



Mediating Conflict in West Africa

AN OVERVIEW OF REGIONAL EXPERIENCES

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About this publication

This publication is the output of collaboration between the Kofi Annan International Peacekeeping Training Centre (KAIPTC) and Crisis Management Initiative (CMI) that started in 2011 through a project entitled "Improving West-African Capacities in Mediation and Peace Processes". The project seeks to enhance the mediation skills of key regional actors so that they are better equipped to prevent and resolve conflicts in the sub-region, thereby contributing to implementing the preventive diplomacy component of the ECOWAS Conflict Prevention Framework (ECPF). The project has, amongst others, developed a comprehensive ten-day training package in Conflict Analysis and Multi-track Mediation that has been organised annually at KAIPTC since 2013.

This publication is part of the KAIPTC-led research component of the project. Through factual information on different peace processes as well as insights into experiences of key individuals, it aims to provide actors engaged in preventive diplomacy, including ECOWAS and its member states, with relevant knowledge/information to inform policy formulation and capacity building.

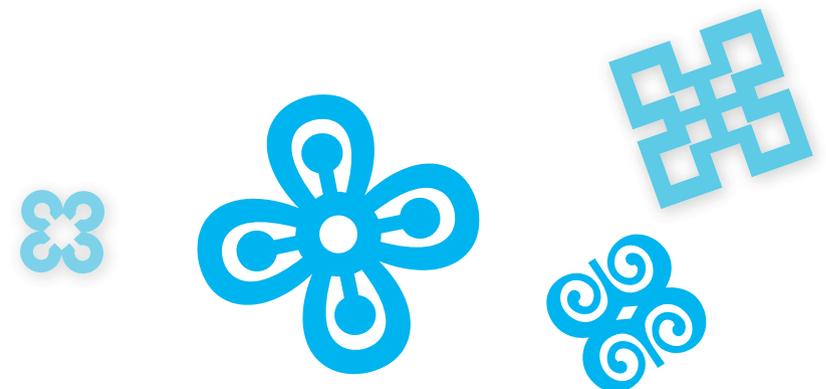


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Executive Summary

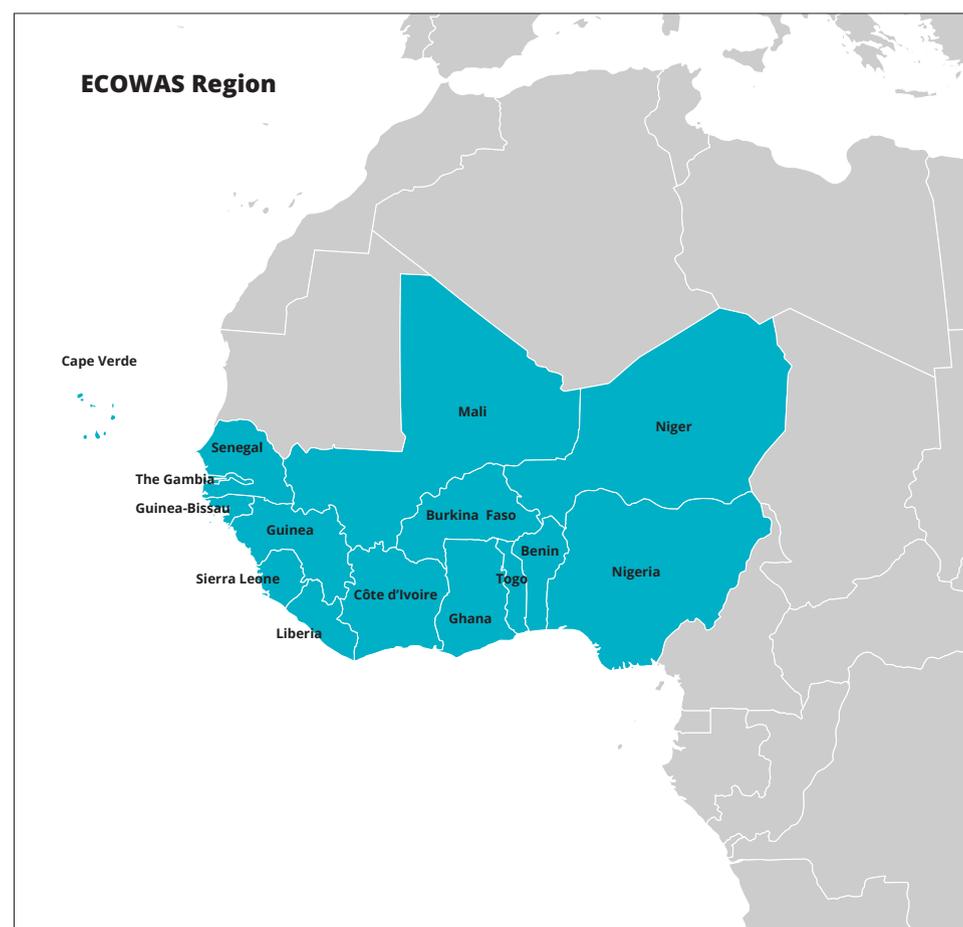
People know about mediation in West Africa already, this is true. It has been used for centuries. More recently, mediation is a process that is also being used widely in the region, at community, civil society as well as government and international levels. Indeed, the region has experienced its fair share of conflicts, but clearly without the use of mediation in its various forms, the situation would likely be much worse. We should not underestimate these gains that have been made.

But with the recent spate of coups d'état, unconstitutional changes of power, violence from terrorist groups and the morphing of indefinable insurgency groups that we have seen in West Africa, it seems that there has never been a better time for us to ask ourselves questions about mediation in the region. Are we giving mediation enough attention? Are we optimising its potential as both a conflict management and prevention tool? There are many more related questions — they are challenging and complex, but we have to ask them. We must prioritise the search for a response to questions and challenges around mediation in order to really transform conflict. We need as many ideas and solutions to the problem of conflict in the region as the instability is so intimately linked to a myriad of issues critical for the advancement of the nations and people in West Africa — freedom, security, development, opportunity — to name just a few.

Our hope is that in its own way, this publication makes a contribution to both the asking of the questions and attempts to define some of the responses. We have described, discussed and analysed conflict and mediation processes in eight countries, as well as looked in depth at the role of the Economic Community of West African States (ECOWAS) in its interventions. It is a mixed bag of experiences that shows the diversity and complexity of mediating in this region. We have incorporated the thoughts and experiences of key actors that were directly involved in the mediation within various peace processes.

From them we can see that the issues we need to grapple with are many. Looking at West Africa today, how can we fairly and effectively assess mediation efforts that were successful in preventing conflict altogether, or even its escalation? Particularly with the sensitivity surrounding this work, this is a great challenge. Another issue is election violence. With the great number of elections scheduled in the region between 2015–2016, we also need to ask ourselves how effective certain mediation approaches or external mediation interventions can be during election-related violence and conflict. This highlights the importance of strengthening resilience of nations and their citizens to be able to mediate their conflicts — strengthening their Infrastructures for Peace. But one thing is clear: if we do want to take mediation in West Africa seriously, challenges of capacity need to be addressed in innovative and creative ways that actually make a difference.

The region also needs to look frankly at itself in the mirror at its approach to choosing mediators and ask itself whether this is synonymous with successful mediation. The answers may prove bitter pills to swallow, but sometimes these are the most effective remedies. In some cases, the change is slight; mediation initiatives are on the right path and have made just a few errors. In other cases, the changes needed are radical. We must not lose sight of the fact that if we insist on ignoring the shifts that need to be made for more effective mediation for peace processes and prevention, it is human lives that are being affected, lost or damaged. It is our hope that in some small way sharing the experiences of mediation in West Africa and discussing successes and challenges will contribute to the knowledge and initiative of those who are working on mediation in the region, as well as those simply working to improve the practice.



List of Abbreviations and Acronyms

- AFRC — Armed Forces Revolutionary Council
- AFL — Armed Forces of Liberia
- APC — All People's Congress
- AU — African Union
- CCP — Commission for the Consolidation of Peace
- CEN-SAD — Community of Sahel-Saharan States
- CMI — Crisis Management Initiative
- CNAM — Centre National d'Action Antimine
- CNDD — National Council for Democracy and Development
- CNDP — National Council for Political Dialogue
- COW — Council of the Wise
- CPA — Comprehensive Peace Agreement
- CPLP — Community of Portuguese Speaking States
- CPP — Convention People's Party
- CPS — Community Peace Setters
- CSO — Civil Society Organisation
- CSRD — Supreme Council for the Restoration of Democracy
- DDR — Disarmament, Demobilisation and Reintegration
- DEA — Drug Enforcement Agency
- ECOMIB — ECOWAS Mission in Bissau
- ECOMOG — ECOWAS Monitoring Group
- ECOWAS — Economic Community of West African States
- ECPF — ECOWAS Conflict Prevention Framework
- EU — European Union
- FAS — Femmes Africa Solidarité
- FDD — Front for Defence of Democracy
- FGD — Focus Group Discussion
- FPI — Ivorian Popular Front
- GOS — Government of Senegal
- ICC — International Criminal Court
- ICG-G — International Contact Group on Guinea
- ICGL — International Contact Group on Liberia
- IEC — Independent Electoral Commission
- IFMC — Inter-Faith Mediation Committee
- IMF — International Monetary Fund
- INEC — Independent National Electoral Commission
- INN — International Negotiation Network
- INPFL — Independent National Patriotic Front of Liberia
- IRCL — Inter-Religious Council of Liberia
- IRCSL — Inter-Religious Council of Sierra Leone
- ISS — Institute for Security Studies
- JMG — Joint Monitoring Group
- KAIPTC — Kofi Annan International Peacekeeping Training Centre
- LCC — Liberian Council of Churches
- LDF — Lofa Defence Force
- LNC — Liberia National Conference
- LPC — The Liberian Peace Council

LURD — Liberia United for Reconciliation and Democracy
 LWI — Liberia Women’s Initiative
 MARWOPNET — Mano River Women Peace Network
 MFDC — Movement of the Democratic Forces of Casamance
 MINUCI — UN Mission in Côte d’Ivoire
 MISSANG — Angolan technical military and security mission in Guinea-Bissau
 MJP — Movement for Justice and Peace
 MOU — Memorandum of Understanding
 MODEL — Movement for Democracy in Liberia
 MP — Member of Parliament
 MPCJ — Patriotic Movement of Côte d’Ivoire
 MPIGO — Ivorian Popular Movement of the Great West
 NEWS — National Early Warning System
 NGO — Non-Governmental Organization
 NOW — National Organization for Women
 NMCL — National Muslim Council of Liberia
 NPFL — National Patriotic Front of Liberia
 NPFL-CRC — NPFL-Central Revolutionary Council
 NPRC — National Provisional Ruling Council
 NRC — National Redemption Council
 OAU — Organization of African Unity
 OIC — Organisation of the Islamic Conference
 OIF — International Organisation of la Francophonie
 PAIGC — African Party for the Independence of Guinea and Cape Verde
 PDCI-RDA — Democratic Party of Côte d’Ivoire-African Democratic Party
 PNDC — Provisional National Defence Council
 RDR — Rally of the Republicans
 RUF — Revolutionary United Front
 SERC — Social and Economic Reconstruction of Casamance
 SIPRI — Stockholm International Peace Research Institute
 SLAUW — Sierra Leone Association of University Women
 SLPP — Sierra Leone People’s Party
 SPAN — Public Affairs Pan-African Network
 UDCI — Democratic Union of Côte d’Ivoire
 UDPCI — Union for Democracy and Peace in Côte d’Ivoire
 ULIMO — The United Liberation Movement of Liberia for Democracy
 UN — United Nations
 UNDP — United Nations Development Programme
 UNOCI — United Nations Operations in Côte d’Ivoire
 UNOMIL — United Nations Observer Mission in Liberia
 UNOWA — United Nations Office for West Africa
 UNSCR — United Nations Security Council Resolution
 US — United States
 VRCC — Volta Regional Coordinating Council
 WAND — Women’s Association for National Development
 WANEP — West Africa Network for Peacebuilding
 WCRP — World Congress on Religion and Peace
 YWCA — Young Women’s Christian Association

Introduction

Nicholas Okai, PhD

Conflicts in West Africa have become increasingly very complex, involving a multitude of actors operating at different levels. The gamut of contentious issues fuelling such conflicts is also equally diverse. The litany of issues includes the nature of inter-state borders inherited from colonial times. Most of these borders were poorly carved without recourse to history and the socio-political realities of those living on the continent. Consequently, what is currently being flagged geographically as a state, in most cases does not comprehensively represent the cultural aspirations and the common identity that citizens would like to be associated with.

Other conflicts we are seeing in the West African region are related to ethnicity. The region is made of up hundreds of different ethnic groups with varying traditional and cultural ascriptions. This rather beautiful variety brings about cleavages and loyalties that are usually placed above statehood, normally resulting in inter-ethnic conflicts and irredentist movements. Irredentism, as a product of ethnic processing and action, has fuelled several large-scale conflicts in Africa. The secessionist wars of Katanga, and Biafra in Nigeria are typical examples. Military coups like the one led by Jerry John Rawlings in 1982 (Ghana) were very successful because the plotters had core support from their tribesmen in the army. The plurality of ethnic groups itself has rarely been the cause of conflict, however, and we have many examples of inter-ethnic social cohesion on the continent. In contemporary times, however, politicians have often manipulated ethnic differences through their aggressive reliance on the ethnic groups for political patronage.

West Africa has seen its fair share of violent conflict related to multiparty elections. Côte d’Ivoire is a clear example of a country that has experienced very destructive intra-state conflicts related to its multiparty elections. The effects of conflicts in Africa are very severe and bring several untold consequences in their trail. The limited basic infrastructure that citizens rely on is wantonly destroyed. Apart from the combatants who die in the theatres of war, many others also die from disease and malnutrition. Trends in the political economy of the sub-region have shown that conflicts have weakened the economies of countries and whole regions, contributing to the mass internal displacement of people.

The above outlined consequences of conflicts make it imperative for states to ensure that the preservation of peace and the need to subscribe to conflict de-escalation and preventive methods are given the needed priority and attention. At the sub-regional level, this importance is well highlighted in the ECOWAS peace architecture, which derives its legitimacy from article 33 (1), chapter VI of the UN Charter. The architecture encourages countries to seek solutions to conflicts and disagreements through mediation, negotiations, arbitration and other peacebuilding interventions. Articles 20 and 32 of the ECOWAS Protocol Relating to the Mechanism for Conflict Prevention, Management, Resolution, Peacekeeping and Security of 1999 pays particular attention to the importance of mediation. Mediation being generally defined as a voluntary non-binding process in which a third party intervenes in a dispute and attempts to bring all parties together into a settlement agreement.

The importance of mediation, as explicitly enshrined in the ECOWAS peace architecture, and the need to investigate its application and efficacy as a conflict prevention tool, informed a 3-year field research project by the Kofi Annan International Peacekeeping Training Centre (KAIPTC) and Crisis Management Initiative (CMI) that culminated in the publication of this volume. This research fell within the wider collaboration with Crisis Management Initiative (CMI) on 'Enhancing West African Capacities in Mediation and Peace Processes'. Field research in eight West African countries was conducted by researchers between June 2011 and December 2013 and combined with desk research to produce this publication. The research critically examined experiences of mediation in selected conflicts within the ECOWAS sub-region, based on the experiences of key actors working in the field who expressed concerns that, at the most basic level, there is a dearth of documented experiences of key actors involved broadly in peace processes in the sub-region and mediation in particular.

Also contributing to the rationale for the research was the lack of research and documentation that takes the individual experiences and detailed information on peace processes in West Africa. Although there are, and have been, numerous conflict prevention and preventive diplomacy activities in West Africa, there is limited information, knowledge and documentation on the precise nature of these activities. Equally lacking is a keener understanding of the relationship between those mediating at different levels and how this impacts the peace process. Further validating the research is that, in their international conference held in Liberia in 2010, ECOWAS took stock of peace processes in the region during the past 20 years and one of the key recommendations was to strengthen mediation learning from rich African experiences and local options and remedies, as well as understanding and strengthening the role of civil society and women in peace processes.

Thus the aim of the research project was to provide actors engaged in preventive diplomacy (i.e. mediation and peace processes) with relevant knowledge on mediation processes and key issues in West Africa. Research objectives included: contributing to a better understanding of how preventive diplomacy is practiced in West Africa and to document lessons learned, and experiences and challenges of mediation and peace processes in West Africa.

The findings are presented in the various chapters as follows:

Chapter 2 examines the ECOWAS conflict resolution mechanisms within the current peace and security architecture. It highlights the structures for preventive diplomacy and mediation, shedding light on very pertinent issues such as the Council of the Wise, the Early Warning System and the ECOWAS Standby Force. It probes deeper into the various challenges that confront these sub-structures in the delivery of their stated objectives.

Chapter 3 examines the manner in which low level and intractable conflicts are mediated in Ghana. By analysing the Nkonya–Alavanyo and the Dagbon conflicts, the chapter identifies the complex roles of the various conflict parties, their interests, and highlights efforts made at resolving the conflict, using traditional mediation techniques.

The chapter illustrates the importance, relevance and challenges of indigenous approaches to conflict resolution in contemporary times.

Chapter 4 delves into the causes of the Sierra Leonean war and the various processes leading to the negotiated peace agreement that ended the violence. The steps leading to the signing of the Abidjan agreement in 1996 and the comprehensive Lomé Peace Agreement in 1996 are all highlighted. The roles of the various conflict actors involved in the negotiation and the peace processes are also well illustrated. The chapter demonstrates how the interests of conflict parties impact on the process of negotiation.

Chapter 5 presents an incisive analysis of the Liberian conflict and highlights the challenges faced by mediators in the peace process. Factors that led to the splitting of the various warring factions, the interest of external actors and the role of ECOWAS are well explained. The chapter provides a very lucid picture of the strategies employed by key mediators in that complex conflict.

Chapter 6 examines the underlying causal factors that underpin the protracted conflict in the Casamance region of Senegal, and outlines the various mediation efforts undertaken to bring it to an end. It also illustrates the various actors at the centre of the conflict and the vested interests that anchor their positions. The importance of the different approaches adopted by the various government administrations in the mediation process is well explained in the chapter.

In **chapter 7**, the deep-rooted structural issues underpinning the conflict in Côte d'Ivoire and its various manifestations such as the polarisation of the Ivorian society are discussed. The chapter brings to the fore the manner in which the national identity factor galvanised the conflict parties to take entrenched positions in the mediation process. Key process milestones such as the Accra I summit, which set the tone for key electoral reforms in the country, and its impact are also well explained. The breaches before and after the electioneering process, leading to the conflict, are also addressed. The alacrity with which major institutions such as the UN, ECOWAS and the AU commenced the mediation process with the setting up of the High-Level Panel in January 2011, and the charged diplomatic interventions that ensued are all well highlighted.

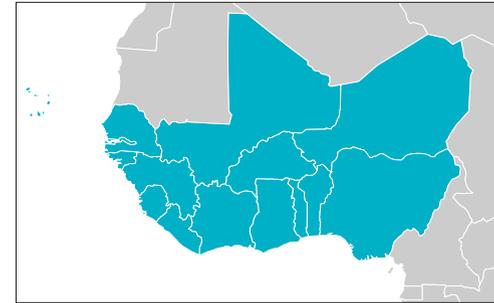
Chapter 8 provides an enlightening political history of Guinea-Bissau and the events leading to the outbreak of the civil conflict in 1998. The analysis of the conflict illustrates that the situation in the country is not only political in nature and outlines how the various positions of the conflict parties are informed by criminal networks and narco-trafficking interests. The chapter is informative on factors such as the effect of the multiplicity of actors and vested interests on the process of mediation in an underdeveloped environment.

Based on the conflict in Guinea, **chapter 9** presents aspects of how the rollout of quick and well-crafted mediation interventions can prevent conflicts from escalating. The chapter outlines the critical decisions taken by ECOWAS to mediate and deescalate tensions in that country following the death of President Conté in 2008. It also highlights the impact of calculated sanctions on conflict parties and their impact on the mediation process.

Chapter 10 presents an epochal outline of the various diplomatic and political initiatives undertaken to address the cycle of instability in Niger during and after the military coup in 2010. The chapter illustrates how multiple actors, operating at the different tracks, can work in a concerted manner to realise and consolidate peace.

The conclusion summarises the current state of mediation in the sub-region and highlights practical ways of enhancing its utility as a tool for conflict prevention. The section concludes by highlighting the importance of well-aligned structures and the need to improve specific skill sets of actors involved in mediation processes in the sub-region.

Introduction



The Economic Community of West African States (ECOWAS) was established in 1975 to 'promote cooperation and integration, leading to the establishment of an economic union in West Africa in order to raise the living standards of its peoples, and to maintain and enhance economic stability'.¹ With time, due to the prevalence of political instability and conflicts in West Africa, ECOWAS

included in its economic integration agenda the promotion of peace and stability. The inclusion of political and security issues on the ECOWAS agenda was premised on the thinking that economic development would best succeed in an environment of peace and security. Beginning with two security-related protocols in 1978 and 1981², ECOWAS has developed a comprehensive security architecture intended to promote conflict prevention, end existing conflicts, and support peacebuilding activities in member states that have experienced violent conflicts. Critical to the ECOWAS conflict prevention agenda are the preventive diplomacy and mediation tools that have been deployed in many conflict contexts. However, despite the progress made in resolving conflicts in the region, existing literature on ECOWAS experiences in mediation and preventive diplomacy is quite scant. This chapter provides an insight into the existing structure for mediation as well as some experiences of ECOWAS over the years. It also identifies some successes and constraints to effective mediation in the region.

ECOWAS Preventive Diplomacy and Mediation Efforts: A Background

West African leaders were overwhelmed by the events of the Liberia and Sierra Leone civil wars in 1989 and 1991, respectively. In an effort to suppress the violence and maintain peace, it was realised that the existing normative structures, which were geared more towards economic integration and inter-state conflicts, were insufficient in addressing the sub-region's complex internal conflicts. The lessons learned from the ECOWAS Ceasefire Monitoring Group (ECOMOG) operations in Liberia, Sierra Leone and Guinea-Bissau and realisation of the direct correlation between economic integration and regional peace and security, prompted ECOWAS to revise its original regional economic integration agenda to include the maintenance of peace, stability and security within the sub-region.³ The ECOWAS Revised Treaty provides for the use of good offices, conciliation, mediation and other methods of peaceful settlement of disputes as well as the establishment of a regional peace and security observation system. Theoretically,

this provision set the stage for mediation efforts at the sub-regional level, albeit on an ad hoc basis. Following Article 58 of the Revised Treaty, the 1999 ECOWAS Mechanism for Conflict Prevention, Management, Resolution, Peacekeeping and Security (hereafter the Mechanism) created the structures for conflict prevention, resolution and mediation in the sub-region.⁴ The Mechanism thus represents the first documented attempt at restructuring the ECOWAS conflict prevention and management apparatus.

Even though ECOWAS has not been able to support member states in preventing conflict altogether, it has nonetheless been at the forefront of responding to violence and halting escalation as well as mobilising international response. Regional leaders acknowledge the remarkable successes achieved in containing violent conflicts through preventive diplomacy initiatives such as fact-finding missions, quiet diplomacy, and mediation in the sub-region. Despite these successes, they also recognise serious impediments to the preventive diplomacy initiatives specified in the Revised Treaty and the Mechanism. The lack of a strategic approach to preventive measures has usually resulted in the ‘utilisation of limited instruments, piecemeal interventions and late response to crises...’⁵ These challenges informed the adoption of a comprehensive and more preventive approach to conflict management within the sub-region in 2008 — the ECOWAS Conflict Prevention Framework (ECPF) — which devotes one of its fourteen components to preventive diplomacy and mediation efforts.

ECOWAS Structures for Preventive Diplomacy and Mediation

Since the first intervention in Liberia, ECOWAS has been actively involved in the political and security situations of member states such as Sierra Leone, Guinea-Bissau, Guinea, Côte d’Ivoire, Niger, Mali and Togo. Similar to United Nations (UN) and African Union (AU) structures, mediation efforts are carried out at different levels. Through the Mechanism, ECOWAS mandates several institutions and organs to support the prevention and management of conflicts.⁶ These institutions are: the Authority of Heads of State and Government of Member States; the Mediation and Security Council; and the Executive Secretariat (now Commission). Other organs have also been established to support the efforts of these institutions in the prevention and resolution of internal and inter-state conflicts. These organs have been active since 1999, when ECOWAS realised the need to restructure its conflict prevention and management architecture. The 2001 Supplementary Protocol on Democracy and Good Governance briefly advocates for the establishment of a national mediation system by member states.⁷ The 2008 ECPF also provides for the deployment of Special Mediators, Special Envoys or members of the Council of the Wise to any member state in a situation of potential crisis, as well as the establishment of a Mediation Facilitation Division within the Commission to promote preventive diplomacy interventions in the region.⁸ The Heads of State and Governments of ECOWAS have over the years relied on high-level mediators and facilitators to diffuse political tensions and bring conflict parties to the negotiating table. Also, the President of the Commission, apart from his good offices, resorts to several structures, including special representatives, to support the execution of its conflict prevention and resolution mandate.⁹ Within the Mechanism, certain organs and institutions are also mandated to support the maintenance and promotion of peace and security in the sub-region. While

these structures operate within a wider ECOWAS Peace and Security Architecture that also includes the Committee of Chief of Defence Staff and the ECOWAS Peace Fund, discussions in the following section will be limited to the functions of the Mediation and Security Council, Council of the Wise, ECOWAS Standby Force and the Early Warning System.

