countries pursing their own interest through varying strategies. This has cost the sub-region a lot of setbacks. A typical example is the dragging of the war in Liberia due to lack of coordination and control. Hence the adoption of the game theory as our theoretical framework.

Empirical Literature

Rogan (1998:756), have noted that "we do not have a set of logically consistent and empirically verified conditions that increases likelihood that outside actors will intervene in international conflicts". However, researchers have attempted to locate a few.

Brecher and Wilkenfeld (1997), for instance, examine the relationship between the level of violence experienced in a crisis and the probability of third party involvement using their International Crisis Behaviour (ICB) data. They find that the higher the level of violence, the higher the probability of third party involvement, presumably because the superpowers "managed" their clients so as to not escalate a regional crisis into a Third World War. Smith (1996) also links third party interventions with alliance memberships. Judging by the sudden increase in UN activity since the end of the Cold War, there certainly seems to be a relationship between the structure of the international system and intervention in conflicts.

Kabia (2011) conducted an investigation on, "Regional Approaches to Peace-building: The ECOWAS Peace and Security Architecture". The paper analyzed the implications of the provision of nascent security protocols in 1978, had implications for the sub-regional security and conflict resolution. It argues that despite the portrayal of Africa as the "hopeless" continent, the conflict management and peace-building of ECOWAS is a manifestation that Africa is taking ownership and responsibility for its conflicts.

Perhaps the most related and useful to our current study is that by Mohammed (n.d) which examined the future of command and control of ECOMOG. In the paper titled, "sub-regional" pre-emptive mechanism for conflict resolutions. Lessons from Liberia (1990-2000), the author began by observing that ECOMOG involvement in Liberia showed that security should be seen beyond the use of military force alone. Considerable progress can be made if democratic institutions are strengthened and much investment made in social capital. Furthermore, the author posits that the panacea for conflict prevention in Africa is to put in place pre-emptive mechanism, which should commence activities long before crisis develop into conflicts. It is more cost effective in the long run for pre-emption rather than resolution.

Mohammed (n.d) seriously underscored the point that the lessons from Liberia hinged on the difficulty of command and control of military forces involved in enforcing conflict resolution, particularly where the participants have divergent interests. He further observed that the war in Liberia lasted longer than would have been the case due to lack of command and control and loyalty to the overall field commander.

Studies exist on the role of ECOWAS (ECOMOG) in conflict resolution in the sub- region. These studies have not really considered the consequences/ effects of the command structure and control of the stability, socio- economic, and general wellbeing of citizens of member states.

Methodology

Our methodology uses content analysis to evaluate the socio- economic implications of the command and control structure of the peace- monitoring group of the ECOWAS.

Research Question one (1). What is the effect of the command structure on the political stability of the sub- region. The answer to the question is evident in the empirical support of

Mohammed (2011) who clearly revealed the irregular structure and lack of control in the command structure. According to him, contingents from various countries only showed loyalty to the national commanders due to suspicion and lack of trust. This made operations difficult and risky to the advantage of other combatants. This affected the rate at which force achieved its mandate of maintaining political stability of the sub- region.

Research Question two (2): how does the command structure impact on the wellbeing of the citizenry? The answer to this question is deduced from the answer in research question one (1) above. Thus, given the empirical backing to the response in question one (1), it is only logical to reason that the absence of control which frustrates the realization of the mandate on peace, security and political stability, also permeates/ spills over the welfare of citizens as each welfare can only be guaranteed in peaceful and stable environments.

Findings
Following the analysis above, it is clear that;
1. ECOMOG remains the first and only example of a regional economic integration that has established a standby military force for purposes of peace, security, economic growth and development of its people.
2. ECOMOG mandate was quite unclear at the initial state but only became more precise with time.
3. The command structure of the force is still not good enough for the effective and quick realization of its mandate.
4. Lack of confidence and trust of many national contingents to the standby force often jeopardizes its effectiveness and operations.
5. Nigeria has played the key role in terms of personal (troops) and finance in support of ist operations. Liberia ad SierraLeone are examples.
6. The sub- region cannot be adjudged to be very stable .the degree of effectiveness of the force is not yet in a position to guarantee such stability. This affects cooperation in the areas of trade, commerce, industrialization, transport and tourism, etc.
7. All the above impacts negatively on the wellbeing of the citizens.
8. Although, the FORCE is yet to attain its height, it must be recommended for restoring peace to Liberia , Sierra Leone and the prevention of the crisis in Guinea have forced the exit of former President Jamil.

Conclusion
At inception, one problem faced by the ECOMOG was to understand its mandate. The force was launched into Liberia when there was no ceasefire in place and one of the factions was not disposed to the ECOMOG intervention. There was therefore, a sudden change in focus to peace enforcement due to the inability of the political class to achieve any ceasefire. Hence, the ECOMOG operation in Liberia was a mixture of peace- keeping and peace enforcement. Despite its manpower deficiency, the force was to provide protection as well as humanitarian assistance to the local population and the international community within its area of operation.

Despite the inadequacies of the force following the lack of confidence and trust, loyalty of contingents and poor command and control structure, it has not been a total failure.
The point is that the force would have performed much better to the benefit of the state and citizens if it had a better command/ control structure. In its absence however, the socioeconomic development on growth of sub- continent are also known to be affected adversely.

Recommendations

1. ECOMOG as it is presently constituted should be sustained with a revisit of its command and control structure of its command and control structure.
2. The confidence and trust of contingents is an area which the heads of governments must consider a priority to be worked upon.
3. Funding of the organization must be improved as member-states should be sensitized on the need to make their contributions when they fall due.
4. Nigerians dominant contribution of personnel and logistics to the force and body should be reviewed downwards as it may constitute threat to other smaller nations

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