Mediation and Security Council

The Mediation and Security Council (MSC) is the most powerful institutional decision-making body in matters of regional peace and security, and responsible for the implementation of all policies relating to conflict prevention, management and resolution. At the sub-regional stage, the Council is the equivalent of the UN Security Council and meets at the level of Heads of State and Government, as well as ministerial and the ambassadorial levels. The MSC is comprised of representatives of nine member states, of which the Authority of Heads of States and Government elect seven. The other two members are the current Chairman and the immediate past Chairman of the Authority. It can authorise and sanction all forms of intervention, including the decision to deploy political and military missions, as well as appoint special representatives and force commanders.¹⁰ The Council has played key roles in several conflicts across the sub-region. In the build-up to the overthrow of Nigerien President, Mamadou Tandja, the MSC met at the ministerial level and, after expressing deep concern over violation of the country’s Constitution and the ECOWAS Protocol on Democracy and Good Governance, recommended an extraordinary summit of Heads of States on Niger. It also constituted a four-member ad hoc committee to work with Nigerien political stakeholders towards the restoration of dialogue and consensus that prevailed before the crisis.¹¹

Council of the Wise

The Council of the Wise (COW) comprises eminent personalities who use their good offices and experience to play the role of mediators, conciliators and facilitators. The Council’s main engagement is in the area of mediation and preventive diplomacy. Appointed by the Commission President, the COW (formerly Council of Elders) has been deployed to monitor elections in the majority of countries in the sub-region. In certain conflict situations, the COW, before the intervention of Heads of State, undertakes preliminary or fact-finding missions. In Niger, the COW met with the political actors to investigate and find avenues for a peaceful settlement of the crisis in June 2009. Their visit paved the way for a tripartite delegation of the President of the ECOWAS Commission, Dr. Mohamed Ibn Chambas, the Special Representative of the UN Secretary-General to West Africa, Ambassador Said Djinnit and an AU Special Representative to Côte d’Ivoire, Ambroise Niyonsaba, who met with President Tandja in Niamey.¹² Over the years, disputing factions have shown more inclination to accept former Heads of State as mediators and facilitators rather than trained diplomats appointed by regional leaders. However, resorting to the often subtle and less prominent COW has been a more effective way of intervening in internal matters of member states without breaching the much-upheld veil of national sovereignty and non-interference in the internal affairs of member states.

ECOWAS Standby Force

The ECOWAS Standby Force (ESF) is a composition of multi-purpose civilian, police and military standby structures ready to be deployed in times of crisis. Previously known as ECOMOG, the ESF is tasked with observation and monitoring; peacekeeping and peace restoration; humanitarian intervention; enforcement of sanctions; preventive deployment; peacebuilding, disarmament and demobilisation; as well as policing activities.¹³ However, their preventive diplomacy initiatives are manifest where they support regional diplomatic efforts to reach a long-term political settlement in beleaguered member states. From the first operations in Liberia, ECOMOG has also been involved in Sierra Leone, Guinea-Bissau and Côte d'Ivoire. However, since it became known as the ESF, ECOWAS has been involved in only one major military operation in Mali¹⁴ and hence the ESF has hardly been tested to evaluate its readiness and potency in crisis situations. This is especially so because the civilian component of the ESF is not fully developed¹⁵, with Mali being the exceptional case where civilians have been deployed in an ECOWAS peace mission. Some of the challenges of the deployment of the ESF during the Mali crisis were raised as part of a comprehensive after action review of Mali conducted by ECOWAS in February 2014.

The Early Warning System

The Early Warning System (EWS) is the sub-regional peace and security observation system and is fundamental to any action taken in relation to preventive diplomacy or mediation. Given that the success of fact-finding missions, conflict analysis, negotiations, mediation and peacekeeping duties are heavily dependent on relevant and timely information, the system has become an indispensable means of pre-empting conflicts and reacting to potential crisis situations. Also, contemporary conflict prevention places enormous prominence on early warning and early response, and the ECOWAS Early Warning and Response Network (ECOWARN) has been instrumental in pre-empting potential conflicts in the sub-region. In practice, the EWS comprises four sub-regional Zonal Bureaus which analyse open sourced data submitted by field monitors from member countries, and the Observation and Monitoring Centre at the ECOWAS Commission which verifies information, analyses reports and submits timely recommendations to the office of the President of the Commission through the Commissioner of Political Affairs, Peace and Security. Ninety-four (94) pre-defined indicators are used as a grid to evaluate risks and swiftly detect security trends in Member States. Additionally, the West Africa Network for Peacebuilding (WANEP), which has its offices in all 15 ECOWAS countries, contributes to ECOWARN by monitoring and reporting socio-political situations that could degenerate into violent and destructive conflicts. Currently WANEP is in the process of developing National Early Warning System (NEWS) in all of its national networks in order to feed ECOWARN and other relevant institutions with grassroots information through community-based conflict monitoring systems. Despite establishing a concrete early warning system, ECOWAS has been severely criticised for its inability to prevent conflicts, for instance as it did identify credible warning signs such as in Guinea-Bissau and recently in Côte d'Ivoire where violence broke out.¹⁶ This could be partly explained by the inherent gaps in the Mechanism, which does not clearly make provisions for early intervention before conflicts have escalated into violence.

Challenges Inhibiting ECOWAS Mediation Efforts

While ECOWAS has made substantial progress in developing a vibrant peace and security architecture and forestalling violent conflicts in the region, not all of its mediation efforts have ended in success. These are as a result of a combination of factors, notable among them; the lack of effective structures and capacity for conflict resolution, weak norm enforcement capacity, the lack of political will, internal divisions, conflicting interests of Member States, and constraints imposed by inadequate resources. This section discusses the challenges associated with ECOWAS mediation efforts in countries that have experienced violent conflict or political crisis in the post-Cold War era.

Internal Divisions among Member States

Conflicting interests of some Member States within ECOWAS and their disagreements on how to handle conflict situations in the region have posed challenges to effective mediation. In some cases, disagreements among Member States contributed to the escalation of conflicts and strained ECOWAS' cohesion.¹⁷ For instance, a case in point is the Liberian civil war, where a lack of consensus between the Anglophone¹⁸ and the Francophone¹⁹ country divides over ECOWAS' intervention contributed to the protracted nature of the war. During the Liberia conflict, particularly Côte d'Ivoire and Burkina Faso refused to contribute troops to ECOMOG but rather supported Mr Charles Taylor and his NPFL with logistical support. Another case in point is the disagreements among ECOWAS Member States that constrained ECOWAS' military intervention in Côte d'Ivoire during the civil war that broke out after the 2010 elections. These disagreements exposed "the fragility of the regional consensus"²⁰ and how that has constrained ECOWAS' peace efforts in the region.

Lack of Effective Structures and Capacity for Conflict Resolution

Though ECOWAS has established normative and legal structures to respond to conflict situations, its operations are largely ad hoc and crisis driven. This is to say that normally ECOWAS responds to conflict situations using ad hoc measures rather than coherent and effective structures. A typical example is the inadequate ECOWAS Standby Force (ESF), which lacks effective intervention capabilities, such as naval and air capabilities, and is highly dependent on external support for its intervention efforts.²¹ Additionally, the civilian component of the ESF is yet to be fully operationalised.

Weak Norm Enforcement Capacity

ECOWAS lacks effective sanctioning capabilities. For instance, though the Commission has demonstrated its zero tolerance for unconstitutional rule by condemning unconstitutional rule and changes of power, and applying sanctions in the cases of political crisis in Niger and Guinea in 2009, some member states continue to violate the additional protocol on democracy and good governance with impunity.²² For example, Blaise Compaoré, who had been President of Burkina Faso since 1987, retained his hold on power in 2010 through a controversial interpretation of the constitution, without any opposition by ECOWAS.²³ His recent attempts to revise the constitution and extend

his mandate were foiled due to mass civil action and not ECOWAS intervention. Meanwhile, Mr Campaoré is often selected by ECOWAS to mediate in conflict situations, notably in the political crisis in Mali, Guinea and Côte d'Ivoire, where he was expected to defend ECOWAS' zero tolerance for undemocratic rule. Sometimes, this duplicity displayed by ECOWAS has called into question the credibility of some of its mediation efforts in conflict situations.

Resource Constraints

Mediation efforts call for enormous financial commitments especially in the cases where ECOWAS has to mobilise resources to support security sector reforms and the provision of social services. For instance, in some cases ECOWAS has to provide technical and financial aid to countries emerging from conflicts in the region. Additionally, ECOWAS has human resource challenges — it is understaffed and overstretched.²⁴ This is because it is believed that some of its staff members have been poached by partners who offer better conditions of service. Consequently, valuable institutional memory is lost, as new staff members have to be recruited and trained.²⁵ Thirdly, ECOWAS also has challenges with allocating and utilising donor funds according to schedule. Bureaucratic financial procedures and reporting requirements, on the one hand, constrains the effective utilisation of donor funds. On the other hand, it affects the effective use of funds and the ability to raise substantial sums to meet current demands. Fourthly, ECOWAS is overly dependent on external assistance and receives minimal financial support from its Member States.²⁶ This over dependence on donor funding sometimes undermines its independence and legitimacy during conflict situations.

ECOWAS Mediation Experiences

ECOWAS engages mediators at different levels of the mediation process. At the Track I level, mediators comprise former Heads of State and eminent personalities who are invited to use their experiences to facilitate negotiations. Increasingly, ECOWAS acknowledges the important role of civil society groups and grassroots organisations, including women's groups, which have facilitated mediation processes at the grassroots level. It has created a platform that seeks to integrate such indigenous efforts into peace processes in the sub-region. In light of the above, this section highlights the mediation experiences and lessons learnt in the mediation process through such identifiable groups as former Heads of State and women.

Role of (Former) Heads of State in Mediation

The ECPF provides for the active involvement of former Heads of State, eminent and high profile personalities in mediation, conciliation and facilitation as ECOWAS Special Envoys and Ambassadors.²⁷ Also, the President of the Commission is authorised to nominate a mediator — normally a former Head of State — who is tasked with studying the conflict situation and leading mediation efforts. Several factors are considered in the nomination of former Heads of State as mediators.²⁸

These include:

- **Respectability** — because personality plays a key role in the mediation process, the mediator is expected to be someone who: (a) has the stature of a Head or former Head of State, (b) commands respect at the regional and international levels, and (c) has connections with regional and international actors.
- **Impartiality** — the mediator has to be someone who can relate to the conflict parties, namely opposition parties, rebel leaders and government, and be able to negotiate with these parties and other power brokers in order to facilitate mediation efforts.
- **Familiarity** — the mediator has to be conversant with the background of the conflict and the internal dynamics at play in the country. Additionally, the mediation support team has to include subject matter experts who can advise the mediator on the different issues at play.

The critical role of former Heads of State was highlighted by Gen Ishola Williams, who explained that:

*People tend to listen to former Heads of State because they believe they have the experience of running a country. So when they speak, they do with some knowledge of the practice of governance because of the various power centres he has to manage as a president.*²⁹

However, it is pertinent to note that due to the politics involved in the selection of (former) Heads of State as well as the 'peer pressure' at play during mediation efforts, the above mentioned qualities are not strictly adhered to. This leads to the ineffectiveness of some mediation efforts in the sub-region. Moreover, ECOWAS is expected to facilitate the activities of the mediator by providing materials, background information on the conflict and assembling a mediation team from a database of persons who understand the internal dynamics at play in the country. The mediation team should include technical staff, and sometimes people the Mediator has worked with previously. The role of the mediation support team is to analyse the situation on the ground and advise the Mediator. In some cases, however, the mediation teams lack the technical expertise to advise the mediator on the right course of action to take.

In the case of the Council of the Wise, which is the 'advance team' (members of fact-finding missions), these members, who are mostly retired and rely on pensions, are often not adequately remunerated.³⁰ Additionally, ECOWAS lacks the ability to provide adequate resources to facilitate mediation processes. In official processes, for instance, in the case where a (former) president is a mediator, he has to be provided a chartered flight that will contain his technical staff, his security apparatus and his administrative staff. Additionally, security has to be provided for him when he arrives in the conflict-affected country. These resource constraints sometimes undermine the effectiveness of the mediator.

Contribution of Women to ECOWAS Mediation Efforts

Women's groups form an integral part of the West Africa Civil Society Forum (WACSOFF), which serves to channel the experiences of civil society groups in conflict prevention and mediation at the Track II level, complementing ECOWAS' efforts in ensuring peace and security. WACSOFF was endorsed by ECOWAS due to their independent role in putting pressure on international partners and influencing the decisions of mediators from the margins of the peace table.

Women's groups from various parts of the region have played critical roles in facilitating peace at the grassroots and, sometimes, regional levels. One such group is the Mano River Women's Peace Network (MARWOPNET), which was involved in the peace processes in Liberia, Sierra Leone and Guinea. MARWOPNET³¹, a collection of high-level women from political networks as well as grassroots women, was formed in 2000 in Abuja under the auspices of ECOWAS.³² It was established at a time when the conflict in the respective countries intensified and there was a need to gain access to peace actors, who will facilitate an end to the atrocities. For instance, during the Accra Peace Talks on Liberia in June 2003, women were not invited officially to the meeting so they could not contribute directly to discussions. However, they acted as a pressure group that mobilised other women and groups in their communities to appeal to warring parties to stop fighting and agree on negotiated settlements of disputes. The women's groups also put pressure on stakeholders to involve them in the peace process. One official at the ECOWAS Commission corroborates this, stating:

They were not allowed in, they forced themselves in. It was not like the region gave a slot to the women. They also present a lot of pressure on people because it is not easy to shoot women who are your mothers, your sisters.³³

The efforts of the women's groups (including Liberia Women's Initiative) were recognised during the Accra Peace Talks on Liberia and they were officially invited as the only women's group that participated with observer status at the talks.³⁴

Impediments to Women's Representation at the Highest Level of Peace Processes

As occurs globally, in West Africa, though women play active roles at the grassroots as well as civil society levels (Tracks II and III), they are barely represented at the decision-making and implementation levels. To deal with the underrepresentation of women at the higher levels, ECOWAS has dedicated a component on Women, Peace and Security in the ECPF in order to enhance the visibility and role of women at the implementation and decision-making levels of the peace process.³⁵ Besides, ECOWAS has established a Gender Directorate at the Commission to develop plans of action towards the implementation of the women, peace and security component of the ECPF, and a Gender and Development Centre in Dakar exclusively targeted at making sure that the role of women becomes visible.³⁶ In spite of these efforts, women have not been given a fair representation during mediation processes in the region, and are not included in the decision-making and implementation levels of the peace process.³⁷

Some of the challenges that hinder the representation of women at the peace table are arguably the lack of economic and political empowerment and unchanging attitudes that refuse to acknowledge the value and role of women in peace processes. In addition, as is the case with their male counterparts in the region, there are challenges related to lack of technical skills. The section below will examine some of these challenges further.

Economic empowerment: Most women in the region work in the informal sector and their wages and earnings are significantly lower than the earnings of men. It is estimated that women's earnings are 20 per cent lower than those of men.³⁸ Besides, in patriarchal societies, some women control fewer assets because they have little say in the control of household incomes. This leads to economic dependence of these women. This particular situation does not encourage them to participate in political positions. Those involved in mediation processes are normally selected from some form of political office; hence it is important that women occupy such posts.

Political empowerment: Women's roles in political positions especially at the national levels contribute to their participation in the peace process. This is emphasised by one of our respondents at ECOWAS who mentions that:

For them [women] to have a higher role in the mediation process, they should also be seen to be having a higher role in the political process in their countries.³⁹

However, few women actively participate in political activities as candidates and, sometimes when some of these women stand for elected positions they barely get the support of the electorate. Most national governments have allocated quotas to increase the political participation of women through affirmative action plans; however, these allocations are not always fulfilled. Legislation of these quotas into national constitutions and other frameworks has not been implemented in most countries and this has impacted on the representation of women in government positions, and by default, their role on the international scene as mediators.

Lack of technical skills: In keeping with the general situation for both men and women in West Africa, there are concerns surrounding the level of skills available on issues of mediation and general conflict resolution. While there are several prominent women engaged in peace processes in Africa, it is argued that many more lack the capacity to engage at the decision-making levels. It is certainly debatable whether grassroots women who mobilise other women at the local level lack specific technical knowledge and skills that will support them to translate their local expertise into official peace processes. Questions remain as to whether women are given adequate opportunities at high-level negotiation tables, perhaps partly attributable to cultural barriers and sensitivities that are inimical to women's progress. However, there are also concerns that women need to demonstrate their skills about the peace processes and mechanisms, and are able to articulate the issues. These factors, however, do not negate the fact that there are some empowered women with adequate skills that could be involved at the higher level.

Conclusion

Preventive diplomacy and mediation in West Africa have contributed significantly to averting several potentially deadly conflicts. They have also helped in ensuring some of the conflicts do not escalate, although it is less easy to demonstrate cases of prevention. Nonetheless, much needs to be done to ensure that preventive diplomacy and mediation retains its sustained relevance and efficacy in curbing the sub-region's complex and intractable conflicts. The success of mediation depends on factors such as rapid deployment of diplomatic efforts and employment of skilled mediators.⁴⁰ Even though ECOWAS is regarded as a continental trailblazer in conflict resolution, its response and monitoring mechanisms need great improvement. The challenge of late response to crisis and piecemeal intervention still persists many years after the adoption of the ECPF. There is the need to enhance the mediation capacity of mediators at the different levels of the mediation process including the capacities of women mediators and civil society groups. Civil society organisations across the sub-region can play a key role in pre-empting and responding to potential crises as well as ensuring accountability for perpetrators of crime and violence.

ECOWAS should also support the internal national mechanisms for conflict prevention as well as enforce the existing institutional capacity for preventive diplomacy to give mediators, Special Envoys, Special Representatives and members of the COW more authority to engage warring parties. To guarantee the neutrality of mediators and ensure their legitimacy, the inherent weaknesses in appointing mediators needs to be addressed. This will help avoid the political power play often associated with regional interventions. Overdependence on external funding sometimes unnecessarily influences the direction and objectives of mediation processes. ECOWAS should be able to raise funds internally from Member States to prevent over reliance on external support. Finally, it is crucial for ECOWAS to consider documenting the experiences of mediators, especially former Heads of State, to serve as reference for future mediation efforts.

Endnotes

1. Article 3(1) of the Revised Treaty of ECOWAS, 1993.
2. The two protocols are the Protocol on Non-Aggression (1978) and the Protocol on Mutual Assistance on Defence (1981).
3. See Article 58 of the Revised Treaty of ECOWAS, 1993.
4. See Section II, The ECOWAS Conflict Prevention Framework: Regulation MSC/REG.1/01/08.
5. Ibid.
6. See Articles 4 and 17, Protocol Relating to the Mechanism for Conflict Prevention, Management, Resolution, Peacekeeping and Security, ECOWAS Doc, 1999.
7. See Article 36, Protocol A/SP1/12/01 on Democracy and Good Governance Supplementary to the Protocol relating to the Mechanism for Conflict Prevention, Management, Resolution, Peacekeeping and Security.
8. See Articles 49(e) and 49(h), Regulation MSC/REG.1/01/08, The ECOWAS Conflict Prevention Framework. The Division is currently being set up and recruitment for key staff is ongoing.
9. According to Article 15 of the Mechanism, the Executive Secretary shall have the power to initiate actions for conflict prevention, management, resolution, peacekeeping and security in the sub-region. Such actions may include fact-finding, mediation, facilitation, negotiation and reconciliation of parties in conflict.
10. See Article 10, Protocol Relating to the Mechanism for Conflict Prevention, Management, Resolution, Peacekeeping and Security, ECOWAS Doc, 1999.
11. ECOWAS Mediation and Security Council recommends extra-ordinary summit of Heads of State on Niger, ECOWAS Press Release N°: 081/2009 24 August 2009, Abuja - Nigeria.
12. Ibid.
13. See Article 22, Protocol Relating to the Mechanism for Conflict Prevention, Management, Resolution, Peacekeeping and Security, ECOWAS Doc, 1999.
14. See African-led International Support Mission to Mali (AFISMA).
15. The framework for deployment was developed in 2010, but lacked a doctrine. The Doctrine has now been developed and as of October 2014 efforts were being made by ECOWAS to adopt the Doctrine. Numerous challenges remain with the actual deployment of the civilian element of the ESE, which will be addressed.
16. In Guinea-Bissau, ECOWAS issued several warnings but could not prevent the killings of the Chief of Defence Staff of the Armed Forces and President Nino Vieira on 1st and 2nd March 2009, respectively. In Côte d'Ivoire, repeated ECOWAS warnings before and after the 2010 disputed elections failed to dissuade both factions from killing and brutalising innocent civilians.
17. ECOWAS and regional peacekeeping integration in West Africa: Lessons for the future, Peter Arthur, *Africa Today*, Vol. 57, No. 2, 2010 Winter; See Also Emmanuel Kwesi Aning, 1999, *Eliciting Compliance from Warlords: The ECOWAS experience in Liberia, 1990–1997*, Review of African Political Economy.
18. led by Nigeria.
19. led by Côte d'Ivoire and Burkina Faso.
20. Dossou David Zounmenou and Reine Sylvie Loua, ISS Paper 230, December 2011, <http://dspace.africaportal.org/jspui/bitstream/123456789/32973/1/Paper230.pdf?1>, accessed 29 September 2014.
21. Sebastian Sperling, Feb 2011, *ECOWAS in Crisis mode: Strengths and Limits of regional security policy in West Africa*, <http://library.fes.de/pdf-files/iez/07936.pdf>, accessed 29 September 2014.
22. Ibid.
23. Ibid.
24. Babatunde Tolu Afolabi (n.d.), *Peacemaking in the ECOWAS region: Challenges and Prospects*, kms1.isn.ethz.ch/serviceengine/Files/ISN/105816/.../Chapter_4.pdf.

25. Office of the Special Adviser on Africa of the UN (2007), The emerging role of the AU and ECOWAS in conflict prevention and peacebuilding, Background paper prepared for expert group meeting, <http://www.un.org/africa/osaa/reports/Emerging%20Role%20of%20AU%20and%20Ecowas%202007.pdf>.

26. Ibid.

27. See ECPF, 2008.

28. Examples of mediators used by ECOWAS are Gen Abdulsalami Abubakar (mediator in Liberia and Niger) and Blaise Compaoré (mediator in Côte d'Ivoire, Togo, Guinea and Mali).

29. Interview with Gen Ishola Williams.

30. Ibid.

31. Their activities within that period were facilitated by Bineta Diop of Femmes Africa Solidarité.

32. See MARWOPNET (2004-2009), <http://www.marwopnet.org>.

33. Interview with ECOWAS official.

34. Brownel, 2011.

35. See ECPF, 2008.

36. Interview with Abdel Fatau-Musah, Director of External Affairs, ECOWAS Commission, Abuja, 19 August 2011.

37. Ibid.

38. UNICEF, 2006.

39. Interview with Abdel Fatau-Musah, Director of External Affairs, ECOWAS Commission, Abuja, 19 August 2011.

40. Lund, M. (1996), "Preventing Violent Conflicts: A Strategy for Preventive Diplomacy" Washington DC: United States Institute of Peace Press.

Introduction



This chapter examines two case studies of low-intensity conflicts in Ghana, namely the Nkonya–Alavanyo conflict in the Volta Region of Ghana and the Dagbon conflict in the Northern Region. The chapter traces the historical antecedents of the two conflicts, discusses the mediation processes and efforts adopted by various actors, including government officials, civil society organisations, religious and traditional leaders, while particularly highlighting the

indigenous aspects of the peace processes. It further discusses the effectiveness of the indigenous approaches and the associated weaknesses in order to illustrate that these approaches are still important and relevant despite the increasing focus on Western models in conflict resolution in West Africa. The chapter also highlights the fact that, for mediation processes to succeed, traditional and cultural values should not be disregarded but be integrated in mediation and conflict resolution efforts.

Nkonya–Alavanyo Conflict: Historical Background

The Nkonya–Alavanyo Conflict is a land boundary conflict between the Nkonya⁴¹ and Alavanyo⁴² communities, both in the Volta region of Ghana. The contestation over that parcel of land stems from the 'Gruner Map'⁴³ demarcated by a German Surveyor in 1923, when Germans were colonising the eastern corridor of that area. The 'Any Tree' was used to demarcate the boundary. Prior to the cartographic work of Dr. Gruner, the two tribes co-existed peacefully. The drawing of the map by Dr. Gruner was intended to further map out the area and settle possible disputes between the two tribes in the future.

In an instance during the early days of the land dispute when tension ensued between the two tribes over the ownership of the land, it is believed that the Nkonya people allegedly got hold of the land document and then used it in court to their advantage — subsequently the court ruled in favour of the Nkonya people. On the basis that the judgment was tainted with prejudice, the Alavanyo people disputed the verdict. This allegation was rooted and traceable in history. According to Kornu, during the plebiscite when people had to vote either to join Togo or Ghana, the Alavanyo people clashed with the Ghana National Army and have since been negatively tagged as "the bad guys". This perception, according to the Alavanyo people, was the reason for the prejudice in the judgment⁴⁴ and has since been a source of misunderstanding, leading to the protracted conflict between the two groups. It is also argued that the conflict has prolonged due to the rich natural resources on the disputed land, including timber species, bamboo, cola nuts, cocoa, oil palm and food crops⁴⁵. In effect, each side (Nkonya and Alavanyo) is interested in laying claim to these natural resources.

As reported by Reverend Anthony Kornu, the first violent incident over the boundary occurred in 1923 during preparations for 'Empire Day Celebrations'.⁴⁶ Subsequently, various violent clashes between the two communities were recorded in 1980, 1983, 1990, 1997, 2001 and 2003⁴⁷. The conflict has had a devastating effect on the two communities as a result of lack of communication, which created longstanding suspicion and mistrust between both sides. Consequently, during the conflict, members of both communities did not assemble for social gatherings such as funerals, naming and marriage ceremonies, and market women from either community did not share the same market and 'barter trade' as they used to do previously. Besides, schoolchildren that attended school in neighbouring communities and had to cross either the Nkonya or Alavanyo communities could no longer do so. In summary, animosity and antagonism replaced the hitherto peaceful inter-ethnic co-existence prior to the creation of the 'Gruner Map'. In addition, the deteriorating inter-personal and inter-communal relations were exacerbated when relatives of people who lost their lives during the conflicts began to avenge the death of their family members, thereby contributing to the protracted nature of the conflicts.

Intermittently, violent clashes were recorded between the communities. In October 2012, tensions between the two communities mounted following ambush killings by both sides.⁴⁸ Similarly, in 2013 violence erupted in the area following reprisal attacks by the two communities that resulted in the death of two people from both communities.⁴⁹ This led to the imposition of a curfew by the Ministry of Interior in order to restore calm in the area.

The Dagbon Conflict

As a centralised and hierarchical state, the chieftaincy institution in Dagbon⁵⁰ is layered — with various leaders chosen at the kinship, paramount, divisional and settlement levels — to administer their people.⁵¹ Among these layers, however, the Ya-Na's (the overlord of the Dagbon state) position is the highest, and rotational in nature. Chiefs at the lower levels, especially divisional chiefs from both royal families, aspire to the next higher level, particularly the paramount chieftaincy, in order to increase their chances of becoming the next Ya-Na.⁵²

The processes leading to the ascension to the Ya-Na position has, however, been contested by the royal families, and this has engendered rivalry between the two conflict parties (Abudu and Andani Royal families/gates). Specifically, the Dagbon conflict is a longstanding chieftaincy dispute between the Abudu and Andani families over the rotation system for ascension to the kinship of Dagbon; the legitimacy of a candidate to be selected as Ya-Na; the procedure for the selection of Ya-Na; and the legitimacy of the selection committee as well as king makers. Though the conflict dates back to pre-colonial times, the recent disputes are believed to have originated in 1948 when the throne was vacant following the death of Ya-Na Mahama II from the Andani clan. His son, who was the regent, failed in two successive attempts to be selected as the Ya-Na. In both these instances, members from the Abudu clan were selected to be the Ya-Na.

In both these instances, members from the Abudu clan were selected to be the Ya-Na. This failure by Andanis to ascend to the kinship position generated tensions between the two royal families, and consequently, the Andanis refused to accept the enskinment of Ya-Na Abudulai III⁵³ (an Abudu) as king. This was because according to the rotation system that was being practiced, an Andani should have at least been selected after two members from the Abudu family were selected successively as kings of Dagbon.⁵⁴ Subsequently, the Andanis launched a campaign to have Ya-Na Abudulai III removed from the throne even though the latter was against Dagbon chieftaincy tradition.⁵⁵

Ya-Na Abudulai III survived these threats and died on 14 September 1967.⁵⁶ Ya-Na Andani III was selected in November 1968 by the Selection Committee to replace Abudulai III as king in accordance with the rotational succession system. This decision was however opposed by 14 chiefs of the Dagbon Traditional Council who stated that they had chosen the Abudu Gbonlana⁵⁷ as King⁵⁸. This notwithstanding, Ya-Na Andani III was enskinned and later died on 14 March 1969. Due to the recurrent disagreements over succession to the Ya-Na position, various regimes (since independence) constituted Commissions of Inquiry which were tasked with investigating the root causes of the succession crisis and making recommendations. In one instance in 1960, the Mate Kole Commission of Inquiry was established by the Convention People's Party (CPP) government and the report of this commission was used to decide the successor for Ya-Na Andani III. In accordance with the recommendation by the Mate Kole Commission, an Abudu Prince, Mahamadu Abudulai was enskinned as Ya-Na Mahamadu Abudulai IV on September 12, 1969. In other instances, the Ollenu Committee was constituted by the National Redemption Council (NRC) in 1972 to, among other things, determine the legitimacy of Ya-Na Andani III and Ya-Na Abudulai IV.⁵⁹ The Ollenu Committee endorsed the rotational system of succession by recognising the legitimacy of Ya-Na Andani III and called for the deskinment of Ya-Na Abudulai IV. The report by the Committee was referred to the Supreme Court which approved the recommendation and supported the rotational system being practiced.

Meanwhile, Ya-Na Abudulai IV died in 1988 while there was a sitting Ya-Na. The Abudu family insisted that his funeral should be performed in the Gbewaa Palace, even though that action was against custom. According to Dagbon custom, the funeral of a Ya-Na who dies outside the palace cannot be performed in the palace nor can he be buried there when there is a reigning Ya-Na. Potentially, this quest by the Abudus to perform the funeral of their late Ya-Na is a major factor which contributed to the murder of Ya-Na Andani II. In 2002, violence escalated between the two families following an attack on an Andani youth by some members of the Abudu family. Subsequently, Ya-Na Yakubu Andani II and about 40 of his loyalists were killed and there was also the destruction of some houses.

Mediation and Peace Efforts

This section analyses the role of key institutions, including government and civil society groups as well as traditional and religious institutions, in managing the Nkonya–Alavanyo and the Dagbon conflicts.

The Nkonya–Alavanyo Peace Process

Although described as low-intensity, the Nkonya–Alavanyo conflict has existed for decades. As a result, several mediation and peace efforts, involving numerous actors, namely government institutions/officials, traditional and religious actors and civil society organisations, were engaged. Notable among them include: churches⁶⁰; the West Africa Network for Peacebuilding (WANEP); the Nkonya–Alavanyo Mediation Committee; the Volta Regional Coordinating Council; women’s groups, queen mothers and traditional authorities. The following section explores the role of various institutions and groups in the Nkonya–Alavanyo peace process.

The Role of Government Institutions in the Peace Process

Government has long been involved in contributing to the management of the Nkonya–Alavanyo conflict. For instance, in November 1992, the Provisional National Defence Council (PNDC) appointed the Acquah Committee to investigate the dispute and advise the government on possible ways of resolving the conflict.⁶¹ The Committee’s work, however, was suppressed by renewed hostilities between the two communities. Subsequent to that, the District Chief Executives of Hohoe and Jasikan jointly appointed the Mireku Committee to inquire into the dispute in 1995. As is the case, the recommendations in the Committee’s report were not implemented, thereby impeding the mediation and peace process. A vacuum for managing the conflict was thus created until February 2003 when the MP for Biakoye, Dr. Kwabena Adjei, raised the land dispute on the floor of parliament and called for government support.⁶² The MP for Hohoe–North, Nathaniel Kwadzo Aduadjoe, countered his proposition and generated tension and intense debate on the floor of Parliament. In order to reduce tension over the issue, the former majority leader of Parliament, Mr Felix Owusu-Adjapong, intervened and called the house to order. Subsequently, the Volta Regional Minister at the time, Mr Kwasi Owusu-Yeboah was invited to Parliament to respond to questions on the Nkonya–Alavanyo dispute and efforts that his office had put in place to resolve it. In his submission, the Minister revealed that the Volta Regional Security Committee had deployed a police military taskforce in the Nkonya–Alavanyo area since September 2002.⁶³

Following this and in pursuit of an effort to find lasting solution to the conflict, the Nkonya–Alavanyo Peace Architecture was established in 2004 under the New Patriotic Party’s Administration and was composed of four structures, namely the Mediation Committee and Joint Committee also known as Consultative Committee (both are the main structures) and two supporting structures known as the Ho Diocesan Peacebuilding Team, and Community Peace Setters (CPS).

The Ho Regional Coordinating Council (RCC) appointed by the Mediation Committee⁶⁴ was comprised of seven members and a secretary while the Joint Committee⁶⁵ was comprised of nine members from Nkonya and Alavanyo. However, in order to ensure unity of purpose by the people of both communities, the name Joint Committee was changed to Consultative Committee. These two structures were put in place by the then New Patriotic Party government and the Ho Catholic Secretariat, i.e. the Ho Peacebuilding Team, which offered technical direction.

The two additional structures, namely the Ho Diocesan Peacebuilding Team⁶⁶, comprising six members, and Community Peace Setters (CPS),⁶⁷ comprising four members, were created in order to make the peace architecture comprehensive and inclusive. The peace architecture was comprised of three key institutions, including religious leaders, traditional leaders and legal representatives. Although the peace architecture was established in 2004, it faced the initial challenge of lack of funds. Consequently, actual work started in 2005 when the Catholic Secretariat in Ho and Catholic Relief Services in Accra provided the initial funding for the commencement of the mediation process.

Additionally, the 2005 Mediation Committee established by the government was tasked with mediating the conflict between the two communities.⁶⁸ Firstly, the four groups which constituted the Nkonya–Alavanyo peace architecture were given technical training by WANEP, where peace intervention guidelines were developed to help train the identified actors, namely queen mothers, youth leaders and women leaders, with special emphasis on the two protagonists to the conflict. Citizens in the diaspora who were considered as strategic allies in the conflict were also involved. The inclusion of a broad array of persons was intended as confidence and trust-building measures before the actual mediation on the land issue could commence.

During the peace process, the Mediation Committee separately engaged opinion leaders, chiefs, elders and women’s groups in dialogue sessions. Subsequent to that, the youth from Nkonya and Alavanyo were engaged at a workshop organised at the Bishop Koning’s Peace Centre. Initially, the youth from each community were antagonistic to each other during the peace process. However, after weeks of sensitisation in a series of workshops, they began to interact. Finally, a memorandum of understanding in which it was stated that each side would cease to take up arms against the other was signed by the youth. Additionally, as indicated earlier, the Consultative Mediation Committee, which comprised natives from both communities, was tasked with collating data and reporting it to the Mediation Committee any time there is a resurgence of conflict in the area. Depending on the intensity of the conflict, the Mediation Committee could task the Consultative Committee with resolving the issue and invite representatives of both conflict parties or seek external support from religious leaders and other groups.

Furthermore, the Judicial Service in Ho was extensively involved in adjudicating the land dispute between the two communities. However, there have been instances where judgement pronounced in favour of one side against the other contributed to the exacerbation of tension between the two communities.

The Alavanyo people, for example, are believed to have persistently questioned the court's decisions stating that the Gruner Map — which was used as the basis for the judgement — was “not accurate, was too small in scale, and therefore never intended as the basis for boundary demarcations”.⁶⁹ These disagreements over the judgements on the land dispute perhaps lend credence to the report of the Mireku Committee⁷⁰, which indicated that “the implementation of the court's decision will not help to promote peace between the two traditional areas”⁷¹. This view was corroborated by a respondent⁷² who argued that:

“...the courts making definite decisions without reference to traditional peace processes is our problem in Ghana. Our land problems, our chieftaincy problem should not be decided ... [only by what] the court says. And the court is only trying to [use] tangible documents [to decide who has ownership of] the land and [who does not]. Anytime the court gives a decision, then the fight starts because the other side feels that they cannot do anything apart from violence. Court action is our biggest problem in this country [especially] the Alavanyo-Nkonya one... The courts continue to run as an obstacle to our peace process and this is our headache now.”⁷³

Potentially, there are some inherent challenges in the judgements delivered by the law courts on this land boundary dispute. It is believed that these challenges stem from the fact that judgements are prosecutorial and tilted towards finding a culpable person rather than an amicable solution to the conflict⁷⁴. As a result, aggrieved conflict parties tend to engage in violence in order to draw attention to their concerns.

The role of Civil Society, Traditional and Religious Groups

At the communal level, several actors, namely civil society groups, traditional and religious leaders and women's groups played critical roles in the mediation process. The role of civil society organisations in undertaking policy research and advocacy towards conflict resolution and peacebuilding has been immense and widely recognised in Ghana. (WANEP is one such organisation that has been extensively involved as a key mediating organisation in the Nkonya–Alavanyo conflict.⁷⁵ It has organised several workshops and facilitated dialogue among the chiefs, queen mothers, youth and opinion leaders from both communities; and capacity building workshops in support of mediation efforts. Additionally, WANEP conducted Committee Surveys with the involvement of the communities in order to map out the exact area of land that is at the core of the boundary dispute between the two communities. Following a study of the map by the communities, the final round of dialogue to agree on a mutually acceptable land boundary settlement was concluded in November 2008. However, the mediation process was stalled in 2009, when there was misunderstanding over the contested area of land that was surveyed and mapped.⁷⁶

To complement the effort of civil society groups, religious and traditional leaders featured prominently in the negotiation process. The Catholic Diocese, for instance, played a central role in the Nkonya–Alavanyo peace process. As early as 1984, Catholic priests and sisters from both sides of the community were involved in dialogue with the two communities in order to calm tensions.⁷⁷ Together with the Presbyterian Churches,

they provided funding for the peace process. Similarly, the Volta Regional House of Chiefs played a key role in finding solutions to the intractable conflict. In addition to making calls to both sides to cease hostilities, the Regional House of Chiefs appointed committees to reconcile the two communities.⁷⁸

The traditional leaders of the disputing parties made efforts to identify the disputed boundary line and the “cutting of the path was done for a month jointly”.⁷⁹ Interestingly, none of the two parties knew the right acreage of the contested land. As a result, surveyors from both parties were asked to demarcate the portions of land they claimed belonged to them and submit a report to the Regional Surveyor and finally the two maps from the parties were put together (100 sq. miles). It became clear that the land in dispute was 10 sq. miles — this was validated by the Mediation Committee. During this event, the two parties “shared appetite together”⁸⁰ and the joint clearing of the path, a ritual known as “joyenga” was performed for reconciliation. The “joyenga” ritual signifies the burial of all issues and disagreements that had occasioned the conflict. It meant that whoever revisits the issue would be deemed to be causing trouble and this would constitute a taboo and attract punishment in the traditional sense. This restored confidence between the two groups and the chiefs drank from the same calabash. Subsequently, round table negotiations began with each party represented by 20 members who had been part of the peace process since its inception. Although the process was largely successful, there were some challenges.

First, in spite of the training workshops organised, members of the Mediation Committee lacked the in-depth technical knowledge for mediation and negotiation. Moreover, there was no monitoring mechanism in place to ensure that parties adhered to the principles agreed in the mediation process. Another challenge was that marijuana cultivation is rife in the community and this had negative consequences on the youth, who became belligerent and desirous to fight over the issue in spite of on-going peace negotiations. Finally, an interviewee noted that the Nkonya people did not follow the criteria of bringing people who are involved in the process from the very onset as part of the mutually agreed criteria. Thus, it created a situation where they insisted on the court ruling to the neglect of initial commitments to achieve peace.

Following the renewal of violence between the two disputing communities in 2013, WANEP, under the patronage of the Volta Regional Coordinating Council, facilitated a consultative forum that engaged representatives of both sides to re-design the peace process. At the end of the meeting, representatives pledged to embrace dialogue as well as commit to the new peace process.⁸¹

Dagbon Peace Process

Apparently, the Dagbon peace process is as old as the conflict itself. While acknowledging that several actors, including government, civil society groups and international institutions, played central roles in the peace processes, this section focuses on the effort of the Committee of Eminent Chiefs in managing the Conflict.

The role of the Committee of Eminent Chiefs

The 1992 Constitution of the Republic of Ghana is explicit on the authority of chiefs as the custodians of Ghana's tradition as well as the independence of the chieftaincy institution. In line with this provision, and after a series of efforts by government institutions had failed to restore peace to Dagbon, the former President of Ghana, Mr John Agyekum Kufuor, constituted a Committee of Eminent Chiefs in 2003, under the chairmanship of the Asantehene Otumfuo Osei Tutu II, the King of Ashanti. This Committee of Eminent Chiefs was tasked with examining the traditional issues relating to the Dagbon conflict as well as helping find home-grown traditional solutions to the conflict.⁸² Pursuant to this, the Committee assembled representatives of the Abudu and Andani families, the United Nations Development Programme (UNDP)⁸³ and the Ministries of Interior and Chieftaincy for peace talks. According to Ahorsu and Gebe⁸⁴, the Wuaku Commission Report's interpretation of traditional issues and consultation with the various parties to the conflict formed the basis for crafting the "Roadmap for Peace", outlining the benchmarks for peace in Dagbon.⁸⁵ These benchmarks included: the burial of the late Ya-Na Andani II; the installation of the regent of the late king; the performance of the funeral of the deposed Ya-Na Mahamadu Abdulai IV; the performance of the funeral of Ya-Na Yakubu Andani II; and the selection and enskinment of a new Ya-Na for Dagbon.

Among other roles, the Committee served as mediators between the two disputants in order to undertake negotiations towards the resolution of the conflict. A series of dialogues with both warring parties culminated in the drafting of the "Final Peace Agreement"⁸⁶, which was signed and released on 18 November 2007.⁸⁷ Nevertheless, the burial of Ya-Na Yakubu Andani II, the slain overlord of Dagbon in 2002 and the performance of the final funeral rites of the late Ya-Na Mahamadu IV (which the Wuaku Commission had identified as constituting the root cause for the March 2002 crisis) remained outstanding.⁸⁸ As emphasised by a respondent:⁸⁹

*The real problem was that the funerals of some previous members had not been celebrated, you know, which led to some ill feelings. Because once you don't celebrate the funeral it means you do not recognise them as chiefs but the reality was that they have been on the skins prior to that.*⁹⁰

As a result, the Committee of Eminent Chiefs led by the Otumfuo Osei Tutu II, the King of the Golden Stool in Kumasi employed three interconnected Asante concepts, namely *Abusua dua*, *yentwa*⁹¹, *nkonsonkonson*⁹² and *ese ne tekyerema*⁹³ to resolve the dispute between the Abudu and Andani families.

The first concept means that the two families belong to the same ethnic group Dagbani and should therefore live together. The second concept links the two families together as one unit of society. This is to say that each family is interconnected and therefore depends on the other for support. The interdependence of the two families means that, in times of difficulties or aggression by external forces, the two families come together and coordinate efforts to defend the integrity of their community. This second concept interconnects with the third concept of 'teeth and tongue'⁹⁴ that emphasises peaceful co-existence between the two families in the Dagbon traditional area. The two families accepted the wisdom in these Asante maxims and agreed to the burial of the Ya-Na, which restored relative peace in the Dagbon community.

Though this traditional approach has contributed to the restoration of relative peace in the area, the increasing politicisation of the conflict continues to pose a challenge and undermines peace efforts. For instance, in the case of political interference in the conflict, one interviewee hinted that:

*Politicians have their interests. They tend to lose when there are no conflicts in the northern region. When there are no conflicts and people are going to vote according to their conscience, a lot of these politicians will lose their votes.*⁹⁵

It is apparent from the above that politics and political interference remain a major obstacle that will continue to hinder any mediation effort in the Northern part of Ghana, particularly the Dagbon conflict.

Exploring the Effectiveness and Weaknesses of Indigenous Approaches to Mediation and Conflict Resolution in Ghana

In both Nkonya–Alavanyo and the Dagbon conflicts, the application of indigenous approaches complemented government efforts and contributed to the resolution of the conflicts although tensions still exist as potential triggers. This points to the fact that indigenous methods of mediation and conflict resolution are equally relevant and effective in managing conflicts and building peace. In the Nkonya–Alavanyo mediation processes, indigenous approaches were reflected in the critical roles that traditional as well as religious leaders played. Similarly, the Committee of Eminent Chiefs constituted by the NPP government recognised and placed emphasis on indigenous methods where traditional leaders played pre-eminent roles in resolving the Abudu–Andani conflict in Dagbon.

This notwithstanding, there is the need to exercise caution in generalising the effectiveness of indigenous approaches and offer them as a wholesale application to dispute resolution and conflict management in West Africa. Like others, indigenous processes have inherent weaknesses and thus their applicability can at best be described as context specific. In other words, an indigenous approach applicable in one ethnic group may be different from another ethnic group in much the same way as there will be differences from one region to the other. This is so because they usually originate from different established social, cultural and religious practices. They, therefore, lack a

codification system, which may render the interpretation and delivery of justice subjective⁹⁶. As traditions and cultural practices are passed on from one generation to the other, they are bound to lose some valuable elements and meanings. To this end, some traditional practices such as rituals, religious observances, spirit mediums and witchcraft are shrouded in secrecy, making their credibility somewhat questionable.

Additionally, it has been argued that the lack of a generalised model of dispute resolution and conflict management poses a major challenge to indigenous and traditional dispute resolutions. In most cases, indigenous approaches are peculiar to certain localities only and their applications can pertain to and be appreciated by only a particular group of people.⁹⁷

Lastly, with respect to Ghana, Brewoo and Abdallah⁹⁸ argue that a challenge to the application of traditional conflict management strategies to modern conflicts is that traditional institutions are increasingly becoming tainted with corruption and deep involvement in politics. The hitherto respected chieftaincy institutions are increasingly being manipulated and drawn into partisan politics, thereby compromising their credibility in mediation and peace processes.

Conclusion

Using the cases of the Nkonya–Alavanyo and Dagbon conflicts, this chapter has explored mediation efforts that were undertaken in both cases. In the Nkonya–Alavanyo conflict, for instance, it was evident that local peace institutions, religious bodies such as the Catholic Church, WANEP, and traditional authorities played complementary as well as instrumental roles in the mediation process. WANEP, in particular, played a dual role of training local mediators and being directly engaged in the mediation processes. More so, some traditional authorities have been instrumental in paving the way for the various mediation processes to begin. This local interest and participation in the peace process has helped, in some respects, to prevent the escalation of the conflict. Similarly, the Dagbon peace process also presents a unique case of the utility of traditional approaches in mediation and conflict resolution in the country. Particularly, the role of the Committee of Eminent Chiefs, which was established by government, applied traditional approaches in managing the conflict. In spite of these successes, it is pertinent to note that indigenous approaches have inherent limitations. They remain nonetheless important and relevant and should not be disregarded in conflict resolution processes. At worst, these approaches can be integrated to complement the effort of Western models. This is because, given the complexities and changing dynamics of modern conflicts, wholesale application of indigenous methods will be difficult, if not impossible, to terminate conflicts.

Endnotes

41. The Nkonya people are known as the Guans from the Jasikan District of the Volta Region.
42. The Alavanyos are Ewes from the Hohoe District of the Volta Region.
43. A map drawn by a German surveyor in the 1800s.
44. Interview with Reverend Anthony Kornu, 21 May, 2014. He is a Director General of the Catholic Diocese, Ho, and a member of the Peacebuilding Team.
45. Tsikata, D. and Seini, W. (2004). Identities, inequalities and conflicts in Ghana. *CRISE working paper*. Oxford: CRISE.
46. This event took place during the colonial period.
47. Tsikata & Seini, 2004, Op. Cit.
48. Ibid.
49. Dzamboe, T. (25 February 2013). Two killed in renewed Nkonya–Alavanyo conflict. Graphic Online. Retrieved from <http://graphic.com.gh/news/general-news/8944-two-killed-in-renewed-nkonya-alavanyo-conflict.html>.
50. One of the largest kingdoms in the Northern Region of Ghana. Yendi is the capital and seat of the Ya-Na. The people of Dagbon are called Dagombas and they speak the Dagbani language.
51. Steve Tonah (2012), Politicization of a chieftaincy Conflict: the case of Dagbon, Northern Ghana, *Nordic Journal of African Studies*, 21(1): 1–20.
52. Ibid.
53. Second Abudu successor of Ya-Na Mahama II. He was installed in 1954.
54. Tsikata & Seini, 2004, Op Cit.
55. According to the Dagbon custom, a King once enskinned cannot be deskinned.
56. See WACSI/SIPRI (2011), *Governance and Security in Ghana: The Dagbon Chieftaincy Crisis*.
57. Abudu Candidate.
58. See WACSI/SIPRI, 2011.
59. SIPRI/WACSI, 2011.
60. The Catholic, Presbyterian and Global Evangelical Church.
61. Tsikata & Seini, 2004, Op Cit.
62. Ibid.
63. Ibid.
64. Members included: Rev Livingstone Buamah, Former Moderator of the Presbyterian Church, Chairperson; Most Rev Francis A. K Lodonu, Catholic Bishop of Ho Diocese, Vice Chairperson; Most Rev Gabriel A. A Manteh, Catholic Bishop of Jasikan Diocese, Member; Felicia Otchere Darkowa, Chief State Attorney of Ho, Member; Mrs Hilary Gbedemah, Law Institute of Labone-Accra, Member; Nana Mprah Besemuna III, Krachiwura, Member; and Mama Adokua Asigble, Queen Mother of Tefle Traditional Area, Member.
65. The Joint Committee (Consultative Committee) members included: Mr William Kpendeh, currently Chairman/President of the Committee (initially he was the president of the Alavanyo side when it was a joint Committee), Chairperson; Mr Christian Yao Elleley, Opinion Leader Nkonya Tayi; Nana Kate Darkowa, Women's Leader, Nkonya Traditional Area; Mr Emmanuel Bempong Abotsi, Nkonya-Nchumuru Area; Nana Kodua II, Chief (later Nana Kwame obiri from Nkonya Wurupong replaced Nana Kodua); Mr Oscar Gato, Youth Leader, Alavanyo Traditional Area; Mr Francis Kodzoga Ampong, Opinion Leader, Alavanyo Traditional Area; Mr Paul Dzathor, Opinion Leader, Alavanyo Traditional Area; and Ms Agnes Adzomey, Women's Leader, Alavanyo Traditional Area.

66. The Ho Diocesan Peacebuilding Team included: Rev M.Sgr. Antony Kornu; Rev Sister Rejoyce Sedegah, Director of Dept of Social Communication, Ho Secretariat; Rev Father Francis Amuh (Late), Director, Faith and Culture Commission, Ho Diocese; Rev Sister Margaret Mavis Ankamah, Gender Coordinator ; and Rev Father Edward Terence, Development Coordinator/Secretary to the Peacebuilding Team.

67. The Community Peace Setters were: Rev Father Tawiah Raphael, Parish Priest, Alavanyo; Rev R. Y. Kpongo, District Pastor of Alavanyo, Evangelical Presbyterian Church; Rev P. C. K Letsukumah, District Pastor, Nkonya; and Rev Father Anastasios Ottoman Dzodofe, Parish Priest at Wurupong.

68. Interview with Bishop Francis Anani Lodonu, Bishop of Ho Catholic Diocese, 15 September 2011.

69. Tsikata & Seini, 2004, Op. Cit.

70. The Mireku Committee was established in the 1990s.

71. Tsikata & Seini, 2004, Op. Cit.

72. One of the interviewees during the field visits to the Volta Region.

73. Ibid.

74. Interviews from the field.

75. Led by Mr Emmanuel Bombande, Executive Director, West Africa Network for Peacebuilding (WANEP), Regional Office, Accra, Ghana.

76. Stakeholders in Alavanyo / Nkonya Conflict dialogue for peace, 25th March 2013, <http://www.modernghana.com/news/454691/1/stakeholders-in-alavanyonkonya-conflict-dialogue-f.html>.

77. Lodonu, 2011, Op. Cit.

78. Tsikata & Seini, 2004, Op. Cit.

79. This refers to the demarcation of the land boundary.

80. This means they ate together.

81. Statement issued by the people of Nkonya and Alavanyo after a one-day meeting on re-engaging in the peace process: Ending violence and building peace, held on 23 March 2013 at Bishop Herman College, Kpando.

82. Asiedu, O. E., (2008) Examining the State's Capacity in the Management of the Dagbon crisis in Ghana: Is there a role for ECOWAS? ALC Research Report No. 1.

83. Main facilitator of the peace process.

84. Ahorsu, K. & Gebe, B. Y. (2011). Governance and security in Ghana: The Dagbon chieftaincy crisis. West Africa Civil Society Institute. A Stockholm International Peace Research Institute (SIPRI)/OSI African Security and Governance Project, Stockholm, Sweden.

85. Tonah (2012) Op. Cit.

86. The agreement was spearheaded by the Committee of Eminent Chiefs.

87. Asiedu, Op. Cit.

88. Ibid.

89. Interviewee in the Ashanti Region, 8 September 2011.

90. Interview with Nana Adusei Opoku, 8 September 2011. He is a former officer at the Ministry of Foreign Affairs in Ghana and currently serves as the Akyempimhene at the Manhyia palace, Kumasi. His role within the palace set up is like that of the Chief of Staff or a prime minister in a modern office arrangement. Among his responsibilities as the Akyempimhene are that he represents the king at most functions where the king cannot attend personally. Opoku is also one of the four chiefs that enjoy the status of a paramount chief in the Ashanti Kingdom.

91. "Abusua dua, yentwa" is Asante terminology, which literally translates as "A family tree is the basis of societal formation and should not be destroyed." It means that, individual family units within a given society should love and not destroy the other through violent conflict. This maxim emphasises the centrality of family units in building societies and nation states.

In other words, families should co-exist peacefully in order to form the foundation of societies. See Brewoo & Abdallah (2014) 'Exploring Indigenous Mechanisms for Peacemaking in West Africa' in Eds. Akanmu G. Adebayo, Brandon D. Lundy, Jesse Benjamin, and Joseph Kingsley Adjei, "Indigenous Conflict Management Strategies in West Africa: Beyond Right and Wrong". Forthcoming.

92. "Nkonsonkonson" is an Asante adage which literally translates as unity or interdependence. The term nkonsonkonson means a chain linked up by various angles of strands that can make a full end chain. The inter-linkages between the various angles of the chain stress the strength in unity and interdependence of one family on the other. See Brewoo & Abdallah, Ibid.

93. Ese ne takyerema (the teeth and the tongue) denotes peaceful co-existence in Asante tradition. The Asante consider the teeth and the tongue to mean two interwoven features, which co-exist peacefully in spite of occasional disagreements. This concept stems from the belief that, in any setting where individuals and social groupings interact, there are bound to be disagreements. The teeth and the tongue living in the same mouth exemplify this. In the process of eating, the teeth sometimes bite the tongue to the extent that one might want to spew out the food, indicating existing friction between the two organs, and yet eating and chewing the same portion of the food continues. In practical terms, this suggests that, no matter the atrocities committed by one individual against another, one family against another, or one community against another, there should be an avenue for redress and reconciliation. See Serwaa & Abdallah, Ibid.

94. See previous endnote.

95. Interview with Atia Akita, 10 September 2011. Secretary, Yendi Peace Centre.

96. Brewoo & Abdallah, Op. Cit.

97. Osaghae, E. E. (2000). Applying traditional methods to modern conflicts: Possibilities and limits. In I. W. Zartman (Ed.), *Traditional cures for modern conflicts: African conflict "medicine"* (pp. 201–217). Boulder, CO: Lynne Rienner Publishers.

98. Brewoo & Abdallah, Op. Cit.

Introduction



In 1991, violent conflict broke out in Sierra Leone and lasted until 2002. The conflict, which mainly pitched the Revolutionary United Front (RUF) against the Government of Sierra Leone, degenerated into violence unparalleled in the history of the country. According to the RUF, one of the main reasons for starting the war was to halt the bad governance of the All Peoples Congress (APC) government and restore democracy in Sierra Leone. In the course of the conflict, both

the government and the RUF committed various forms of atrocities and war crimes. Several people including children were amputated, maimed or killed and thousands fled the conflict, leading to the destruction of the social and moral fabric of the society.

The resolution of this conflict proved rather intractable. Between 1991 and 2002, two major peace agreements were produced: the Abidjan Peace Accord (1996) and the Lomé Peace Agreement (1999). The peace process involved several actors including ECOWAS, the then OAU, the UN, civil society organisations as well as the main protagonists (the Government of Sierra Leone, the Armed Revolutionary Forces Council (AFRC) and the RUF). It was the combined efforts of these groups that led to the final resolution of the conflict after 11 years. This chapter provides detailed information on the Sierra Leone peace process and analyses the roles of various actors mediating at different levels and how this impacted the peace process, drawing out relevant lessons that could be instrumental for informing policy and developing capacities in the field of mediation.

The Genesis of the Problem: Background to the Conflict

Sierra Leone was a British colony until 1961, when the country gained independence under the leadership of Sir Milton Margai. The first few years after independence were ones of a flourishing democracy characterised by political pluralism, press freedom and political tolerance. The political landscape, however, changed after the death of Margai⁹⁹ in 1964 when Albert Margai (brother of Milton Margai) took up the reigns of leadership. Instead of consolidating the democratic gains of his predecessor, he abolished all forms of political organisation in the country. According to some analysts, this marked the beginning of the country's descent into political and economic crises. To ensure his hold on power, Albert Margai appointed his tribesmen to senior positions in government and within the armed forces.¹⁰⁰ These actions politicised the military and other national institutions to ensure regime protection rather than protection of the interests of the State. However, in 1968 Margai's Sierra Leone People's Party (SLPP) was defeated in national elections by the All People's Congress (APC). Between 1968 and 1990, the APC government under the leaderships of Siaka Stevens (1968–1985) and Joseph Saidu Momoh (1985–1990) followed Margai's footsteps to fast-track the country's descent

into political and economic crises. This period under review, as described by Reno¹⁰¹, was characterised by rampant corruption, nepotism, tribalism, political intolerance and gross mismanagement of the country's economy. Stevens, on one hand, established Sierra Leone as a one-party State and adopted a political tactic that ensured a selective assimilation of the party-faithful and tribesmen to perpetuate his term in office. Momoh, on the other hand, was principally accused of being far too weak and inattentive to the affairs of the country, allowing his corrupt advisors to manipulate matters behind the scenes.¹⁰² These actions, including bad politicking, poor governance and economic injustice, created an environment conducive to the civil war in 1991. As much as the above factors account for some of the principal causes of the conflict, one cannot rule out the role of external politics in the conflict, such as the involvement of Charles Taylor's National Patriot Front of Liberia (NPFL) with the RUF.¹⁰³

Nature of the Sierra Leonean Conflict

In March 1991, violent attacks were launched in the Kailahun district of the eastern province of Sierra Leone near the Liberian border by a small group of RUF fighters led by Foday Sankoh. The rebel leader, an ex-corporal in the Sierra Leone Army, had been charged with mutiny, imprisoned and later discharged from the army. Embittered and disenchanted by the repressive regime of the government, Foday Sankoh came into contact with a group of young revolutionists and joined them for insurgency training in Libya in the 1980s.¹⁰⁴ On his return, Sankoh, with the help of his two allies, Abu Kanu and Rashid Mansaray¹⁰⁵, formed the RUF. They recruited local youths and, with support from Charles Taylor's NPFL, launched an insurrection that developed into one of the most brutal civil wars on the African continent.

The response to the initial attacks by the government was that they were mere acts of banditry. It is believed that the government's ineptitude and insensitivity to the rumours of the attacks in the provinces increased the RUF's insurgencies. In addition, the lack of any proper analysis of the situation rendered the government complacent in responding to the looming crisis. Sankoh's fighters were rather violent and ruthless. They committed indiscriminate acts of violence against the civilian populations such as rape, abductions and lootings and recruited children to fight in the war. By the end of 1993, the RUF had gained considerable control over the diamond-rich areas of the country. These resources were exploited to fund the conflict. Although the government sought assistance from neighbouring countries such as Guinea and Nigeria to counter the attacks, the rebels' invasion of the country persisted.

In 1992, some officers of the armed forces, led by Captain Valentine Strasser, overthrew Momoh's government and formed the National Provisional Ruling Council (NPRC) with the promise to halt the rebel invasion. The NPRC then contracted the services of private military companies — Executive Outcomes and Sandline International — to support the army, which by that time had been so compromised that they neither had the men nor the capacity to counter the RUF's insurgencies. In fact, at one point, soldiers from the national army had joined the rebel forces to fight against the government, hence the term "sobels".¹⁰⁶ His Chief of Defence Staff, Julius Maada Bio, later overthrew Strasser

while the NPRC was making plans to conduct elections to return the country to constitutional rule. Amid the on-going crisis, the Presidential and Parliamentary elections that brought Ahmed Tejan Kabbah of the SLPP to power finally took place in 1996. The elections, however, did not bring an end to the hostilities. Rather, the RUF and the NPRC intensified their assaults on the civilian populations, especially civil rights groups who campaigned for a return to democratic rule, before the peace negotiations in Abidjan.

First Attempts at Brokering Peace

In November 1996, ECOWAS and the international community initiated processes to bring an end to the war. Under the auspices of the then Ivorian President Konan Bedie and his Foreign Minister, Amara Essé, peace talks were facilitated. This led to the negotiations between Kabbah's government and Foday Sankoh's RUF, which resulted in the Abidjan Peace Agreement. The Agreement among other things called for the immediate cessation of hostilities between the two belligerents; it also outlined plans for Disarmament, Demobilisation and Reintegration (DDR) of RUF combatants, the repatriation of private military companies and a restructuring and reorientation of the military¹⁰⁷. The Agreement also made provisions for the establishment of a Commission for the Consolidation of Peace (CCP) and a Joint Monitoring Group (JMG) made up of representatives of the international community. These institutions were to serve as a verification mechanism responsible for supervising and monitoring the implementation of and compliance with all the provisions contained in the Peace Agreement.¹⁰⁸ In accordance with the terms of the Agreement, the government for its part terminated the contract with Executive Outcomes, with the hope that the RUF would also give up hostilities and begin the disarmament process. They thought this to be especially the case, as from their point of view the contracting of Executive Outcomes was the brainchild of the junta government. The RUF, on the other hand, did not keep to its part of the Agreement. This grossly affected the implementation of the Agreement and derailed the entire peace process.

Indeed, the Agreement was signed under the assumption that all parties would keep to the terms of the Agreement, but within approximately two months hostilities resumed between the RUF and the government forces. Sankoh reneged on his part of the agreement even before he returned to Freetown. According to some interviewees and analysts, the Peace Agreement failed even before the talks began. First, the parties had gone to Abidjan without adequate preparation. The talks had taken place without any formal or careful analysis of the issues at hand. The talks rather revolved around the cessation of hostilities and reintegration of the rebel groups without actually addressing the problem at hand.¹⁰⁹ These were woefully inadequate considering the magnitude of issues involved in the conflict and the various positions and interests of the conflict parties.

The Agreement required the two parties to formally write to the UN Secretary-General to request peacekeepers who would help monitor the disarmament process and ensure that

the terms of the Agreement were observed. While the government representative had the letter signed and ready to be delivered to the UN representative (Berhanu Dinka), the RUF leader was nowhere to be found. This display of bad faith further reinforces the allegations that Sankoh was only in Abidjan as a response to pressure from the international community to stop the hostilities. It was also alleged that Sankoh had sent a letter to his field commander (Sam Bockrie) while he was in Abidjan requesting him to intensify his assault on the civilian populations.¹¹⁰ Another gap, which equally jeopardised the implementation of the Abidjan Peace Agreement, was the absence of the active participation of the international community. Côte d'Ivoire, for instance, had been drawn into the process at the time, because of its position at the UN General Assembly. At that time, Amara Essé was presiding over the UN General Assembly. It was therefore expected that Côte d'Ivoire had the moral duty to intervene in the situation. The situation seemed more or less like an "African affair" and required an African response.¹¹¹ Although the Ivorian government hosted and provided facilities for the talks to take place, they did not lend the needed political backing to the process. Generally successful mediation endeavours require strong leadership and a fine balance between principles and vision¹¹². Perhaps this was the missing link in the Abidjan peace process. Although International and regional organisations — the UN, the Organisation of African Unity (OAU) and the Commonwealth Organisation — were all represented at the signing of the Agreement, there was still no political force to later impress upon the respective parties to withhold their part of the Agreement.

The Abidjan Peace Agreement eventually fell apart in May 1997, when Johnny Paul Koroma's Armed Forces Revolutionary Council (AFRC) overthrew Kabbah's government. The government went into exile in Guinea while the human rights violations continued and worsened. International and regional organisations including ECOWAS, the OAU and UN denounced the coup d'état and assigned responsibilities to ECOWAS to ensure that the coup was reversed and the democratically elected government reinstated. After ECOMOG's failed attempts to bring the exiled government into power, the ECOWAS Committee of Five (comprising Côte d'Ivoire, Ghana, Guinea, Liberia and Nigeria) and a delegation representing Johnny Paul Koroma adopted the Conakry Peace Plan.¹¹³ The main thrust of the Peace Plan was to reinstate Kabbah as the legitimate government within six months, immediately halt all hostilities, facilitate humanitarian assistance, expedite the return of refugees and internally displaced persons, initiate DDR processes, and grant amnesty to the coup leaders. The implementation of the Peace Plan proved rather difficult as Koroma and his men refused to allow the reinstatement of Kabbah's government and a return to constitutional order. To them, the Peace Plan that was primarily signed between ECOWAS and the junta government and the RUF, was interpreted as recognition of the AFRC's status as legitimate. Therefore, the junta government reneged on the agreed terms of the Peace Plan until ECOMOG eventually used force to oust them in April 1998.

The ousting of the military junta and the installation of the democratically elected government, however, did not bring an end to the war. The AFRC and the RUF joined forces and launched a virulent attack to re-capture and control major towns in the country. By January 1999, the rebels had captured a large portion of the country and had entered the capital city. In Freetown, they broke into the maximum-security prisons in

Pademba Road, freed prisoners and immediately recruited the prisoners to fight against the government and ECOMOG forces. The invasion of Freetown was characterised by terror, indiscriminate killings and gross violations of human rights. By the end of the two weeks of the rebels' occupation of Freetown, about 7,335 people had been killed and thousands of others had suffered crude amputations and mutilation.¹¹⁴

The Lomé Peace Process

The Comprehensive Peace Accord signed in Lomé in 1999 was the key step towards ending the Sierra Leone civil war. The negotiation process that led to the signing of the Lomé Accord began following the deadly onslaught on Freetown by the RUF. By the end of January 1999, there were both regional and international concerns for intervening in the conflict. The war had already claimed the lives of about 800 ECOMOG peacekeepers.¹¹⁵ Guinea, which had hosted the majority of Sierra Leone's refugees, was growing weary with the economic and security burdens this created. At the same time, Nigeria, the largest contributor (in terms of troops and funds) to ECOMOG, was also experiencing political drawbacks in its own internal affairs with the death of General Sani Abacha. These factors, including the spillover effects of the war in neighbouring Liberia and pressure from civil society groups, prompted the international community's attention to effectively respond to the on-going violence.

In the aftermath of the rebel attacks, ECOWAS in consultation with the Special Representative of the UN Secretary-General for Sierra Leone, Francis Okello, initiated a series of diplomatic efforts aimed at opening up dialogue with the RUF. As a result, in late January 1999, regional and international actors, including foreign diplomats, civil society actors and religious leaders, began to explore channels of communication with both Kabbah and Sankoh to consider dialogue in resolving the conflict. Kabbah, for his part, granted the release of Sankoh from prison. The UN and the International Red Cross Society also facilitated contacts between Sankoh and the RUF fighters and in May 1999 the peace negotiations began in Lomé.

The brokering of the Lomé Peace Accord, however, did not happen without its attendant challenges. The first point of difficulty in the Lomé negotiations had to do with the commitment of all conflict parties to the peace process. While Kabbah and Sankoh had agreed to the negotiations in Lomé, some influential actors within the RUF, such as Sam Bockarie, were not particularly in favour of the peace talks and would therefore relay information to the RUF negotiation team to present conflicting demands in the course of the talks. These actions stalled the talks and sometimes resulted in complete walkouts by the RUF. This brings to the fore the point that all parties to the conflict, including their various constituents, must be committed to the peace process. In addition, the failure to identify all relevant stakeholders in a conflict is likely to result in a breakdown of conflict resolution efforts. Mediators and facilitators of peace processes must therefore be well equipped and skilled enough to identify, analyse and effectively engage all actors and stakeholders in the conflict to ensure the success of the peace process.

Other issues relating to power sharing between the government and the RUF and the dilemma between amnesty and justice for combatants also threatened to derail the peace process. After nearly three months of deliberations, walkouts and complete deadlocks, the Lomé Comprehensive Peace Accord was signed on 7 July 1999 between the government of Sierra Leone, the RUF and the AFRC, once all these critical issues had been ironed out. In principle the signing of the agreement signified an official end to the conflict but post-conflict violence continued until 2002.

Civil Society and the Sierra Leone Peace Process

Civil Society Organisations also played important facilitation roles on the sidelines of the Lomé peace talks. NGOs, women's groups, the Press and other civic organisations denounced the on-going human rights violations and called for democratic governance. Most of these groups, however, faced stiff opposition from both the military government and the RUF. While some groups were disbanded for propagating falsehood, others were arrested and imprisoned for instigating the people against the military regime.¹¹⁶ Despite these challenges and intimidations, civil society groups played important roles in influencing both the Abidjan peace process and, especially, the Lomé peace talks.

Beginning with the lead up to the Abidjan talks, civil society actors were instrumental in the demand for a democratically elected government to negotiate the peace deal with the RUF rather than the self-imposed NPRC government. Therefore, in 1995, the "elections before peace" campaign was launched, which eventually resulted in the 1996 parliamentary and presidential elections that brought Ahmed Tejan Kabbah to power, resulting in the Abidjan Peace Accord between the government and the RUF. Despite these efforts, CSOs were sidelined during the actual talks and had very little space to make inputs to the Abidjan peace talks.

In Lomé, however, civil society played important roles in facilitating dialogue between the conflict parties. For example, civil society actors informally engaged RUF members to convince them to reconsider their rather hardline positions. They also acted as informal communication channels between the government and the RUF, especially when the talks seemed to have stalled or when both parties were not ready to shift positions.¹¹⁷ Although the CSO actors present at the talks had no official status in the peace talks, they had in-depth knowledge of the situation and also, in some instances, special affinities or close relations with conflict parties on which they could draw to influence the different actors and the outcomes of the negotiations. These informal tracks became helpful in providing a broad base of support for the peace process.

The Role of the Inter-Religious Council of Sierra Leone in the Peace Process

The Inter-Religious Council of Sierra Leone (IRCSL) that was comprised of faith-based organisations (leaders of Islamic groups and the Council of Christian Churches) became actively involved in the peace process in early 1997. In Sierra Leone, the religious leaders

generally have a moral responsibility to influence their constituents towards advocating for democratic values.¹¹⁸ Subsequent to its active engagement in the peace talks, the IRCSL had distinguished itself as one of the most prominent CSO groups dedicated to the promotion of peace by organising training workshops and promoting national unity and tolerance.¹¹⁹ In April 1997, the Council participated in the National Consultative Conference that primarily advocated for elections and democratic governance. The second aim of the Council's engagement in the peace process was to draw on the political and social clout of religious leaders to influence the conflict parties to initiate talks. Therefore they established links with the government and also requested to meet with the rebel leader, Foday Sankoh, who had been incarcerated by the government at the time.

Together with the leaders of other CSO groups and international actors, the IRCSL impressed upon the two parties the need to begin dialogue. After several meetings with President Kabbah, a delegation was allowed to meet with Sankoh at a military installation near Freetown where he had been imprisoned. After this meeting, Sankoh agreed to order a ceasefire and the release of child-soldiers abducted by the RUF. With some assurances from Sankoh and Kabbah towards a peaceful settlement of the war, the IRCSL became a confidence bridge between the two parties. They also called on international actors such as the UN Special Representative, Francis Okello, and the International Red Cross Society to facilitate communication between Sankoh and his men, as well as guarantee their safety should they need to travel to Lomé for the talks.¹²⁰

One would have thought that the Council's work would end once they had succeeded in convincing the conflict parties to agree to dialogue. However, they pursued their commitment to ensuring that the conflict ended with a peaceful settlement. With support from the World Congress on Religion and Peace (WCRP) and other international groups, a seventeen-member delegation including three women participated in the Lomé peace talks as observers.¹²¹ The council was committed to its course, especially during the nearly two months of peace talks in Lomé. The Inter-Religious Council of Sierra Leone (IRC SL) played important behind-the-scenes roles, facilitating communications between the parties when the talks ended in complete deadlock.

Until quite recently, much of the literature on religion and conflict has focused on the role religion plays in making conflicts intractable. Bercovitch and Kadayifci-Orellana¹²² observe that religious texts, myths and narratives sometimes have the potential of being manipulated to justify the use of force, implant negative enemy images or even delineate conflict parties. However, in the same way, religious values, rituals, texts and narratives can also be employed to promote peace and co-existence. It is important to note that, the Sierra Leone civil war had no religious dimension to it however the role of the IRC SL demonstrates the role religious leaders can play in peacemaking.

Women's Participation in the Sierra Leone Peace Process

Women and children often suffer disproportionately from the devastating consequences of war. During the 11-year civil war, women suffered various forms of human rights abuses. It is estimated that thousands of women and girls were raped or sexually assaulted during the war. Others were also abducted and forced to serve as wives, nurses and cooks to the fighting forces. The RUF in particular was known to have abducted many young girls who became 'bush wives', performing a variety of roles such as domestic chores, sex workers, looting and soldiering.¹²³

Several factors including the on-going social unrest, violence against women and the harsh economic conditions prompted women's groups to work towards securing peace in the country. Moreover, women who had been internally displaced by the conflict and those who fled to neighbouring countries had to assume the added responsibility of becoming breadwinners for their families, especially in cases where the men were out fighting or had been killed in the war. These reasons among others prompted the women's groups to mobilise for peace. In January 1995, the Sierra Leone Women's Movement for Peace (SLWMP) was formed. It was comprised of women's groups and associations such as the Sierra Leone Association of University Women (SLAUW), the Young Women's Christian Association (YWCA), the Women's Association for National Development (WAND) and the National Organization for Women (NOW).¹²⁴

Together with other CSOs, the Women's Movement organised peace marches, national campaigns and debates on democratic processes and the resolution of the conflict through peaceful negotiations. For instance in 1994, Elizabeth Alpha-Lavalie, then the Deputy Speaker of parliament, took the bold decision to organise a peace march which rallied the support of women from all walks of life in an attempt to engage the rebels and send out a message that women wanted an end to the war. The peaceful demonstrators ventured into rebel-controlled territories in Kenema to call on the fighters to declare a ceasefire and consider negotiations with the government. These actions were indeed dangerous and could have sparked a potential disaster. However, days later, the rebels delivered a letter indicating that they would not attack Kenema because of the women's appeals for peace.¹²⁵ In many societies in West Africa, women are perceived as less threatening to conflict parties. Therefore they have the potential to promote a less aggressive atmosphere when they engage in mediation processes. These actions also brought on a sudden realisation that the rebels were people who could sit and talk. The rally organised by the women's group at least helped to establish the identity of the rebels and also opened communication lines with people who were otherwise thought of as criminals whose aim was to destabilise the country.¹²⁶

In August 1995, the Women's Movement joined other civil society groups in the National Consultative Conference on elections and democracy. Women presented a position paper that reiterated their calls for peace, democracy and a cessation of all forms of violence against civilians, especially women. In spite of the widespread violence and intimidation that characterised the 1996 elections, women took up active roles to campaign and encourage voters to go to the polls to elect a legitimate government who would negotiate on behalf of citizens instead of the junta government.

Although a democratically elected government represented the people at the Abidjan Peace talks, women's calls for representation in the negotiations failed to materialise.

In 1999, however, representatives of the Women's Movement participated in the Lomé peace talks as observers with two others as part of the government's negotiation team. As part of civil society, the women's group worked to influence members of the two parties as well as other facilitators to ensure that the talks yielded positive results.

"I recall that for 16 days there was hardly any agreement. We, civil society, met to strategise. I was asked to go and speak to the American Ambassador and some Nigerians who were there as moral guarantors to ensure that the talks kept moving".¹²⁷

Like other civil society groups, the women's groups had no official role in the peace talks but they held meetings, drafted position papers and lobbied key persons who could influence the process. Some also gathered information that was useful in persuading the conflict parties to change their positions in order for the talks to reach an agreement. Oftentimes in formal peace negotiations, conflict parties tend to concentrate on their interests, which usually revolve around issues of power sharing, representation in government and the distribution of resources between the belligerents. It is also the case that the outcomes of the negotiated settlements are often to the benefit of the conflict parties, including perpetrators of violence and crime, leaving out specific needs of women and other vulnerable groups who may have suffered most from the negative consequences of war.¹²⁸ However, it is considered that women often tend to bring on board different perspectives such as education, healthcare, livelihoods and issues of representation that are critical to achieving sustainable peace when they are duly represented in the peace process.

Internationally, the Women's Movement for Peace also succeeded in drawing support for an end to the war and to women's rights violations. Organisations such as Femmes Africa Solidarité (FAS) and the Manor River Women's Peace Network (MARWOPNET) were particularly instrumental in supporting women's participation in the peace process.¹²⁹ Oftentimes, women rarely actively participate in high level mediation and negotiation processes, but they play critical roles, especially at the grassroots level and as part of civil society in keeping channels of communication open across the conflict divide. While much of the literature on women and peace negotiations explores informal strategies adopted by women in engaging in peace processes and the benefits they bring to the peace process, it is important to critically examine what strategies women can employ to engage in formal mediation and negotiation processes and how existing strategies, structures and capacities can be strengthened.

Conclusion

The Sierra Leone peace process offers a number of lessons for understanding the conduct of mediation in West Africa as well as its associated challenges. Firstly, the Sierra Leone case demonstrates that successful mediation or negotiation processes require commitment from all stakeholders including the conflict parties and facilitators of the peace process. For instance, in comparison to the Lomé peace talks, we observe that the Abidjan peace talks lacked the necessary commitment from the side of the RUF as well as the facilitators of the process. As Berewa explained, the RUF had merely participated in the Abidjan talks as a result of international pressure and not because they were motivated at the time to resolve the conflict through dialogue. Also, although Côte d'Ivoire had facilitated the talks with support from ECOWAS and the then OAU, they did very little to ensure that Sankoh was committed to the terms of the agreement which required him to request the assistance of the UN to monitor the peace agreement. Therefore, hostilities resumed almost immediately after the signing of the agreement.

In addition, mediation and negotiation processes are likely to yield sustainable outcomes when they benefit from the inclusion and efforts of multiple actors. In the case of Sierra Leone, the involvement of civil society, including women's groups and faith-based organisations in the peace process was particularly useful in opening up channels of communication across the conflict divide. Some of these actors also had access to other stakeholders and could share information that ensured the sustainability of the talks and its outcomes.

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Introduction



Following the 1989 rebellion by Charles Taylor, Liberia became a theatre of prolonged armed conflict that lasted intermittently for almost 14 years.¹³⁰ Within this period, there were two phases of the conflict, the first from December 1989 to July 1997, and the second from April 1999 to June 2003, during which 15 peace agreements were signed between the government of Liberia and non-state actors.

One major characteristic that accounted for the endurance of the conflict was the proliferation of non-state rebel groups and warring factions as well as incapacity on the part of Economic Community of West African States (ECOWAS) to put in place monitoring mechanisms for the peace agreements. Consequently, rebel factions continually became splintered, with diverse positions and interests underpinned by economic, military as well as political objectives.¹³¹ Their demands were also entrenched and often considered preposterous, making the conflict intractable.¹³²

The endurance of the conflict worsened socio-economic conditions and resulted in both military and civilian casualties — the latter in particular subjected to rape, torture, abduction, drug abuse and murder¹³³. The figures of fatalities are varied and contested.¹³⁴ By the end of the conflict in 2003 when the Comprehensive Peace Agreement (CPA) was signed in Accra, it was estimated that over 250,000 people had died, approximately 500,000 displaced internally, and about 700,000 forced to seek refuge in neighbouring countries¹³⁵. Other literature, such as Dupuy and Detzel, indicates that 200,000 people were killed and 1.5 million displaced.¹³⁶

As the conflict ensued in both phases, mediation was employed as an important tool to restore peace and stability to Liberia. Although supported variously by other organisations such as the United Nations (UN) and the defunct Organization of African Unity (OAU), Abdulsalami Abubakar led the final mediation and peace process¹³⁷ under the auspices of ECOWAS. This brought about the signing of the CPA on 18 August 2003. Following this feat, ECOWAS gained an enviable recognition among other sub-regional organisations as a pacesetter in successful peacekeeping, mediation and conflict management. This was related particularly to the adoption and implementation of ground-breaking normative, institutional and legal frameworks for conflict prevention, management, resolution, peacekeeping and peacebuilding (ECOWAS 1999). Besides the Track I level of mediation spearheaded by ECOWAS, religious groups such as the Inter-Faith Mediation Committee (IFMC), and Inter-religious Council of Liberia (IRCL), had initiated and subsequently complemented the mediation and peace process at the Track II level. They also played a key role in the Track I process including the drafting of the final peace agreement.

There is extant literature on the root causes and multiple dynamics of the Liberian conflict.

This chapter, however, focuses on the processes that eventually led to the restoration of stability in the country. The chapter highlights some experiences of key individuals as well as underlying challenges that inhibited the mediation efforts, and consequently dragged the conflict over a 14-year period. It concludes by providing an insight into some possible measures that could be considered in future mediation efforts in the sub-region.

Background to the Conflict and the Peace Process

Liberia became the first independent republic in Africa on 26 July 1847 after its formation in 1822. It was also the first country in West Africa to suffer the effects of the post-Cold War crises in Africa, which ushered in brutal intrastate wars and the implosion of many regimes across the African continent. Existing literature suggest that the war was instigated by decades of political exclusion and marginalisation, repression, widespread poverty, bad governance and lack of rule of law among other things¹³⁸. By late 1989, the Liberian economy was facing severe challenges, and economic mismanagement had brewed social tensions that threatened to plunge the country into crisis. The National Patriotic Front of Liberia (NPFL), led by Charles Taylor, invaded Liberia on 24 December 1989 under the pretext of liberating the people from the dictatorship of President Samuel Doe's government. This began a campaign of carnage that quickly spread to most of the countryside.¹³⁹

The persistence of the war drew in different non-state warring factions with varying political, economic and military interests. As the NPFL broke into several factions — NPFL, Independent National Patriotic Front of Liberia (INPFL), National Patriotic Front of Liberia Central Revolutionary Council (NPFL-CRC) — new warring factions also emerged at different times with divergent interests and allegiances. Notable among them were the United Liberation Movement of Liberia for Democracy (ULIMO), Lofa Defence Force (LDF), and the Liberian Peace Council (LPC), some of which fought alongside the Armed Forces of Liberia. The factionalisation of the war was typified by repeated violations of the peace agreements.¹⁴⁰ These added to the complexity of a war in which civilians were subjected to violent atrocities including rape, torture, murder, kidnapping, and other forms of inhumane treatment. At the same time, the lack of concrete international response to the crisis, absence of a specific regional framework for dealing with internal conflicts¹⁴¹, and the Anglophone–Francophone divide which pitched Côte d'Ivoire and Burkina Faso (backers of NPFL) against Nigeria and Ghana (detractors of the rebellion), contributed to the intransigence of the crisis, and complicated the intervention efforts.

The IFMC, a local peacemaking group comprising the National Muslim Council of Liberia (NMCL) and the Liberian Council of Churches (LCC), thus commenced mediation efforts in June 1990. While their initial peace talks convened between the factions broke down, the initiatives of the IFMC prepared the ground for mediation and initiation of peace efforts by the ECOWAS Standing Mediation Committee which had been created in May 1990 by the Authority of Heads of State and Government. The initial ECOWAS attempt at restoring peace to Liberia resulted in the adoption of the IFMC's proposals as the ECOWAS Peace Plan for Liberia in Banjul, Gambia, in August 1990. However, the initial

ECOWAS attempt at mediation ended in failure as warring factions, particularly the NPFL, set unreasonable preconditions for negotiations and resolution of the conflict.¹⁴² The initial peace process also faltered due to disagreements on the role of the NPFL in the transitional government and on the perceived bias of ECOMOG¹⁴³ that had forcefully intervened as a peace enforcement operation. Between 1989 and 1997 when the first elections were held, fourteen peace agreements were brokered usually under the auspices of ECOWAS.¹⁴⁴ The number of peace agreements leading to the eventual resolution of the conflict epitomised the intractability of the conflict and the complexity of the mediation and peace process.

By many accounts, the Liberia civil war and the accompanying peace process exemplify a multi-track mediation model. A complex network of interrelated activities, institutions, groups and individuals worked 'together' to achieve peace and stability. These complex processes occurred at different tracks with very similar end goals. At one level were efforts by Civil Society Organizations (CSOs) to restore peace in Liberia. In this regard, several individuals and groups including the Inter-Religious Council of Liberia (IRCL) which became the Inter-Faith Mediation Committee, women's groups such as the Liberia Women's Initiative (LWI) founded in 1994 under the leadership of Mary Brownell, the Liberia National Conference (LNC) and many others played a crucial part in bringing the warring factions and the beleaguered government to the negotiation table. These fed into official or higher level mediation efforts spearheaded by the ECOWAS Standing Mediation Committee. The ECOWAS mediation occurred at different stages of the conflict and involved various actors such as Former US President Jimmy Carter's International Negotiation Network (INN), the African Union, the European Union (EU) and the United Nations. Several sub-regional heads of state and governments also participated actively in the process towards peace.

In 1999, Liberia relapsed into a second civil war after Liberians United for Reconciliation and Democracy (LURD) launched military operations against Taylor's government. ECOWAS intensified diplomatic efforts to end the crisis. An International Contact Group on Liberia (ICGL)¹⁴⁵ was created in September 2002 to focus international attention on Liberia in a more concerted manner.¹⁴⁶ The ICGL, co-chaired by ECOWAS and the EU, was tasked with renewing negotiation towards peace and ensuring appropriate implementation of the peace agreements.

While the initial ECOWAS mediation efforts took place at the Track I level dealing with high-level mediation between government officials and state delegations, CSOs became important actors in the peace process. They either forced their way into the process or participated at the invitation of the sub-regional body. According to Dr Abdel Fatau-Musah, former Director of Political Affairs at ECOWAS, women's collectives such as the Liberia Women's Initiative "were not allowed in officially but they forced themselves in".¹⁴⁷ The women's groups also organised a series of conferences and facilitated several dialogue sessions between the warring factions. The CPA signed in Accra in August 2003 particularly featured numerous CSOs such as the Inter-Religious Council for Liberia, the Liberian Bar Association, political parties, the Mano River Women Peace Network (MARWOPNET), Liberians in Diaspora, the Liberia Leadership Forum, and other CSOs in Liberia that witnessed the process and prevailed upon the warring factions to lay down

their arms and embrace peace. International NGOs also played part in the process towards restoring peace. Jimmy Carter's INN, for instance, was solicited by ECOWAS Heads of State to monitor the non-violation of the ceasefire as well as provide election monitoring duties at various stages of the transitional process.¹⁴⁸ INN also observed some of the negotiations between the actors.

Although mediation and negotiations in the Liberia crisis took place at multiple levels, the different tracks were not always engaged in parallel. Mostly, actors were intertwined to the extent of having efforts duplicated, overlapping or loosely interrelated. ECOWAS also faced practical challenges in mobilising efforts of the various actors under one process owing to logistical challenges and other issues which are discussed in the following section.

Mediation Efforts in Liberia: Experiences and Challenges

This section analyses the mediation efforts by various actors in the Liberian peace process, highlighting the experiences of key individuals and the challenges that characterised the 14-year civil war. An examination of the experiences of key individuals under the umbrella of civil society organisations, religious bodies and external regional actors is critical to analysing the challenges that impeded and prolonged the overall process of restoring peace and stability in the country. However, it is important to precede this discussion with an affirmation that the peace process, despite the initial setbacks, made ECOWAS innovative, leading to the crafting of the ground-breaking normative, institutional and legal framework for conflict prevention, management, resolution, peacekeeping and security in 1999 known as the Mechanism. The 1999 Mechanism was significant in ECOWAS' effort to facilitate the peace process during the second phase of the conflict from 1999–2003.

As a consequence, the prolonged ECOWAS-led mediation effort could arguably be described as successful, resulting in the signing of Comprehensive Peace Agreement in Accra in 2003. It was against this background that Said Djinnit, former Special Representative of the UN Secretary-General in West Africa (UNOWA), particularly praised ECOWAS for emerging as a success story in conflict management and a model for other regional organisations in peacemaking in West Africa.¹⁴⁹ This achievement is a manifestation of the efforts of force and field commanders to persuade the warring parties to lay down their arms amidst the pessimism of the international community.¹⁵⁰ Olusegun Obasanjo, former president of Nigeria, attributed the success of the peace process in Liberia to the cooperation of Liberians with ECOWAS and the international community, and the commitment of major rebel groups, mediators, peacekeepers and the African Union (AU).¹⁵¹

However, while the conflict lasted many years, the reasons for the final peace agreement are myriad. The comprehensive agreement captured the varied interests and concerns of the parties. According to Joe Wilie, a former rebel leader of LURD, the presence and engagement of the international community and CSOs in the CPA instilled confidence in the warring parties to commit to the final process.¹⁵² Secondly, the belligerent warring

factions were fatigued after many years of fighting. Thus, by 2003, one may argue that the conflict had run its natural course and was therefore ripe for resolution. But the question that still needs further interrogation is the durability or otherwise of peace and stability in Liberia. Since the signing of the CPA in 2003, two successful elections have been conducted in October 2005 and 2011, with run-offs in November 2005 and 2011, respectively. In particular, the 2005 elections marked the end of the political transition following Liberia's civil war. There is no doubt that the country is still confronted with several post-conflict security challenges such as youth unemployment, weak educational institutions and poor health infrastructure, a key reason for the spread of the Ebola pandemic. However, the deepening culture of democracy provides a glimmer of hope for the sustainability of the relative peace in the country.

Understanding the Mediation Experiences

During the entire mediation and peace process, both positive and negative experiences were recorded that contributed to either facilitating or impeding the peace process.

Civil Society Groups: Promoters of Peace or Parties to the Conflict?

In West Africa generally, civil society groups play critical roles during peace processes and in the context of post-conflict peacebuilding. The manifestation of civil society's effort results in creating dialogue and compromise between parties to the conflict; influencing the political process, keeping the politicians accountable for their actions and creating the conditions for lasting peace. However, there are situations where civil society groups align to one party in the conflict and thus incur the displeasure of other parties and consequently prolong a conflict. This sums up the duality of their roles, but they have a primarily positive role as promoters of peace. According to Atuobi¹⁵³, Liberia benefited from a coordinated and vibrant civil society and non-governmental organisations before the war. Their coordinated effort played a critical role relative to the provision of relief and humanitarian assistance during the first phase of the conflict (1989–1996), particularly when there was absence of state structures. For instance, the Inter-Faith Mediation Committee is one such notable example of the first civil society groups that took steps at the initial stages of the conflict to end the violence. The IFMC held the first consultations between the parties to the conflict in 1990, and its proposals were adopted and articulated as part of the ECOWAS Peace Plan for Liberia.¹⁵⁴ However, subsequent intensification of the war that destroyed the country's social fabric compromised the organisational strength and activities of some of the CSOs. This was partly attributed to the protracted nature of the first phase of the conflict (1989–1996), which further marginalised the role of CSOs. Worse still was the role played by President Charles Taylor's administration (1997–2003), ostensibly to break the front of civil society groups.

Instead of harnessing their positive contributions, President Taylor relegated vibrant civil society groups to the background. Thus, they were not considered as partners in the mediation and peacebuilding processes. Rather, they were perceived either as operating to undermine Charles Taylor's government or pursuing the agenda of the donor community. Consequently, the initial unity of purpose that characterised the existing

civil society groups prior to the war was replaced by adversarial and antagonistic posture, creating divisions and factions. According to Joe Wilie, the existing civil society groups during the height of the war became factionalised because they were no longer a knowledge-based civil society. The negative impact of the war rendered them confrontational and they therefore could not present a united front to pursue the peace agenda with tact and coordination.¹⁵⁵

Moreover, they were infiltrated by the existing power on the ground. For instance, Charles Taylor allegedly hamstrung the peace process at various levels and formed his own civil society groups, providing them with financial support. This included women's groups such as the one led by Nobel Laureate Leymar Gbowee.¹⁵⁶ Thus, while external actors saw the Liberian Mass Action for Peace¹⁵⁷, a group led by Leymar Gbowee as a key actor in the Liberian mediation and peace process, some argue that the group played to the gallery of external actors.¹⁵⁸ This assertion, however, can be contested as it is generally agreed that the Liberian Mass Action for Peace exerted pressure on protagonists to reach a consensus during the Accra peace talks. The women's group locked up the warring factions at the agenda-setting plenary session until they agreed on the way forward for peace negotiation.¹⁵⁹ Their efforts continue to manifest even after the war, where they contribute significantly in post conflict reconstruction efforts through governance and democratic processes.

Mistrust and Duplicity of Actors and Warring Factions

Another experience that impeded the peace process was the great level of mistrust that existed between and among the warring parties on the one hand, and the regional organisations and external actors on the other hand. During the initial phase of the conflict, ECOWAS, external partners and mediators did little to engender more confidence between and among warring factions. They focused only on getting an agreement on paper — an agreement to make the world know that 'there was a peace agreement', but an agreement among people that didn't trust each other was rather problematic. It became apparent that people "who didn't trust each other were making commitment to each other to work together knowing very well that confidence doesn't exist between them".¹⁶⁰

Mistrust and divisions among the ECOWAS leadership also significantly affected the overall success of the peace process. It is instructive to note that building confidence among warring parties before the commencement of formal agreement is very critical because, more often than not, the public relations value or mass media coverage of the signing of formal agreements can overshadow the actual implementation of the agreement, resulting in failure.¹⁶¹ This is particularly so when much confidence is reposed in the leadership of warring parties, who speak for their large followers, but often, pursue their parochial economic or political interests. Although this appears to be the characteristic of most warring parties in emerging conflicts, in the Liberian situation, representatives of warring factions further created a communication gap from the top to the bottom. In other words, because of their personal interests, they were neither truthful with the broad masses of the people after negotiations nor with other

stakeholders such as the government in power, regional organisations and development partners. Thus, most often “when they make a commitment to ceasefire, the implementation doesn’t take place because words haven’t gotten down to the lower people”.¹⁶²

Related to the above is the changing nature of the warring factions. According to Sheikh Kafumba Konne, a former Chairman of the National Muslim Council of Liberia, whenever a conference was called outside Liberia, warring factions represented and demonstrated willingness to resolve the conflict through interactions.¹⁶³ This often convinced all the mediators that there would be solution in sight as it manifested through:

*...drinking and eating together and conversing and pretending that they had regretted what had taken place, to the extent that there was no warring faction who did not describe the civil war as senseless war, yet when they came back to Liberia they became sensitive and they would see reason to continue their fighting and the fighting was against themselves and their fellow Liberians.*¹⁶⁴

Moreover, in as much as ECOWAS was committed to resolving the Liberian civil war, it was under constraints because of inadequate financial and technical capacity. Further, external partners who were willing to finance the work of ECOWAS used the ‘carrot and stick’ approach to pursue their agenda. Thus, the inter-play of politics of external partners and internal financial and technical weaknesses of ECOWAS, as well as the intransigence of the warring factions, largely contributed to the endurance of the conflict until the signing of the CPA in 2003 in Accra.

Synergy among Actors

In a high-level negotiation, it is often the synergy between actors, namely regional organisations, the diplomatic communities and civil society groups, that can serve as the basis for the generation of confidence. This synergy imbues trust and confidence between and among warring factions on the one hand, and the warring factions and locals as well as external mediators on the other. In the case of Liberia, where civil society became less vibrant and uncoordinated because of political interference, especially by Charles Taylor’s government, the diplomatic community created an atmosphere of trust even among the Liberians. As Joe Wilie noted, “after fifteen years, we were all tired. We were stuck in civil conflict we didn’t know how to get out and we didn’t want a situation where we go to [Accra for the peace agreement] and squander the opportunity to derive general peace”¹⁶⁵. Important in cultivating this synergy was the role of Kofi Annan, the then Secretary-General of the UN. Indeed, his role and influence was another motivating experience that contributed to the success of the peace process. In the words of Wilie:

So if a Ghanaian [and an African] is a Secretary-General of the UN and we can’t solve the Liberian problem, then it will be difficult [if a non-African occupies that position]. We thought after fifteen years, the onus of solving the Liberian conflict should be on an African Secretary-General. So we, the warring factions, were more inclined, especially those of us with some Pan-Africanist background who want to honour our own and respect our own,

*we wanted Kofi Annan to take that credit and honour his tenure in the Liberian civil war and coincidentally the conference was in Accra, his very own home.*¹⁶⁶

With the support of the International Contact Group on Liberia (ICGL) that was composed of Morocco, Nigeria, Ghana, the United States, the United Kingdom, France, Italy, the EU and ECOWAS, a significant success was achieved in this direction.

What Were the Challenges?

As the first theatre of prolonged armed conflict in West Africa, ECOWAS and other stakeholders who championed the mediation efforts faced several difficulties in restoring peace and security to Liberia. Firstly, the initial intervention was characterised by the absence of a clear mandate for peace operations; absence of uniform and professional standards of discipline; the absence of police contingents and civilian experts at the initial stage of ECOMOG’s deployment; ECOMOG’s inability to respond to the brutal guerrilla tactics adopted by the rebels; competing lines of command, control and coordination; the tendency for ECOMOG to support various rebel factions at various times so as to gain tactical advantages; the absence of clear UN/AU/ECOWAS guidelines on the handling of joint operations; lack of sufficient funding for managing ECOMOG troops and general logistical difficulties¹⁶⁷. President Sirleaf of Liberia further identified in-fighting among the Generals and senior civilian administrators as being responsible for weakening the cohesion and effectiveness of ECOMOG at the initial stages of its deployment. The existence of these difficulties according to the former President of the ECOWAS Commission, Mr Victor Gbeho, was due to the fact that certain important factors were taken for granted at the inception of the conflict. Firstly, Member States did not demonstrate sufficient unity of purpose. Secondly, Member States were embroiled in Cold War politics, in spite of the changes in the post-Cold War global dynamics¹⁶⁸. As a result of this difficult political environment, three major challenges confronted regional actors.

The first major challenge that impeded the mediation process was inadequate logistics. Regional efforts were beset by the lack of adequate funding and logistics. The dynamics of internal armed conflict was very new to the region and thus it was difficult to convince Member States to commit resources to the resolution of the conflict. Indeed, Member States were divided on the best approach to the conflict while the international community was simply uninterested. It is also important to note the lack of formal structures for mediation and negotiation in the region. This meant that most of the peace efforts took the form of ad hoc arrangements.

Secondly, and as a result of the challenge noted above, there was a lack of clarity in the definition and end objective of the peace process. This came about as a result of the fact that various actors and warring factions saw the conflict from different perspectives depending on their interests and negotiating positions.¹⁶⁹ As they held on to their entrenched positions and varied interests, more factions and splinter groups emerged, undermining the effectiveness of peace agreements reached during the period. The non-commitment to the implementation of the peace agreements was partly due to the

emergence of multiple factions and splinter groups. As noted by Monie Captan, a former Minister of Foreign Affairs in Liberia:

*...at the end of the duration of the [peace] agreements, we see ourselves coming back again to renegotiate, and each time there was a new agreement, the parties to the conflicts seem to increase, so you have [new] splinter groups [emerging] from the original ones. And so when we did sign the final agreement during the first phase of the conflict somewhere in Abuja in 1996 where we started with the original two parties, we ended up, I think, with 7 or 8 parties.*¹⁷⁰

It has been argued that the continued proliferation of rebel factions and splinter groups was due to fundamental lapses by ECOWAS after taking over the mediation effort from the Inter-Faith Mediation Committee (IFMC) in 1990. These related to the inability of ECOWAS to introduce a monitoring mechanism throughout the period of the conflict. Thus, all agreements from the 1990s were either not implemented or truncated by another phase of insurrection by rebel groups. This continued until the involvement of the United Nations Observer Mission in Liberia (UNOMIL), which was strategic and intended to build confidence among the warring factions.¹⁷¹ Indeed, engendering confidence between and among warring factions was a challenge to ECOWAS in its mediation process. It should be noted that in the Liberian conflict, parties to the conflict were preoccupied with how to convince the mediator that they were right, while the mediator had the responsibility to convince them and bring them to the table for peaceful settlement. During most of the mediation process, parties to the conflict were able to hijack the process, slowing the mediation efforts.¹⁷²

Another challenge that emerged, especially during the first phase of the conflict, was the deep-seated, vested interests of some leaders entrusted with the transitional administration. In Captan's view it is not plausible to have a caretaker government that had a vested interest in power. Indeed, as he described them, "the 'guys' who were heading the interim government were basically a coalition of political parties who also were interested in power. So they had a keen interest in the dynamics of the process".¹⁷³ Whilst they served as representatives of the transitional administration during the negotiation process, they were not neutral because of personal interests. Thus, the interim administration is alleged to have impeded the peace process because of an implicit power ambition.

Conclusion

This chapter has illustrated that mediation and peace processes can be complex and last much longer than expected. Difficulties and challenges arising from the interests of warring parties, member states, regional organisations, external actors and development partners are to be expected. For instance, one major challenge was the continued splitting of warring factions and rebel groups, which is partly explaining the intractability of the conflict but also underlines the complexity of the accompanying mediation and peace processes. Another challenge identified relates to inadequate resource capacity of ECOWAS to sustain the mediation process. What is needed in the face of such challenges is for the mediators to develop techniques and innovative approaches to navigate such difficulties and challenges at the very outset of mediation and negotiation processes. But the success of this will be contingent upon multiple factors such as building of trust, neutrality, patience, knowledge of the conflict history, interests and motivations of the parties and the ability of mediators to research and keep abreast of developments and dynamics of the conflict. Of overwhelming importance, however, will be the availability of continued financial resources to facilitate the process.

Endnotes

130. Addo, P. (2005) *Peacemaking in West Africa: Progress and Prospects*, KAIPTC Monograph No. 3.
131. Ibid.
132. Key among the warring factions include: National Patriotic Front of Liberia (NPFL); Independent National Patriotic Front of Liberia (INPFL); Armed Forces of Liberia (AFL); The United Liberation Movement of Liberia for Democracy (ULIMO); The Liberian Peace Council (LPC); Lofa Defence Force (LDF); NPFL-Central Revolutionary Council (NPFL-CRC); Movement for Democracy in Liberia (MODEL) and Liberia United for Reconciliation and Democracy (LURD).
133. See “Liberia: No Impunity for Rape — A Crime Against Humanity and a War Crime” Amnesty International, 14 December 2004.
134. Ellis, S. (2007) *The Mask of Anarchy: The Destruction of Liberia and the Religious Dimension of an African Civil War*. 2nd Edition. Hurst, London. See also Boas, M. (2005) *The Liberian Civil War: New War/old war?* *Global Society* 19 (1), 73–88.
135. Mbadanyana, T. & Onuoha, F. (2009) “Peacekeeping and post-conflict criminality — Challenges to the (re-)establishment of rule and law in Liberia,” *Institute of Security Studies (ISS)*, Paper 190. Available at: <http://www.iss.co.za/uploads/PAPER190.PDF>.
136. Dupuy, K & Detzel, J. 2007. *Power-sharing and peacebuilding in Liberia: Power-sharing Agreements, Negotiations and Peace Processes*. CSCW Papers, Centre for the Study of Civil War, Oslo. Available at: www.prino/sptrans/623646343/Liberia_full_report.pdf.
137. Abdul-Salami Abubakar is a former interim leader in Nigeria after the death of Sani Abacha.
138. Aning, E. K., Birikorang, E. & Jaye, T. (2010). *Compendium of ECOWAS Peace and Security Decisions: Protocols, Declarations and Peace Agreements*. Accra: Kofi Annan International Peacekeeping Training Centre (KAIPTC).
139. Pitts, M. (1999). *Sub-Regional Solutions for African Conflict: The ECOMOG Experiment*. *The Journal of Conflict Studies*, 19.
140. Ibid.
141. At the onset of the Liberia crisis, ECOWAS had no sub-regional security mechanism for addressing intrastate wars. The 1975 ECOWAS Treaty, the 1979 Protocol on Non-aggression and the 1981 Protocol on Mutual Assistance on Defence basically addressed interstate conflicts.
142. Op. Cit., Addo, 2005.
143. Armon, J. & Carl, A. (1996). *The Liberian Peace Process: 1990–1996*. ACCORD, 82–94.
144. ECOWAS Peace Plan (Banjul Communiqué) – August 1990; Bamako Ceasefire Agreement – 28 November 1990; Banjul Joint Statement – 21 December 1990; Lomé Agreement – 13 February 1991; Yamoussoukro I Accord – 30 June 1991; Yamoussoukro II Accord – 29 July 1991; Yamoussoukro III Accord – 17 September 1991; Yamoussoukro IV Accord – 30 October 1991; Geneva Ceasefire Agreement – 17 July 1993; Cotonou Accord – 25 July 1993; Akosombo Agreement – 12 September 1994; Accra Clarification – 21 December 1994; Abuja Accord – 19 August 1995; Abuja Accord Supplement – 17 August 1996.
145. The ICGL was composed of representatives from Nigeria, Ghana, Morocco, France, the United States, the United Kingdom, the AU, the EU, ECOWAS and the UN.
146. Addo, P. (2005) *Peacemaking in West Africa: Progress and Prospects*, KAIPTC Monograph No. 3.
147. Interview with Abdel Fatau-Musah, Director of Political Affairs, ECOWAS Commission, Abuja, 19 August 2011.
148. Aning, E. K., Birikorang, E. & Jaye, T. (2010). *Compendium of ECOWAS Peace and Security Decisions: Protocols, Declarations and Peace Agreements*. Accra: Kofi Annan International Peacekeeping Training Centre (KAIPTC).
149. See ECOWAS International Conference Report, “Two Decades of Peace Processes in West Africa: Achievements – Failures – Lessons”, Monrovia, Liberia 22–26 March 2010.
150. Ibid. See contribution of Generals (Rtd) Arnold Quainoo (Ghana), Adetunji Olurin and Festus Okonkwo (Nigeria), who served as ECOMOG Force/Field Commanders at various times during the Liberian war.
151. Ibid. See contribution of Olusegun Obasanjo, former president of Nigeria.
152. Interview with Joe Wilie, 23 July 2011. He was a former rebel leader of LURD and currently a Lecturer at the Kofi Annan Institute of Conflict Transformation, University of Liberia.
153. Atuobi, S. (2010) *State–Civil Society Interface in Liberia’s Post-Conflict Peacebuilding*, KAIPTC Occasional Paper No. 30.
154. Ibid.
155. Op. Cit., Interview with Joe Wilie.
156. Ibid.
157. The Liberian Mass Action for Peace is a coalition of Christian and Muslim women who organised public protests and confronted the warring factions, particularly Charles Taylor’s rebel group, in a bid to end the war. The group is recorded to have sat in public spaces and even held a sex strike as a pressure tool to bring warring factions to the negotiations table.
158. Interview with Joe Wilie.
159. Op. Cit., ECOWAS International Conference Report, “Two Decades of Peace Processes in West Africa: Achievements – Failures – Lessons” Monrovia, Liberia 22–26 March 2010.
160. Op. Cit., Monie Captan, 2011.
161. Ibid.
162. Op. Cit., Monie Captan, 2011.
163. Interview with Sheikh Kafumba Konne, Monrovia, 27 July 2011. He was deeply involved in the Liberian peace process principally as part of the IFMC and participated in brokering several peace agreements.
164. Ibid.
165. Op. Cit., Joe Wilie.
166. Ibid.
167. Op. Cit., ECOWAS International Conference Report, “TWO DECADES OF PEACE PROCESSES IN WEST AFRICA: ACHIEVEMENTS – FAILURES – LESSONS” Monrovia, Liberia, 22–26 March 2010.
168. Ibid., See contribution of Phillip Victor Gbeho, Former President of ECOWAS Commission.
169. Interview with Joe Wilie, 23 July 2011. He was a former rebel leader of LURD and is currently Lecturer at the Kofi Annan Institute of Conflict Transformation, University of Liberia.
170. Interview with Monie Captan, 25 July, 2011. He is also a former Minister of State for Presidential Affairs from 1995–1996 when there was transitional government in place in Liberia and then from 1996–2003, he served as the Minister of Foreign Affairs in the Taylor Administration. Currently an Associate Professor at the University of Liberia, Graduate School of International Relations.
171. Ibid.
172. Ibid.
173. Ibid.

Introduction



This chapter explores the changing dynamics of mediation and peace processes in Senegal, with particular focus on the Casamance conflict. The Casamance conflict, although not brutal in nature as the cases of Liberia and Sierra Leone, has dragged on for more than three decades, making it one of the longest-standing low-intensity conflicts in West Africa. To understand the nuances of the conflict and the associated mediation and peace processes, this chapter provides a brief

background of the conflict and the structure and social organisation of the Casamance people, distinctive from the broader Senegal. It then delves into the historical antecedents of the conflict, highlighting internal and external factors that served as root and proximate causes of the conflict. The chapter further analyses the structure of the MFDC and how their continued split posed a challenge to the peace efforts. It also discusses the role that demining and women's groups are playing towards restoring peace in the region. The chapter proposes that the difficulties encountered in the long-standing mediation processes reflects the changing dynamics of leadership styles and policies of successive governments on the one hand, and the continued factionalisation of the Movement of the Democratic Forces of Casamance (MFDC) on the other, not relegating to the background other external factors. It concludes by outlining priority issues that need to be addressed to ensure lasting peace in the Casamance and, by extension, in Senegal.

Background of the Casamance

Geographically, Casamance is a region located in the southern part of Senegal.¹⁷⁴ Senegal is bordered to the north by Mauritania, the east by Mali, the south by Guinea and Guinea-Bissau and the Atlantic Ocean to the west. Although Casamance is connected in the East to Senegal, the Republic of the Gambia separates it from the rest of Senegal. As opposed to the rest of Senegal, Casamance is richer in mineral and ecological resources and constitutes the bread basket of the country; producing the most staple food, rice, as well as other exportable commodities such as cotton. The region is ethnically diverse, but principally the inhabitants are from the Diola ethnic group — a polyglot assemblage of microcephalous (stateless) peoples — who are predominantly Christians or animists, unlike the majority of Senegalese who are Muslims¹⁷⁵. It is a highly decentralised and egalitarian society unlike the centralised polities and hierarchical caste societies in the more northern part of Senegal.¹⁷⁶ It is argued that the egalitarian political system of the people of Casamance coupled with their rejection of central authority has, from a governmental point of view, made the people of the region difficult to govern.¹⁷⁷

Tracing the Genesis of the Casamance Conflict

The genesis of the conflict in Casamance is rooted in several causes and narratives, but is basically centred on internal and external sources. Internally, the history of colonisation, policies of successive Senegalese governments and the real or perceived marginalisation of the Casamance people could be summed up as some of the underlying causes of the conflict. Externally, the contiguous nature of the region, where The Gambia sandwiches Casamance from mainland Senegal, with Guinea-Bissau bordering it to the south, poses a complicated geostrategic challenge with vested national interests.

Internal Considerations

Since the attainment of independence in 1960¹⁷⁸, Senegal has been described as one of the relatively stable countries in West Africa. It remained united from 1960 to 1980 under the first president, Leopold Sedar Senghor of the Serer ethnic group. Senghor was revered as a promoter of the arts and black unification as well as someone who championed the socialisation of the majority of Senegalese to imbibe a sense of curiosity and open-mindedness. Nonetheless, most Senegalese were not happy with his policies and politics. Consequently, his rule was beset with challenges that sought to weaken his authority. For instance, long ties with the former colonial power, France, was interpreted by many as showing more allegiance to France than to his own people of Senegal. However, what created a deep wedge between Senghor's government and the people of Casamance was his attempt to unite the different ethnic groups under one common Senegalese identity through the promotion of one language, French¹⁷⁹. This policy of unification was strongly opposed by the people of Casamance who perceived this as discriminatory against their traditional customs that place emphasis on egalitarianism and rejects leadership structures. The imposition of the French language came with a co-optation of the leadership of political parties that would represent the government in their respective regions. Although President Senghor made conscious efforts to co-opt some political parties in the Casamance region, there was resistance from the elite largely due to the egalitarian structure of the Diola ethnic group. This is as opposed to the social organisation of the other ethnic groups in Senegal, which are hierarchical in nature.

Compared to Senghor, his successor, Abdou Diouf, also a Serer by ethnicity, proved to be rather more sensitive to Senegal's historical traditions. Thus, he placed emphasis on tradition and promoted the Wolof language (Wolofisation)¹⁸⁰. However, this was to the detriment of the other officially recognised national languages like Pulaar, Serer, Diola, Mandinka, and Soninke¹⁸¹. Although these policies were aimed at nation-building, their implementation faced a lot of resistance in the Casamance similar to what pertained during Senghor's rule.

The administration of Abdou Diouf coincided with the beginning of the Casamance rebellion in 1982, in which the people of Casamance under the umbrella of the Movement of the Democratic Forces of Casamance (MFDC)¹⁸² fought the government of Senegal to

basically attain independence. The MFDC resorted to violence against the Senegalese government (GOS) from 1982 under the leadership of a Diola Catholic priest, Augustine Diamacounne Senghor¹⁸³. The historical antecedents of the conflict are traceable to the territorial arrangements that were established by the European powers at the Berlin Conference of 1884–1886 and the subsequent establishment of the French colonial administration¹⁸⁴. At the Berlin Conference, Casamance, which hitherto was a Portuguese territory, was transferred to the French in 1886. Administratively, the Casamance territory was then merged with northern Senegal with the understanding that northern and southern Senegal would be separated by the state of The Gambia.¹⁸⁵ It has been argued that Senegal's early colonial history and the territorial isolation of Casamance underpins the claims of marginalisation by the MFDC and the demand for independence.

Additionally, the feeling of marginalisation and alienation stemmed from lack of equal opportunity for employment. To a large extent, this was attributed to the traditional egalitarian nature of the Diola, who for various reasons refused to take leadership positions, leading to the domination of the Northerners in Senegal's political life.¹⁸⁶ Consequently, the interests and needs of those in the Southern part of Senegal could not be adequately voiced in Dakar. More worrying is what Fall described as the most unfair and frustrating issue for the educated elites of Casamance (the so-called internal colonialism) where administrative posts, most especially in the civil service, were filled with people from other groups such as the Wolof, rather than the Diola (the predominant ethnic group in the region)¹⁸⁷. To this end, Mr Sambou, a member of the Reflection Group for Peace in Casamance noted that the Casamance region has suffered and continues to suffer from a second colonisation by the government of Senegal, which consider the people of Casamance as 'Nyak' (meaning a stranger to Senegal)¹⁸⁸.

Lambert further noted that the agitation by the MFDC revolves around the adoption of the land policy of 1964 that the government of Senegal began to implement from 1972. The land policy made it possible for northerners who inhabit the arid region of northern Senegal to acquire strategically located land in the fertile Casamance region, denying the natives the opportunity to own land for agricultural and other land use purposes. The conflict also assumed an ethnic dimension, involving the Wolof and Diola who are culturally distinct ethnic groups¹⁸⁹.

External Factors

It has been argued that there is hardly an internal conflict without external dimension. The external dimension often stems from the quest of a country's national interest, especially when it relates to the sovereignty and territorial integrity of a state. In some cases, the pursuit of individual interest to protect their regime's security can be the basis for one state seeking to protect or undermine the security of another state. In the case of Casamance, the contiguous natures of the region to Guinea-Bissau and The Gambia have been identified as underlying reasons for the conflict. For example, in the neighbouring country of Guinea-Bissau, the African Party for the Independence of Guinea and Cape Verde (PAIGC) fought a successful war of independence against the colonial Portuguese power in 1974 and liberated Guinea-Bissau. In that liberation fight, the people of

Casamance played a critical role in support of the people of Guinea-Bissau against the Portuguese colonial domination. They, therefore, had some hope that they would benefit from the same support while fighting for the independence of the Casamance region from Senegal. Similarly, in The Gambia, the movement led by the opponent Kukoi Samba Sagna fought against the power of Daouda Diawara, former Gambian president. This was also a determinant factor in the sense that it convinced the people of Casamance that it was possible to challenge the state.

Furthermore, the dense forest of Casamance, the rear bases in The Gambia and Guinea-Bissau, and the presence of Casamançais veterans of the Indochina and Algeria wars as well as retired officers of the Senegalese army, were an asset for the Casamance rebels.¹⁹⁰ These among other factors precipitated the rebellion of the MFDC against the Senegalese state. According to Robert Sagna¹⁹¹, when the conflict began in December 1982, the people of Casamance disagreed with the government and the majority of belligerents retired into the forest and formed a rebel movement against the central government. With the security forces at its disposal, the central government deployed the police and the army to suppress the rebel movements. The Casamance people, who inhabit the areas of Ziguinchor, Kolda and Sedhiou, all took part in the agitation for independence. As argued by Piérard and Masure¹⁹², the Casamance conflict is not like the conventional open armed conflict, but is rather complex due to its structure and multiplicity of factions. All the same, the humanitarian impact has been grave over the last three decades since the conflict began in 1982. It is approximated that over 5000 people have died, with at least 652 killed or wounded by landmines and unexploded ordnance¹⁹³. These statistics were updated in 2008 by The Centre National d'Action Antimine (CNAM), where the number of landmines victims rose to 748 and massive displacement was reported, with estimates of IDPs ranging between 10,000 and 40,000 in Casamance.¹⁹⁴ In 2010, an arms shipment from Iran, allegedly bound for the Casamance rebels, was intercepted in Nigeria. In December 2011, rebels attacked the Senegalese Army, resulting in 12 deaths, ten of whom were Senegalese soldiers¹⁹⁵.

Understanding the Structure and Factions of the MFDC

The MFDC is basically composed of two main parts: a political and a military wing, which can also be described in its current state as moderate and extremist factions. The political wing has both local and external branches championing the course of the MFDC's quest for independence. At the local front, the Catholic Priest, Father Augustin Diamacounne Senghor, who became the Secretary-General in 1991 and subsequently the President, was the main architect and inspirational leader until his death in January 2007. Prior to his death, Father Diamacounne played a key role in denouncing the Bissau Accord¹⁹⁶ that sought to restore peace between the protagonists. He subsequently formed the Southern Front (French: Front Sud) with Léopold Sagna, who took over from Sidy Badji as head of the group. A notable challenge that confronted the Southern Front was internal divisions despite the relative success in moving the agenda of the organisation. Another major division occurred between Léopold Sagna and Salif Sadio. As a leader of the Southern Front, Sagna made a conscious effort to meet president Diouf, apparently to undertake fresh negotiations. However, because he failed to consult with the wider organisation, a

radical wing of the MFDC moved to replace him with Sadio. Upon his return to the *maquis*¹⁹⁷, Sagna was arrested and killed by rebels under the leadership of Sadio¹⁹⁸. Similarly, the external branch of the political wing based in France also suffered from internal wrangling, primarily centred around issues of leadership of the movement. As a consequence, multiple groups emerged, making the processes of negotiation extremely cumbersome.

The military wing, which is a guerrilla force (Maquisards), on the other hand, was sometimes called Atika (warrior in diola) and remained under the leadership of Sidy Badji, Casamançais and a veteran of the French Army, until his death in May 2003. Sidy Badji and his group were out of sight in the region's forests and across the border in Guinea-Bissau, and mobilised fully in 1990 and on 20 April launched its first attack, on the customs station at Séléti on the Gambian border, marking the start of the 'military phase' of the conflict. Similar to the political wing, Atika also faced internal divisions, which consequently led to a schism in the Northern Front and Southern Front following the signature of the first ceasefire agreement between Sidy Badji and the Government of Senegal on 31 May 1999 in Bissau¹⁹⁹. Supporters of Sidy Badji, grouped under the Northern Front and ostensibly abiding by the Bissau Accord, retired from military action. Atika is currently organised around three different competing groups: the Baraka Mandioka group led by Salif Sadio who is an extremist, the Cassolol group under the command of César Atoute Badiate and the Diakaye group under the leadership of Kamugué Diatta. It is worth noting that only the Cassolol and Diakaye factions have been involved in the negotiations for the peace process, which led to the signing of the peace agreement between the MFDC and the Government of Senegal in 2004 under the auspices of Abdoulaye Wade.

The Changing Dynamics of the Mediation and Peace Processes

The Casamance conflict and the accompanying mediation and peace processes assumed different dynamics and manifestations from one administration to the other due to the increasing factionalisation of the MFDC and the negotiation style of various leaders. An initial repressive approach was adopted by the government to deal with the rebel forces under the administration of Abdou Diouf (1981–2000). One notable incident was the arrest of Father Diamacoune and nine of his followers who were jailed and sentenced to 10 years for violating territorial integrity following the 1982 and 1983 protestations and rebellions.²⁰⁰ A number of people fled into the bush and subsequently formed the armed wing of MFDC called Atika. They resorted to launching the first attacks in the form of sporadic low-intensity ambushes.²⁰¹ Under the leadership of Sidy Badji and Léopold Sagna, Atika was armed with traditional weapons and a small number of hunting rifles. However, most members were novices in terms of handling military weapons. Consequently, Atika had no military or political plan and only engaged in military manoeuvres in late 1986 and, as indicated above, its first attack was on 20 April 1990.

As the military wing of the MFDC became increasingly radical, the Senegalese government undertook an administrative reorganisation, where the Casamance province was divided into two main entities, namely the Kolda and Ziguinchor regions, thus removing the

word Casamance from public usage. To decrease the vibrancy of the organisation, the Senegalese government further introduced torture. However, these repressive measures were later modified and steps were taken towards peaceful engagement. As a result, four Casamançais ministers were added to President Diouf's cabinet and a Casamançais replaced the then mayor of Ziguinchor who was a Wolof.²⁰²

Mediation Efforts Under President Diouf

Effectively, the mediation and peace process began in January 1999 under President Diouf with the aim of restoring peace and finding a definitive settlement of the conflict between the MFDC and the Government of Senegal. This marked the first time President Diouf met the leader of the MFDC, Father Diamacoune Senghor, in Ziguinchor. Subsequently, a meeting between government officials and the people of Casamance was held, during which President Diouf addressed the people of Casamance and appealed to their conscience to forgive and think about reconciliation. Similarly, the MFDC held a meeting in Banjul in June 1991 (Banjul I) in order to discuss the reunification of the different factions as a prelude towards the upcoming negotiations with the Government of Senegal. These efforts for peace resulted in several rounds of negotiations in Banjul (Banjul II and Banjul III) and Ziguinchor. One of Diouf's major strategies in the search for peace was the involvement of civil society in Casamance, which organised peaceful marches under the leadership of women and religious leaders. The federation of women's organisations also supported the victims of landmines, and people from the region organised peace talks. Throughout the 1990s, Diouf adopted a combination of military, political and diplomatic efforts, but all failed to resolve the conflict. Despite ceasefires and accords signed, sporadic and sometimes serious violence continued, in which the civilian populations of large areas along the Guinea-Bissau border were displaced by the mid-1990s. By the later part of the 1990s, Diouf had become unpopular and as a result lost the presidential elections to Wade in 2000.

Mediation Efforts Under President Wade

The defeat of Abdou Diouf in the 2000 presidential elections opened a new chapter in the mediation process and attempts for peaceful settlement of the conflict. Upon his assumption of office in April 2000, Abdoulaye Wade promised to resolve the conflict in 100 days. He departed from the style of his predecessor, Abdou Diouf, who despite the initial repressive approach later emphasised the involvement of civil society in the process. Besides severing ties with civil society, President Wade ensured that other intermediaries such as diplomatic and non-governmental officials were relegated to the background in all matters concerning the conflict. In contrast, the MFDC began to push for greater internationalisation of the process. Despite this, peace accords were signed in December 2000, 16 March 2001 and December 2001, and were followed by meetings in Banjul (Banjul IV).

In September 2001, for the first time since the beginning of the conflict, the leader of the MFDC was given an audience at the presidential palace in Dakar to meet President Abdoulaye Wade. During that meeting, the MFDC leader focused his message on the

need for peace and the development of the Casamance region. As opposed to Wade's former stance, that first audience paved the way for the mobilisation of a strong civil society action to accompany the peace process and also initiated the launching of a series of economic activities in Casamance. This was under the programme known as the Social and Economic Reconstruction of Casamance (SERC).²⁰³

In October 2003, the MFDC organised talks in Ziguinchor, Casamance, which constituted an important period in the conflict considering a significant change had occurred in the discourse of the rebel movement: for the first time the word 'independence' was excluded from the concept of 'political, cultural and socio-economic emancipation' of Casamance²⁰⁴. Moreover, during these talks, the incumbent Secretary-General, Jean-Marie François Biagui, recognised the failure of the 'military' rebellion. In addition, Father Diamacoune, President of the MFDC, declared at the opening of the talks that there were no more reasons to fight. As a consequence, not only was the armed struggle condemned, but also the idea of independence was abandoned²⁰⁵.

The MFDC then committed itself publicly to commencing negotiations and discontinued the armed struggle. The last peace accord between the MFDC and the GoS was signed in December 2004. In that peace accord, the state and the MFDC made a commitment to "immediately nominate delegates in the Consultation Committee which would be responsible for the start-up phase of the negotiations."²⁰⁶ A first round of negotiations was held in Foundiougne (Foundiougne I) in February 2005, and later Foundiougne II talks began in December 2005 to discuss the way forward for achieving lasting peace. On the whole, it can be argued that security conditions improved under President Wade, but his efforts could best be described as unsuccessful as definitive peace remained elusive right up until his defeat in the 2012 elections.

Mediation Efforts Under President Sall

Upon assumption of office in 2012, President Macky Sall made an open statement suggesting that resolving the conflict in Casamance would be among his topmost priorities and that he would work with the support of the International Community to find a lasting solution to the conflict²⁰⁷. Pursuant to this, he emphasised the need for assistance of international and national mediators between his government and the separatist factions. Thus, apart from the state-approved mediator, Community of Sant'Egidio²⁰⁸, another mediation team known as Reflection Group for the Peace in Casamance (RGPC) was formed by President Macky Sall and headed by Robert Sagna. According to interviewees, both mediating groups inspire hope and confidence in the rebel groups as they are deemed neutral and independent. In particular, the Community of Sant'Egidio began a negotiation process in Rome (13–14 October) in 2013, where a delegation of the Senegalese government and the northern faction of the MFDC 'mandated by Salif Sadio' were represented.

Although Sant'Egidio is perceived by many as being neutral and enjoying the confidence of the military factions, some concerns have been raised. While the Circle of Intellectuals and Academics, a faction of the political wing of the MFDC, rejected the mediation by Sant'Egidio on the basis that Sadio is not the leader of the MFDC, Badiate, a leader of

another faction of the MFDC, disagreed with that assertion. He noted that "... Sant'Egidio [is neutral] to broker our talks with Senegal". However, it is necessary first to organise a meeting between the different factions of the movement, bring everybody together "so that we can talk the same language, choose our representatives on a consensual basis..."

In the midst of a deepening schism among the factions, Macky Sall proposed the unity of the existing factions, including the armed branch of the MFDC, a northern front led by Salif Sadio's faction and a southern front made up of two factions, those of César Atoute Badiate and Ousmane Gnantang Diatta, under one Secretary-General for peaceful negotiation. Following this, Salif Sadio, after a press release in June 2012, appealed to all rebel factions for dialogue and consensus building towards achieving peace.

But critical to the peace process is the role of The Gambia, and particularly Yahya Jameh, who is widely believed to be providing a safe haven to the rebels, enabling Sadio's northern faction to thrive and launch attacks. As a consequence, Sall prioritised his first official visit to The Gambia, where he had assurance from the President of support for the Casamance peace process. To this end, on 15 April 2012 the two countries signed an agreement to build a bridge to make Casamance more accessible as a step to closing the under-development gap between Casamance and other regions of Senegal²⁰⁹.

Demining as a Tool for Peaceful Negotiation

Macky Sall's effort in restoring peace is also demonstrated in the undertaking of demining activities, risk education and victim assistance. It should be noted that over the last three decades of the conflict it is approximated that over 1,000 people have been killed or injured by landmines. Since 1997, two hundred people either died or were injured by landmines. In 2008, only one accident was reported, but in 2011 thirty-two people were killed or injured by mines, and in 2013 three people were killed in two separate incidents.²¹⁰

The increasing demining exercise is indirectly being used as an entry point to achieving peace through building confidence and goodwill in the residents of Casamance. However, it needs to be stressed that, prior to this, the NGO 'Geneva Call' played a significant role during the administration of Wade negotiating with the MFDC with the view to getting them to sign a deed of commitment to ban the use of anti-personnel landmines. This was intended to engage with non-state actors to reduce the humanitarian impact of conflict and at the same time provide an opportunity to build rapport with rebel groups²¹¹. As a result of the mine clearance exercise, a significant number of refugees in neighboring countries like Guinea-Bissau and The Gambia are on a regular basis returning to their home villages in Senegal. These returns are accompanied by increased agricultural outputs from southern Senegal and therefore increased economic activity overall²¹².

The significance of demining as a necessary precondition to peaceful negotiation attracted international support from the United States, when President Barack Obama visited Senegal in March 2013. Through this strategic collaboration, civil society groups in Casamance are much more confident in the peace process. As a consequence, the USA

has been able to send a high level delegation to the region to put pressure on the Senegalese government and the MFDC to negotiate²¹³.

The Role of Women in Casamance

According to Sambou,²¹⁴ the role of women in the Casamance conflict has been recognised. Their role stems from the fact that the majority of ethnic groups that make up the Casamance are matrilineal. This emphasises the importance of women in social stratifications. Field observations and Focus Group Discussions (FGDs) revealed that women have over the years acquired experience in contributing to conflict resolution. They serve as a link between the warring parties and the local population. As argued by a FGD participant, “Yes, we have access to the rebels, the military and government authorities”. Their involvement, however, could be described as twofold, both as behind the scenes support to the rebel insurgency and subsequently as peacemakers. This dual role was highlighted during an interview conducted with the women’s group known as Women’s Platform for Peace in Casamance.²¹⁵ The primary aim of the group is to make Casamance peaceful and for women to access their rights for peaceful coexistence and to be able to pursue their socio-economic and developmental agenda²¹⁶. Thiam and Sambou²¹⁷ noted that because of traditional beliefs, women often stayed in the forest and sacred groves and offered mystical baths to the rebel groups before they go out to fight. However, because of the long-standing nature of the conflict, most of the women are worn out and are now playing a more pre-eminent role directly in the current mediation and peace processes. In pursuance of this, a federal association of women’s groups has been formed, consisting of 170 women’s groups in the three regions of Casamance, namely Ziguinchor, Kolda and Sédhiou. Each of the associations works on different thematic areas such as health, education and development with the view to achieving peace. Three women’s groups, namely USOFORAAL, KADONKETOOR and KAGANEN, were identified as having made significant contributions towards achieving peace in the Casamance. Among these three, however, USOFORAAL has been recognised since 1999.

USOFORAL, meaning, “Let’s join hands” in the Diola language, was established to support the leadership of women and women’s organisations to participate effectively in the realisation of lasting peace in the Casamance region. Since 2003, USOFORAL has been working to set up local peace committees, to develop and document the peacebuilding experiences of rural women and to put peace education into practice in local communities. During the celebration of the 10th anniversary of the adoption of Security Council Resolution 1325 in Senegal, the three groups came together to assess their performance in the search for peace in the Casamance. Subsequently, in September 2010 they initiated a move to bring all the women’s groups together. As part of that quest for achieving lasting peace, night prayers and a protest march involving about 3000 women was organised, involving all shades of religious groupings (Christian denominations and Muslims).

According to Sambou, as the 2012 elections drew closer, the group was able to prevail on 9 of the 10 candidates who visited Casamance to sign an MoU as a demonstration of their commitment to ensure peace. Similarly, in the second round of the 2012 presidential

elections the two candidates, Abdoulaye Wade and Macky Sall, were challenged by the women’s groups to uphold the peace in the country and pledge to continue to resolve the conflict in Casamance. This worked very well and, as a good will gesture, President Sall in particular gave the women a flag of peace. Also, through a video conference, Mr Sall encouraged women to continue to play their roles to help find lasting peace to the Casamance problem.

Conclusion

This chapter has illustrated that, although the Casamance conflict is a low-intensity conflict, it has lasted much longer than most of the brutal civil wars in the ECOWAS sub-region. Following this, it is safe to argue that the success or failure of any mediation process is not dependent on the intensity of a conflict. Rather, in order to appreciate and understand the success factors in any mediation process, a deeper analysis of multiple issues is necessary. Indeed, the duration of the Casamance conflict over the last three decades or more has brought to the fore a number of issues for consideration in mediation processes. Among others, the nature and history of the conflict, leadership style and approach to mediation, influence and interest of neighbouring states, level of socio-economic development of the country, inequality and real or perceived marginalisation of section of the country, and complexities and lack of consensus between and among warring factions, have been identified as factors that have impeded the success of mediation efforts in Casamance.

For the current mediation process to succeed, however, three things are important: improving socio-economic development of Casamance, building consensus among the rebel factions, and promoting friendship with the immediate neighbours, most notably Guinea-Bissau and The Gambia. These need to be prioritised as a way forward for a successful mediation and lasting peace.

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Introduction

Until September 2002, Côte d'Ivoire was considered as one of the relatively rich and stable countries in the otherwise troubled and impoverished region of West Africa. However, the death of the country's founding father, Houphouët-Boigny, marked the beginning of the country's descent into conflict when complex issues such as identity, citizenship, migration and land ownership were given a bad dose of political expression. The dynamics of the conflict as well as

the various mediation and negotiations efforts produced eight peace accords between 2002 and 2007 but, however, failed to fully address the underlying structural causes of the conflict, which also degenerated into further violence during the 2010 elections.

This chapter examines the various phases of the Ivorian conflict and the range of measures adopted by various actors and how they influenced the outcomes of the conflict, especially the 2010 electoral crisis. It further analyses the impact of the roles of different international, regional and local actors and the lessons they offer for peace processes in the West African sub-region.

Background to the Ivorian Civil War

The Ivorian civil war and the 2010 election crisis are often described by some analysts as having their roots in a complex weave of power politics, ethnicity, economic and political discriminations, land ownership issues and immigration policies, among others.²¹⁸ In 1993, the death of President Houphouët-Boigny, the founding leader of Côte d'Ivoire, revealed the rather deep political, ethnic, religious and social scissions that existed in a country which was once hailed as a model of stability and an economic powerhouse in the rather turbulent and impoverished region of West Africa. Due to the one-party political system, established by Houphouët-Boigny, the country was plunged into a period of tense struggles for power and ethnic antagonisms that eventually drove the country into conflict after his demise. A political power struggle for the Presidency then ensued between Henri Konan Bedie, Speaker of the National Assembly, and the Prime Minister, Alassane Ouattara. However, by a constitutional arrangement Konan Bedie succeeded Houphouët-Boigny as President until elections could be held.

Bedie's term in office was characterised by gross human rights violations and massive allegations of corruption. Also, in order to perpetuate his hold on power, Bedie enunciated the policy of 'Ivoirité', a political tactic that manipulated issues of nationality, citizenship and identity to rouse xenophobic sentiments among the populace and, ultimately, to eliminate his political opponents. The concept of 'Ivoirité' principally played on ethnic tensions between 'true Ivoirians' and 'foreigners'. In this context, 'real citizenship' was

confined to mostly the southern, Akan ethnic groups (specifically Baoules) with which the late President and Konan Bedie himself as well as other political elites were identified. On the other hand, 'foreigners' referred to the predominantly, northern, Muslim populations who are believed to be migrant workers from Mali, Burkina Faso and Guinea.²¹⁹ Bédié was able to even push a law through the parliament requiring that any presidential candidate must have both their parents born in the country, thus automatically excluding Alassane Ouattara, who is alleged to be of Burkinabe descent, from the 1995 elections. The interplay of poor governance, bad politics and an ailing economy therefore precipitated his overthrow in 1999. General Robert Guei overthrew him in a coup d'état.

General Guei's military takeover only exacerbated the situation. He maintained the status quo and further entrenched issues of ethnicity and citizenship when he organised and contested the national elections in October 2000. Although Laurent Gbagbo of the Ivorian Popular Front (FPI) emerged as the winner, Guei declared himself winner. Dissatisfied with the outcomes of the elections, Gbagbo and his supporters organised massive protests in Abidjan which forced Guei to flee the country thus bringing Gbagbo into power. In March 2001, Municipal elections were held and in October of the same year President Gbagbo initiated moves for national reconciliation. These initiatives were intended to address the question of nationality, land ownership, security sector reforms, as well as moves towards a government of national unity. In August 2002, a broad-based government was formed which included all the main opposition parties in a new cabinet, following a meeting in Accra (Accra I summit). These initiatives also paved the way for a court order granting Ouattara, the main opposition leader, a citizenship certificate, hence qualifying him to contest the presidency.

The crisis, however, re-emerged in September 2002, following attacks on military installations in Abidjan, Boauke and Korhogo. These attacks were thought to be attempts at a coup d'état organised by 'foreigners' (supporters of Ouattara) who did not support the government. This therefore led to the harassment of immigrant workers from neighbouring countries and the displacement of some 20,000 people in Abidjan.²²⁰ Meanwhile, rebel forces from the Patriotic Movement of Côte d'Ivoire (MPCI) led by Guillaume Soro (a former student leader) had captured the northern part of the country. Soro's forces demanded the resignation of President Gbagbo, a review of the constitution, the conduct of an all-inclusive election and, ultimately, for an end to the continued dominance of southerners in the country's affairs. By November 2002, two newly-armed movements had emerged: the Movement for Justice and Peace (MJP) and the Ivorian Popular Movement of the Great West (MPIGO). The objectives of these groups were to avenge the death of General Robert Guei, who had died in mysterious circumstances, and also to demand the resignation of President Laurent Gbagbo. They later joined forces with the MPCI to become the New Forces (*les Forces Nouvelles*).

Regional and International Mediation in the Ivorian Civil War

The dynamics of the Ivorian conflict were complex as were the efforts aimed at bringing the crisis to an end. Under the auspices of the Economic Community of West African

States (ECOWAS), several attempts were made to resolve the conflict. The outbreak of violence in September 2002 led to the signing of the Abidjan Ceasefire Agreement between government and the rebel forces on 17 October 2002. The Abidjan Agreement set the stage for further negotiations and led to the signing of the Lomé Peace Agreement on 1 November 2002. Prior to the signing of these two Agreements, ECOWAS convened an emergency summit in Accra to explore peaceful means of resolving the crisis. The Accra I Summit sought to explore possibilities of dialoguing with the rebels to end the conflict. This strategy, however, failed to materialise as President Gbagbo favoured a military solution to the crisis.²²¹ Gbagbo refused initial negotiations with the MPCJ on the grounds that agreeing to sign an agreement with the rebels will be equal to legitimising the rebellion and the partitioning of the country. However, the ECOWAS Contact Group comprising Ghana, Guinea-Bissau, Mali, Niger, Nigeria and Togo, together with the African Union (AU), led discussions and managed to secure an agreement between the two warring factions.

Within the framework of these discussions, the two parties agreed to commit to the ceasefire, to respect the country's institutions, preserve the territorial integrity of the country and refrain from human rights abuses. The Lomé talks, however, ended in a stalemate when the MPCJ insisted on the resignation of President Gbagbo, a review of the constitution and the conduct of new elections. Gbagbo, on the other hand, demanded the immediate disarmament of the MPCJ. Consequently, this led to the deployment of ECOWAS and French forces and the creation of a buffer zone to help curb the crisis from degenerating into a full-scale civil war.

In January 2003, France, with support from ECOWAS and the AU, offered to mediate between Laurent Gbagbo and the rebel forces in Paris. It is believed that France became involved in mediating the conflict because of her interests and investments in the country.²²² Besides, being a former colony of France and a member of the International Organisation of the Francophonie, as well as in response to a long-standing bilateral defence agreement between the two countries, France had a moral duty to intervene to protect and maintain the territorial integrity of Côte d'Ivoire. With the signing of the Linas Marcoussis Accord, the French managed to secure a peace deal, which also led to a further complication of the situation. The Agreement was signed between Gbagbo's government, the rebel forces and the major political parties including the Democratic Party of Côte d'Ivoire-African Democratic Party (PDCI-RDA), the Ivorian Workers Party, the Rally of the Republicans (RDR), the Democratic Union of Côte d'Ivoire (UDCI) and the Union for Democracy and Peace in Côte d'Ivoire (UDPCI). The Linas Marcoussis Accord called for, among other things, the creation of a Government of National Unity, the conduct of transparent, peaceful, free and fair elections, the creation of a transitional government and the immediate disarmament of the warring factions. The Agreement also provided for Gbagbo to remain in power until elections were held. It also made arrangements for the distribution of cabinet posts among the various parties, under which the key portfolios of defence and the interior were allocated to the rebel movements. The ruling government and its supporters, however, expressed misgivings about the agreement, claiming that the rebels had been given a more generous deal.²²³

The implementation of Linas Marcoussis faced many obstacles as violent protests erupted in Abidjan and other towns against the allocation of the Interior and Defence portfolios to the rebel forces. During the demonstrations, French installations were targeted and attacked. In addition, leaders of major political parties who were also signatories to the agreement rejected the allocations made to the rebel forces while President Gbagbo referred to the Agreement as mere "proposals" and asserted that he would retain his constitutional prerogatives. The rebel forces and Ouattara's RDR also denounced what they perceived as President Gbagbo's departures from the Agreement, leading to an impasse. This point brings into question the principles upon which mediation efforts are conducted, the acceptance of the outcomes and its implications for sustainable peace.

In July 2004, 17 African Heads of State and government representatives as well as the UN Secretary-General, Kofi Annan, and the then Chairman of the AU, Olusegun Obasanjo, met in Accra to demonstrate renewed commitments towards finding a solution to the conflict. Under the Chairmanship of John Kufour (then ECOWAS Chairman), the Accra III summit hinged on the commitments in the Linas Marcoussis Accord to put the peace process back on track. The Accra III summit also managed to secure a ceasefire deal and a commitment from the New Forces to be part of the Government of National Reconciliation. The peace process suffered yet another setback in November 2004 when the Ivorian army launched an airstrike on a town near Bouake destroying a French base and killing nine French peacekeepers. France, in retaliation for the so-called 'accidental attack', also attacked the Abidjan airport and destroyed helicopters and fighter planes belonging to the Ivorian air force. These actions by France evoked deep sentiments of mistrust from the Ivorian government, automatically eliminating France as a neutral mediator to the conflict. Although the international community had condemned the actions of the Ivorian government, some analysts believe that it was necessary to investigate the attacks before France decided to unleash such overwhelming force against the country.²²⁴

Considering the entrenched positions of the conflict parties on reaching a consensus on issues such as identity and citizenship, political exclusions and the reformation of key national institutions, coupled with the mistrust of actors engaged in mediating the conflict, the African Union appointed South African President Thabo Mbeki as a neutral mediator to the conflict. In April 2005, talks resumed between Gbagbo, Bedie, Ouattara, Soro and the head of the Government of National Reconciliation, Seydou Diarra, in Pretoria. The parties once again committed to the cessation of hostilities, the immediate disarmament of the militia and the implementation of political reforms to pave the way for the elections in October 2005. The parties, however, reneged once again on their promises as the rebels refused to disarm due to delays in the implementation of political reforms by the Gbagbo government. The failure to implement the commitments in the Pretoria Agreement as well as earlier agreements resulted in delays in preparations for the elections. These concerns together with the massacre of about 51 civilians in Duékoué in the Western part of the country necessitated yet another round of negotiations between the government, opposition parties and the New Forces. Again, under the chairmanship of President Mbeki, the Declaration on the Implementation of the Pretoria Peace Agreement on the Peace Process in Côte d'Ivoire was signed on 29 June 2005.

The Agreement, among other things, recalled the commitments towards the implementation of earlier agreements, emphasising an end to the civil war. This time, the Agreement called attention to the importance of mediation and the imposition of sanctions against any of the parties who fail to keep to commitments within the framework of the Peace Agreement, distinguishing it from all previous agreements. Although the Pretoria Agreement officially declared an end to the civil war and set a road map for the conduct of elections, the violence continued, the disarmament processes stalled and plans for holding elections failed to materialise.

By December 2006, both the government and the New Forces had come to a realisation that outright military victory was impossible. Therefore, in January 2007 Gbagbo called for direct talks with the rebels and invited Blaise Compaoré, the former President of Burkina Faso, to facilitate the talks. This initiative marked a significant departure from all previous mediation efforts where external actors had initiated processes for dialogue. This time, the belligerents themselves had agreed to enter into direct talks to seek an end to the conflict. Although the Ouagadougou Accord could not resolve all the underlying issues of the conflict, it was hatched within the context of mutual trust among the belligerents and the facilitator, in a spirit of dialogue and parity between the government and the New Forces.²²⁵ This brings to the fore the issue of ownership and the conflict parties' commitment to the peace process compared to peace agreements that are brokered under seemingly controversial circumstances. Therefore, under the aegis of President Compaoré, the Ouagadougou Agreement was signed in March 2007 to further strengthen mechanisms outlined in earlier peace agreements in the search for lasting peace in Côte d'Ivoire.

The 2010 Election Crisis

The first round of the much-postponed presidential elections were finally conducted on 31 October 2010 amid controversies over electoral registrations, security and the failed disarmament of militia in the northern and western parts of the country. Although the elections were expected to offer the opportunity for lasting peace to the country, it only sunk the country further into violence. The elections were contested between the incumbent, President Laurent Gbagbo, opposition leaders, Henri Konan Bedie and Alassane Ouattara, and other political parties such as the Union for Democracy in Côte d'Ivoire, Union for Côte d'Ivoire and the Ivorian Workers Party. The elections, however, entered into a second round between Gbagbo and Ouattara and based on the provisional results from the Independent Electoral Commission (IEC), Alassane Ouattara had won the elections by 54.1 per cent against 45.9 per cent for Laurent Gbagbo. The President of the Constitutional Council, however, declared the results invalid, citing allegations of electoral fraud and irregularities in the northern parts of the country where Ouattara's support was strongest. The following day, in accordance with article 94 of the Constitution, the Constitutional Council²²⁶ declared Gbagbo the winner of the elections and he was sworn in as the president. Hours later, Ouattara also announced that he had held his own inauguration ceremony and had formed a parallel government at the Golf Hotel. Meanwhile, international observers including the UN, the EU, the AU and ECOWAS described the elections as free and fair and affirmed their support for the

opposition leader and urged Gbagbo to step down and cede power to Ouattara. The ensuing events led to the 2010–2011 crisis in an already highly-divided country. By the end of December 2010, it was reported that about 173 people had been killed in post-election violence while about 140,000 people fled to neighbouring countries to escape the violence.²²⁷

Efforts at Mediating the 2010 Election Crisis

Mediation efforts aimed at resolving the crisis involved various actors including ECOWAS, the UN, the AU and France. The AU at the onset of the crisis appointed former President Thabo Mbeki of South Africa to hold talks with the two conflict parties in order to find a peaceful solution to the problem. Mbeki, who had already been involved in brokering the 2005 Pretoria Accord, met the two parties separately but left without any success of reaching an acceptable agreement between the two parties. After Mbeki's failed attempts to arrange a meeting between the two, Prime Minister Raila Odinga of Kenya also stepped into the fray but was rejected by Gbagbo. The choice of Odinga as mediator for the Ivorian crisis as explained by some analysts was a rather sour choice as Odinga himself was more or less a victim of the same circumstance after the 2007 electoral dispute in Kenya, which resulted in a power-sharing government with Mwai Kibaki. Prime Minister Odinga's visit to Abidjan was to further reiterate the position of the AU, which recognised Ouattara as the legitimate leader of Côte d'Ivoire and criticised Gbagbo for his refusal to step down and relinquish power to Ouattara. This point also brings into question how the choice of mediators influences the outcomes of a mediation process, taking into account their acceptability by the conflict parties and the dynamics they bring to bear on the peace process.

At a meeting held on the 28 January 2010, the AU established a High-Level Panel comprising Presidents Mohamed Ould Abdelaziz of Mauritania, Jacob Zuma of South Africa, Idriss Déby of Chad, Blaise Compaoré of Burkina Faso and Jakaya Kikwete of Tanzania, tasking it to work towards resolving the crisis. The High-Level Panel conducted separate meetings with all the stakeholders involved in the conflict, including election officials, the main contestants and their supporters and members of the Ivorian Constitutional Council. However, divergent views among members of the continental body with regards to approaches to resolving the crisis failed to yield any positive results at promoting dialogue between the two parties. The AU's position on the situation was, however, clear and firm that Gbagbo must go and that Ouattara was the legitimate president of Côte d'Ivoire. While some members within the continental body thought there was room to negotiate for a power-sharing deal, others strongly opposed this view. For instance, South Africa, which had played a key role in mediating the conflict, was alleged to have been siding with Gbagbo as the winner and was pushing a power-sharing agenda which would preserve a role for Gbagbo. ECOWAS equally criticised South Africa for undermining its efforts by stationing a warship outside Abidjan, which, according to allegations, was ready to support Gbagbo should the sub-regional body decide to use force to dislodge him.²²⁸ Although the South African government denied these allegations, they had clear implications on the position of regional and international actors.

Like other international organisations, ECOWAS responded swiftly to the post-election crisis. At the ECOWAS extraordinary meeting in Abuja on 7 December 2010, seven Heads of State also endorsed Ouattara as the winner and urged Gbagbo to “yield power without delay”²²⁹. In a follow-up meeting, ECOWAS once again reiterated its position on the results of the election and, making reference to the supplementary protocol on Democracy and Good Governance, described Ouattara’s position as non-negotiable and emphasised the need to respect and uphold the will of the Ivorian people. ECOWAS also appointed Presidents Pedro Pires (Cape Verde), Yayi Boni (Benin) and Ernest Bai Koroma (Sierra Leone) to explore diplomatic tracks to resolving the crisis. As Gbagbo continued to resist diplomatic pressures to step down, Côte d’Ivoire was suspended from participating in all ECOWAS meetings and decision-making bodies and backed these decisions with sanctions against Gbagbo and his allies. In a final communiqué issued after a meeting in Abuja on 24 December, 2010, ECOWAS warned of the possible use of “legitimate force” to uphold the will of the Ivorian people.²³⁰ ECOWAS was, however, unable to enforce the latter decision due to logistical challenges and, more importantly, the possibility of igniting a prolonged conflict that could lead to more civilian casualties.

The UN became involved in the search for peace in Côte d’Ivoire in 2002 when ECOWAS leaders called on both the AU and the UN to step up efforts at resolving the political crisis in Côte d’Ivoire. During the 2010 elections, the United Nations Operations in Côte d’Ivoire under the UN mandate had the special role of certifying the results of the elections as was outlined in the Pretoria Agreement. The UN was therefore firm in its endorsement of Ouattara as the winner of the polls and reiterated its readiness “to impose targeted measures against persons who attempt to threaten the peace process, obstruct the work of UNOCI and other international actors, or commit serious violations of human rights and international humanitarian law.”²³¹ As the situation deteriorated into violence and human rights violations worsened, the UN Secretary-General, Ban Ki-Moon, issued a statement to condemn the violence and called on Gbagbo to accept defeat and step down. The UN went further and imposed sanctions against Gbagbo and his close advisors. The European Union, the United States of America and other international organisations also imposed targeted sanctions including bans on travel and financial assets against Gbagbo and his allies when he refused all offers for political asylum as well as diplomatic calls to step down. By the end of March 2011, at least 900 people were estimated to have been killed while over 800,000 were internally displaced due to the post election violence.²³² On 10 April 2011, pro-Gbagbo forces attacked the Golf Hotel (where Ouattara and his cabinet were camped under the protection of UN peacekeepers) but UNOCI in collaboration with French Forces also launched a counter attack on Gbagbo’s forces. The following day, pro-Ouattara forces captured and arrested Gbagbo with help from French troops. Gbagbo is currently being tried at the International Criminal Court (ICC) for committing crimes against humanity. Alassane Ouattara was officially inaugurated as president in May 2010 and shoulders the challenge of fostering reconciliation in a sharply divided society.

Civil Society and the Mediation of the Ivorian Conflict

Civil Society Organisations constitute a viable resource for sustaining a peace process. In places like Liberia and Sierra Leone, CSO actors were instrumental in supporting the peace processes that brought the civil wars to an end. While the mediation of the Ivorian crises seemed to have taken on a rather high-level and internationalised dimension, some CSO actors also played significant roles alongside the official processes to de-escalate tensions and, in some cases, prevent further violence. For instance, respected religious and traditional leaders and leaders of women’s groups²³³ met with supporters of the various factions as well as the main conflict parties. Others also organised peace marches to call on the conflict parties to agree to dialogue. Some of these marches, however, encountered violent clashes with security forces in which people were killed and others brutally assaulted.²³⁴ Besides these incidents, CSO actors in the peace process faced various challenges. Ethnic, religious and political affiliations often raised suspicions about the neutrality of CSO actors. Secondly, there was very little interaction between local and official level actors that also added to the problem of credibility of local actors.²³⁵ The gap between official and unofficial processes also made it difficult to build any sustainable linkages for local actors to support the mediation process. For instance, some CSO actors perceived the process to be non-inclusive, which they said could have contributed to the numerous failed attempts to broker peace. CSO actors bring value to the peace process because they generally have access within their communities and have a better understanding of the conflict as they may be directly affected by it. It is therefore important to build the necessary linkages between local actors and official actors in order for the various actors to draw on the strengths and experience of each other. This also enhances ownership and legitimacy for the peace process.²³⁶

Côte d’Ivoire Today and the Need for Capacity Building in Conflict Prevention

For a country that was once considered the beacon of West Africa, the nearly ten years of civil war rather marks a huge dark spot in the country’s history as well as democratic development. As per the account of one interviewee, the problems that triggered the war, were more of deep-rooted social and economic issues rather than political. At the time this research was conducted, it was barely a year after the end of the conflict and there were, therefore, very visible scars of what the war left behind; very strong suspicions and mistrust and insecurity among the people. Though there currently seems to be a general sense of peace, there are still fears of a possible eruption of violence mainly between remnants of pro-Gbagbo supporters and the government at the slightest provocation. There are also suspicions about pro-Gbagbo supporters exiled or hiding in Ghana, who are believed to be planning a comeback. They are also suspected of secretly funding networks aimed at bringing their political party back into power.

It is, therefore, evident that there is the need to develop capacities for building strong social cohesion and strong mechanisms for conflict prevention. The majority of people interviewed expressed the need for a wider participation of local actors, from the grass-root and community levels, in developing conflict prevention mechanisms and

competencies for the early resolution of conflicts. Evidently, capacities in mediation and negotiations are necessary in contributing to the peacebuilding process of the country. Generally, there was also strong emphasis on the need for close collaboration and cooperation between government and civil society in the peace process.

Conclusion

The outcomes of the Ivorian civil war and post-electoral crises offer a number of lessons for the conduct of mediation or, more broadly, preventive diplomacy and peace processes in West Africa. Beginning with the 2002 political crisis that degenerated into a civil war and eventually served as the catalyst for the 2010 elections crisis, it is evident that understanding the roots of a conflict is critical to its resolution. Mediators of the 2010 electoral crisis focused more on the current crisis to the neglect of the structural causes of the conflict. A proper analysis of the conflict would indicate that the controversies surrounding the results of the 2010 polls were not the primary issues of contention but were rather triggers to deep problems of identity and issues of social exclusion that needed to be adequately addressed before the elections.

As has been emphasised by many scholars, experts and analysts, effective mediation endeavours require conflict parties to be motivated to settle their conflict and be seriously committed to the mediation process. As articulated by an interviewee, “it is simply not possible to bring together two parties without their mutual consent”.²³⁷ In the case of Côte d’Ivoire, the signing of about eight peace accords (between 2002 and 2007) reflects the lack of commitment from the conflict parties. Finally, the role of a mediator as an impartial actor in a mediation process is very critical to the outcomes of the mediation efforts, as has been illustrated in the role of the various actors in the Ivorian peace process.

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Introduction



This chapter explores the complexities of mediation and peace efforts in Guinea-Bissau — one of the two former Portuguese colonies in the West African sub-region. It focuses on the mediation efforts that accompanied the 1998–1999 civil conflict and the post 2012 coup d'état, highlighting the complexities that emerged during the mediation processes. It begins by tracing the history from 1974 when the country gained independence from Portugal and how it dovetails

into the events leading to the outbreak of the civil conflict in 1998 and subsequent developments such as drug trafficking, involving criminal networks. It also analyses the democratisation processes that led to the unfortunate coup d'état in 2012. The chapter illustrates that the situation in Guinea-Bissau is not only political in nature, but this is also a country confiscated by criminal networks deeply engaged in narco-trafficking as a legitimate means for survival. Thus, the multiple actors that emerged during the mediation processes have faced complex challenges largely due to varied interests of actors, but also those rooted in a gamut of development and security challenges.

Political History and Background to the Conflict

Located between Guinea and Senegal, Guinea-Bissau is the first Portuguese African colony to gain independence. It achieved this in 1974 after many years of violent liberation struggle against Portuguese colonial rule. Following this, Luis Cabral ruled the country between 1974 and 1980, after which Bissau's political environment has been characterised by coups and counter-coups, interspersed with one-party rule, political oppression, civil war, and military rebellion. This sequence of events began on 14 November 1980 when Major Joao Bernardo Nino Vieira mounted a successful coup d'état in Bissau after disagreements with Luis Cabral over proposed constitutional amendments²³⁸. Having assumed the position of Head of State, Vieira remained in power for 19 years, amidst socio-economic deterioration. As a result, there was both domestic and international pressure on Vieira's government to make a transition to multi-party democracy. In response, elections were held in Guinea-Bissau in 1994 in which the African Party for the Independence of Guinea and Cape Verde (PAIGC) won the legislative elections, and Nino Vieira won the presidency by 51 per cent of votes cast.²³⁹

In spite of this transition, there was no corresponding change in the socio-economic lives of the broad masses of the people partly due to the fact that the legislature, which was controlled by the opposition, thwarted government business. The consequence of this was the intensification of political activities by the opposition. Before the second elections took place, a military mutiny occurred that resulted in a civil war in 1998. Ansumane Mané, commander of the army, led a faction against Vieira. In spite of support

from Senegal and Guinea, Vieira was defeated and forced into exile in Portugal.

Elections were held after the civil war, in which Kumba Yala of the Party for Social Renewal (PRS) emerged as winner and served from February 2000 to September 2003 when he was removed through the barrel of a gun.²⁴⁰ Subsequently, Henrique Rosa assumed office as the new President and Nino Vieira, who had been in exile in Portugal, returned to power in 2005 through competitive elections. Before long, there was an assassination attempt on Vieira in 2008. Although this attempt was a fiasco, the military succeeded in the second assassination attempt on 2 March 2009. As argued allegedly by the army, the killing of Vieira was revenge for the death of General Batista Tagme Na Waie, Head of the Armed Forces Chief of Staff, who was similarly murdered the previous day.²⁴¹

To restore stability in Guinea-Bissau, a presidential election was conducted in which Kumba Yala, who had previously been ousted through a coup d'état was allowed to run. However, Malam Bacai Sanha won the election and Kumba Yala went into self-imposed exile in Morocco. Characteristic of Guinea-Bissau, the then Deputy Army Chief, Antonio Indjai, led another putsch in 2010 and arrested and detained several people, notably Rear Admiral Bubo Na Tchuto, who led a failed coup in 2008.²⁴²

Following the death of Malam Bacai Sanha in 2012, Reimundo Pereira was sworn into office to oversee the process of conducting new elections within 90 days as provided for in the country's constitution. Fourteen days before the election run-off, however, the army, derailing the transition and the fragile democratic process, staged another coup. Subsequently, interim President Reimundo Pereira and Carlos Gomes Junior, the outgoing Prime Minister, were arrested and detained by the army for allegedly conniving with the Angolan troops to wipe out the Guinea-Bissau Army.²⁴³

While the country was thrown into temporary turmoil, the persistent international pressure forced the mutineers to establish a transitional government, which was headed by Manuel Serifo and Prime Minister Duarte de Barros in 2012. Primarily, they were expected to oversee the conduct of presidential and parliamentary elections within a year. Although the elections were postponed several times, with reasons such as lack of funds being cited, the collaborative and mediatory efforts of regional organisations and states resulted in the conduct of elections in April 2014.

From the above, it is apparent that since the civil war in 1998–1999, the military in Guinea-Bissau has remained a major obstacle to political stability and the democratisation process. Intermittently, Guinea-Bissau has been confronted with a series of coups d'état. Coupled with the drug trafficking and other organised crime menaces, the country merits the description as one of the most unstable theatres in the West African sub-region. According to Shaw, while “cocaine politics” and [drug trafficking] are “triggering a new era of fragility and instability across the sub-region and beyond”, “its impacts have become defining features of politics, governance, and statehood in Guinea-Bissau”.²⁴⁴ Shaw further argues that the 2012 military coup in Guinea-Bissau and its subsequent “broad legitimisation by the international community” is an indication of the increasing connection between drugs and politics in the country. This argument is corroborated by the fact that the 2012 coup d'état, as with the previous ones, was spearheaded by the

military, whose longstanding relationship to drug trafficking is well known and also documented by the U.S. Drug Enforcement Agency (DEA).²⁴⁵

Indeed, in the immediate aftermath of the coup in 2012, the army arrested the Prime Minister and candidate of the (PAIGC), Carlos Gomes Júnior, who was widely tipped to be the winner in the second round of the presidential election that was scheduled for 29 April 2012²⁴⁶. An election that promised to restore stability in the democratisation process in Guinea-Bissau was marred by the military insurrection. Among the reasons cited were: a 'secret deal' discovered between the government and the Angolan technical military and security mission in Guinea-Bissau (MISSANG)²⁴⁷, which sought to undermine the powers of the military and the inability of the electoral process to deliver unquestionable results. Even though the election was declared free, fair and transparent by international observers, some candidates, particularly Kumba Yalà and Manuel Serifo Nhamadjo, who had polled second and third respectively, rejected the results, citing the preponderance of registration and voting flaws²⁴⁸.

Guinea-Bissau Mediation and Peace Processes: Understanding the Complexities

This section examines the mediation and peace processes in Guinea-Bissau following the outbreak of civil conflict in 1998 and subsequent incidents that occurred in the political history of the country until the 2012 coup d'état. The 1998–1999 conflict was particularly precipitated by an exchange of gunfire in the city of Bissau between soldiers loyal to the then President, Major Joao Bernardo Nino Vieira, and mutinous troops supporting the then dismissed army chief of staff, Brigadier Ansumane Mané. From the inception of the conflict in 1998, the subsequent military takeovers until the 2012 coup d'état, the sort of ad hoc initiatives that have characterised conflict management in Africa since independence largely drove mediation²⁴⁹. Initially, the Organization of African Unity (OAU), now the African Union (AU), proved unwilling and incapable of mediating the conflict, desiring to accept the ascendancy of Chapter VIII subsidiarity as the norm²⁵⁰. Consequently, the Economic Community of West African States (ECOWAS) was promoted and played a key role in mediating the 1998 civil war. However, the internal rivalries and opposing agendas along Anglophone–Francophone lines that underpinned the operations of regional organisations in the case of Liberia and Sierra Leone also played out in Guinea-Bissau and undermined the effectiveness of ECOWAS' mediation efforts. This, together with the involvement of Senegal and Guinea fighting alongside president Vieira's forces without a clearly established mandate from the regional body, prolonged and intensified the conflict²⁵¹.

Parallel to ECOWAS is the international organisation for Lusophone states, the Community of Portuguese Speaking States (CPLP), which also played a key role in the mediation and peace process. Although the mediating roles of CPLP and ECOWAS were intended to contribute to resolving the conflict, it resulted in competing interests between Portugal and France. While France used its influence within the francophone bloc of ECOWAS to further its support for the incumbent Vieira, Portugal sought to counter French influence and re-establish its own position in Guinea-Bissau by establishing close

affinity with the CPLP.²⁵²

At the Member State level, with specific reference to Guinea-Bissau, Nigeria's role in mediating and managing the conflict was minimal, particularly when compared to Liberia and Sierra Leone. During that process, Nigeria had internal security and economic issues to grapple with. Thus, security challenges in Guinea-Bissau were considered external and less significant in terms of priorities. This, coupled with the competing interests of regional organisations and their allegiance to France and Portugal, posed several challenges to mediation efforts following the 1998–1999 civil conflict.

After the 2012 coup d'état, similar difficulties were encountered relative to the different approaches adopted by regional and continental bodies to restore constitutional order to the country. In line with their commitments to the Supplementary Protocol on Democracy and Good Governance and African Charter on Democracy, Elections and Governance, both ECOWAS and the AU respectively condemned the coup. In particular, ECOWAS demanded an immediate restoration of constitutional order to allow for the completion of the on-going electoral process. It further rejected the Transitional National Council established by the military command to govern the country for a two-year period. This was followed by targeted sanctions against the junta leaders upon their refusal to accede to its demands for a one-year transition. Diplomatic, economic and financial sanctions were also imposed on the country. Consequent to these approaches and coupled with continued pressure, the military command had no alternative but to step aside for a transitional government to be established, with the mandate to organise elections within a year.

As a result, ECOWAS lifted its sanctions and deployed a 629-man police and army contingent, known as the ECOWAS Mission in Bissau (ECOMIB), to help with Security Sector Reform, support the transition process and facilitate the departure of MISSANG. Undoubtedly ECOWAS' intervention did not only yield positive results, it also brought some semblance of stability to the country, leading to the exit of MISSANG — an external force that had been associated with the April coup. Notwithstanding this, Aubyn argues that ECOWAS' initial intervention was biased by its inability to broker an inclusive transitional government. Clearly missing in the transitional arrangement was Gomes Júnior's PAIGC wing, while the opposition parties and other technocrats were involved, posing a potential threat to the peace effort.

Similar to the 1998–1999 civil war, ECOWAS had difficulties reconciling its position on the transitional government with the CPLP. While ECOWAS, spearheaded by Nigeria, Senegal, Côte d'Ivoire and Burkina Faso, favoured a year's transition, Portugal and Angola, member states of the CPLP, preferred a stabilisation force by the United Nations (UN) and an immediate resumption of the presidential vote²⁵³. Moreover, the UN, AU and the European Union (EU) also disagreed with ECOWAS on the issue of recognising the transitional government. The differences in approach were a major challenge in the process of restoring peace in Guinea-Bissau. However, Aubyn noted that the successful conduct of a joint assessment by the UN, AU, EU, ECOWAS and the CPLP from 16–21 December 2012 was an "encouraging sign of increasing cooperation and harmonisation of positions among these international and regional actors"²⁵⁴. This created a relatively

stable political environment for the conduct of elections in 2014.

Multiplicity of Actors in Guinea-Bissau: A Wheel of Progress or an Impediment to Mediation and Peace Process?

Crocker et al. argued that multiplicity of actors in conflict and mediation is increasingly becoming a norm in the emerging conflicts in Africa. In such an approach of multiple actor mediation, there are associated benefits and costs. It is instructive to note, however, that the benefits are largely contingent upon the various third parties acting in agreement and with mutual consent towards a common goal of a peaceful settlement of the conflict.²⁵⁵ The result of such consensus in multiple-actor mediation is noticeable progress in a peace process and transformation of the conflict situation into stability. This is precisely so because different parties bring to the table diverse resources at different times, opening new avenues for dialogue thereby generating a mutually supportive environment for mediation. Crocker et al. further argue that such joint mediation can also facilitate an even distribution of costs and risks²⁵⁶. The manifestation of this was prominent in Guinea-Bissau, following the 1998–1999 civil war and during the negotiation efforts after the 2012 coup d'état, where several third parties sought sometimes to simultaneously mediate the conflicts. As further argued separately by Massey and Aubyn, the outbreak of the civil conflict in Guinea-Bissau in 1998, the 2012 coup and the accompanying mediation and peace process were characterised by multiple actors, both as parties to the conflict as well as intermediaries — regional, African and extra-African — who offered assistance but at the same time pursued their own interests.²⁵⁷

For instance, in the 1998 civil conflict, the OAU, ECOWAS, CPLP and the EU each demanded a return to constitutional government. In spite of the condemnation of the revolt and the call to re-establish constitutional rule, fighting continued between the two major protagonists, namely forces loyal to the then President, Major Joao Bernardo Nino Vieira, and mutinous troops supporting the then dismissed army chief of staff, Brigadier Ansumane Mané.

At the regional level, mediation efforts were spearheaded by ECOWAS, which resulted in the signing of Abuja Accord on 1 November 1998 and subsequently paved the way for the cessation of hostilities and the deployment of the first ECOMOG contingents under difficult logistic and financial conditions.²⁵⁸ Together with the UN, AU and the Community of Portuguese Speaking Countries, ECOWAS helped in easing tensions around the June 2005 presidential elections. Moreover, ECOWAS and the AU were directly involved in preventive diplomacy activities by sending a joint high-level mission to the country²⁵⁹. Although the CPLP also played a key role in the peace process, its mediation efforts were eventually overtaken by the ECOWAS mediation, partially as a result of the latter's experience in conflict management, but chiefly because of the support ECOWAS received from the UN and OAU as institution of first resort.

Despite the sub-regional efforts, Massey noted that mediation processes were, however, initiated in an ad hoc manner by disparate African and extra-continental actors. Among

them included the Ambassadors of Portugal and Angola in Bissau, the late and former Head of State of Libya, Muammar Gaddafi, as well as the Swedish Chargé d'Affaires, were central figures in these initiatives. Yahya Jammeh, President of The Gambia, in particular visited Cape Verde, Mauritania, Guinea and Senegal in order to canvass regional opinion on the crisis. At the same time, the Gambian Foreign Minister, Sadat Jobe, met Mané to arrange for a ceasefire and mediation talks between the two sides in the Gambian capital, Banjul. These initiatives heralded a sustained drive by The Gambia to find a solution to the crisis due in part to the existing ethnic and personal links, but also motivated by an overarching interest in sub-regional security.

More importantly, however, is the role of the Catholic Bishop of Bissau, Settimio Ferrazzeta, a well-respected individual who had lived in the country since 1955. His independent role endeared him to the heart of the factions and he met with members of the Military Junta in the early days of the conflict. Whilst he expressed himself as 'hopeful', he felt that the government would find it hard to meet the Junta's terms. Thomas Prinzen identified several potential resources available to the Catholic Church as an international mediator — moral legitimacy, the ability to advance the other's political standing, an international audience, a network of information and contacts, secrecy and neutrality. All these traits were very useful in the peace process.²⁶⁰

However, the challenges that bedevilled the mediation efforts were more manifest in the alignment of France to ECOWAS and their quest to see Vieira stay in power as opposed to Portugal that sought to re-establish its authority in Guinea-Bissau as former colonial masters and thus supporting CPLP's parallel mediation. Indeed, these opposing interests undermined the mediation process to a great extent. France–ECOWAS collaboration was less successful and its initial support for the Senegal and Guinea intervention and the ECOMOG operation was not effective as Mané's rebels eventually came to power.

What has emerged is that multiplicity of actors theoretically may be useful in mediation and conflict management because of pooling of resources, sharing of ideas and strategies, which opens new avenues for dialogue thereby generating a mutually supportive environment for mediation. However, when the cooperation and collaboration between the actors and parties are not managed well, mistrust, as well as pursuit of national and regional interests can prolong and intensify conflicts and undermine peace processes. As clearly shown in the case of Guinea-Bissau, internal rivalries between ECOWAS, CPLP and their alignment with France and Portugal, respectively, posed serious challenges to the speedy resolution of the conflict, both in the 1998 civil conflict and during the mediation effort following the 2012 coup d'état.

Conclusion

This chapter provided a case of a conflict situation in the West African sub-region that has particular specificities. Its distinctiveness stems from the fact that it is one of the only former Portuguese colonies in West Africa and the dynamics of the conflict, unlike other countries in the sub-region, are not only political, but also a reflection of the drug traffickers and criminal networks that exist in the country. The involvement of the

security forces, such as the police and the navy, in the drug trade is indeed a worrying aspect. It has thus demonstrated that for security forces to discharge their duties effectively, several factors such as condition of service will be of paramount importance. There is no doubt that the seizure of the Bissau Guinean state by the security forces made the dynamics of the conflict and the accompanying mediation processes more difficult and complex. The complexity has further been exacerbated by the multiplicity of actors, with varied interests. For instance, although the role of France, Portugal and organisations such as ECOWAS, OAU-AU, and the EU was important in the mediation processes, the display of interest, and sometimes lack of it, has contributed to the intractability of the conflict.

What is needed in Guinea-Bissau following the successful April 2014 elections is provision of essential services, socio-economic development, improving the condition of service of security forces and civil servants generally, and an inclusive government. This will yield results if there is a constant monitoring mechanism to sustain the relative peace and stability in the country. But above all, the success of any future mediation process will be based on moral legitimacy such as trust, independence, and neutrality of multiple actors.

Endnotes

238. Ferreira, P. M, 'Between Conflict and Democracy'. Africa Security Review Vo1.3 No.4, 2004.
239. Ibid.
240. See "Ending the Vicious Cycle of Instability in Guinea Bissau: What Next after 2014 Elections?", WARN Policy Brief, April 2014.
241. Ibid.
242. Ibid.
243. Quoted in "Ending the Vicious Cycle of Instability in Guinea Bissau: What Next after 2014 Elections?", WARN Policy Brief, April 2014.
244. Shaw, M. (2013). 'Cocaine Politics in Guinea-Bissau: The link between drug trafficking and political fragility and its wider implications, Journal of International Affairs, Columbia SIPA, available at <http://jia.sipa.columbia.edu/online-articles/cocaine-politics-in-guinea-bissau/> (accessed 17 October 2014).
245. Ibid.
246. International Crisis Group (ICG) (2012) Beyond Turf Wars: Managing the Post-coup Transition in Guinea-Bissau. Africa Report No. 190. 17 August. Brussels: ICG.
247. The military has opposed the presence of MISSANG and persistently called for their withdrawal. However, Gomes Júnior has remained resolute in retaining MISSANG. With him leading in the first round of elections in March 2012, the army feared a possible decision to extend the mandate of MISSANG if he were re-elected. See Aubyn, F.K. (2012). 'Managing Complex Political Dilemmas in West Africa: ECOWAS and the 2012 Crisis in Guinea-Bissau', Conflict Trends.
248. Ibid.
249. Massey, 2004, Op. Cit.
250. Ibid.
251. Okyere, F. and Amedzrator, L. (2014). Mediation and Preventive Diplomacy in the ECOWAS Sub-Region: An Overview, KAIPTC-CMI Mediation and Peace Processes Project in West Africa [Chapter 1 of this publication].
252. Massey, 2004, Op. Cit.
253. Ibid.
254. Ibid.
255. Crocker, Chester A., Hampson, Fen Osler & Aall, Pamela, (2001). 'Is More Better: The Pros and Cons of Multiparty Mediation', in Chester A. Crocker, Fen Osler Hampson & Pamela Aall, Turbulent Peace: The Challenges of Managing International Conflict (Washington DC: US Institute of Peace Press).
256. Ibid.
257. See Massey, 2004, Op Cit; See also Aubyn, 2013, Op. Cit.
258. See Secretary-General's report presented in compliance with resolution 1233 (1999) of the Security Council on the situation in Guinea Bissau S/1999/741, 1 July 1999.
259. On 21 May 2005, President Olusegun Obasanjo of Nigeria (then Chairman of the AU), President Mamadou Tandja of Niger (then Chairman of ECOWAS), President Abdoulaye Wade of Senegal, Prime Minister Cellou Diallo of Guinea, and the Executive Secretary of ECOWAS, Mohamed Ibn Chambas, went to Guinea-Bissau to encourage all candidates to abide by the election results.
260. Quoted in Massey, 2001.

Introduction



Guinea became the first French colony to attain independence in Francophone Africa after a well-known plebiscite in 1958. Deeply rooted in its unique culture, Guinea is famous for its resistance to external intervention during the colonial era.²⁶¹ The country is well endowed with resources such as bauxite,²⁶² diamonds, gold, and other agricultural commodities. Yet, its 10.5 million people are among the poorest in West Africa.²⁶³

The geographic diversity of Guinea also places the country at the heart of an expansive region that has experienced a complex succession of conflict and instability.²⁶⁴ However, Guinea remained relatively stable in an unstable neighbourhood until the 2007/08 political crisis. Ethnicity is entrenched in Guinean politics with parties based on ethnic affiliation, voting patterns formed along family lines and minorities pushing for more representation.²⁶⁵ Since independence, the country has been ruled by two despotic military leaders amid economic mismanagement, widespread repression and a culture of impunity, which fundamentally contributed to the political crisis in 2008.²⁶⁶ This chapter highlights the political crisis that ensued after the death of President Lansana Conté and the response of the regional body, ECOWAS, in mediating an end to a crisis that nearly brought the country to the brink of a civil war. It also touches on the internal political dynamics of Guinea as well as those of ECOWAS, and their impact on the peace process. While the chapter focuses on the period between 2007 and 2010, some major events that occurred outside this period are worth noting in order to present a clearer synopsis of the political situation.

The Political and Constitutional Crisis (2007–2010)

General Lansana Conté assumed power in April 1984 through a bloodless coup after the death of long-time leader and father of Guinean Independence, Ahmed Sékou Touré. He later became president in 1993 after democratic elections and was re-elected in 1998 and again in 2003, despite all polls being marred by widespread allegations of fraud and irregularities.²⁶⁷ During his reign, President Conté instituted constitutional reforms through a national referendum to extend the term of office of the president from five to seven years and allow for unlimited presidential terms.²⁶⁸ Opposition parties accused the president of trying to entrench himself in office forever despite his deteriorating health condition. Many observers had long predicted Guinea's slide into violence after the death of Conté. There were strong indications that the constitution, which provides for succession, would be sidestepped by a possible military coup.²⁶⁹

The years immediately preceding the death of Conté were marked by a series of anti-government protests by trade unions and civil groups owing to harsh economic conditions and the increasing absence of the president from the day-to-day running of

the government. These popular protests were frequently met with violent repression by the armed forces, leading to the killing of at least 129 civilians by February 2007.²⁷⁰ Subsequent and even massive protests forced the president to declare a state of emergency on 13 February 2007. Several negotiations culminated in the appointment of trained diplomat Lansana Kouyaté as Prime Minister in a deal designed to end the mounting general strikes. Kouyaté was said to lack real authority, as there was no legal basis for him to function.²⁷¹ Thus, he was removed a year later and replaced with Ahmed Tidiane Souare, a former Minister of Mines and a strong ally of the president.

Following the announcement of President Conté's death on 23 December 2008, National Assembly Speaker, Aboubacar Somparé, was mandated under the constitution to assume power and hold elections within 60 days.²⁷² However, the National Assembly's mandate had expired at the time, creating a power vacuum.²⁷³ A military junta calling itself the National Council for Democracy and Development (CNDD) rapidly seized power and named a previously unknown figure, Captain Moussa Dadis Camara, as interim president. The junta also announced the dissolution of the government and institutions of the state as well as the suspension of the constitution, political and union activity. Reasons cited for the takeover included the government's failure to provide basic social services, marginalisation of youth and women, upsurge of drug trafficking, worsening insecurity in the entire country and general corruption in the administration.²⁷⁴ The military takeover largely elicited public approval particularly in the capital, Conakry, while ECOWAS, the EU, the UN, the US and the AU universally condemned the coup. Subsequent to the coup, the junta appointed former banker Kabiné Komara as Prime Minister and set up a National Transitional Consultative Council to supervise the transition and the holding of transparent elections.

In spite of his pledge to hold elections by the end of 2009 in which neither he nor any other member of the CNDD would run, Dadis Camara repeatedly made contrary statements, eventually asserting that "every citizen has the right to present themselves as presidential candidates at elections in this country".²⁷⁵ Such pronouncements led to heightened political tensions that culminated in nationwide protests by political parties, trade unions and civil groups that had formed a coalition, *Forces Vives*.²⁷⁶ The biggest of these peaceful demonstrations attended by some 50,000 protesters was organised on 28 September at the National Stadium in Conakry. Security forces, notably the elite presidential guards, opened fire on the gathering, systematically killing at least 150 unarmed civilians and injuring thousands.²⁷⁷ There were also reported cases of sexual assault, pillage and other abuses, which according to Human Rights Watch constitute crimes against humanity.²⁷⁸

ECOWAS Mediation and International Response to the Crisis

Regional mediation efforts had begun long before the military takeover in 2008. In January 2007, the ECOWAS Chairman, President Blaise Compaoré, started consultations aimed at dispatching a mission to Guinea to facilitate a peaceful resolution of what was already considered a political crisis by the sub-regional bloc.²⁷⁹ Labour union strikes over harsh economic conditions and abuse of presidential authority²⁸⁰ were met with brutal

suppression by forces loyal to President Conté leading to the killing of several unarmed civilians. Subsequently, an agreement was reached between the Government of Guinea, the trade unions and other political stakeholders to appoint a consensus Prime Minister to head the unity government. Former Nigerian President and ECOWAS Special Envoy to Guinea, Gen (Rtd) Ibrahim Badamasi Babangida, in the company of ECOWAS Commission President, Mohammed Ibn Chambas, followed the consultations with a visit to Guinea in February 2007 to facilitate the implementation of the agreement. Subsequently, an office of the Special Representative of the ECOWAS Commission President was set up to oversee, inter alia, the smooth functioning of the unity government and restoration of order.²⁸¹ ECOWAS also dispatched a ministerial fact-finding mission to Guinea and later a high-level delegation to contain the crisis when the appointment of Eugène Camara, a close ally of the president, was rejected by the opposition, leading to the breakdown of negotiations and violence in several parts of the country. Persistent mediation efforts facilitated an end to the general strikes after the withdrawal of Eugène Camara and consequent appointment of Lansana Kouyaté as Prime Minister in March 2007.

Subsequent to the death of President Conté and the takeover by Dadis Camara's CNDD, both the AU and ECOWAS echoed their zero tolerance for undemocratic accession to power by suspending Guinea's membership pending return to constitutional order.²⁸² Despite ECOWAS' position on the military takeover, former Senegalese president Abdoulaye Wade travelled to Guinea to meet the coup leaders and subsequently asked the international community to recognise the junta, insisting that the Guinean case was not a classical coup.²⁸³ Like the coup, some regional leaders, who argued that there is no difference between a good coup and a bad one, explicitly criticised this position.²⁸⁴ President Wade's public statement as well as the subsequent criticisms further highlighted the internal divisions within the organisation that have sometimes stalled peace efforts in the region.

ECOWAS also collaborated with the AU and other actors to form an International Contact Group on Guinea (ICG-G). The Contact Group was tasked with following up on the political situation and maintaining dialogue between all parties.²⁸⁵ The group embarked on 19 missions between February 2009 and December 2010 when the second round of presidential elections was held.²⁸⁶ The numerous missions undertaken highlight the commitment and role of the ICG-G in fostering dialogue and injecting confidence within social and political circles across Guinea. It is important to also state the role played by other actors such as the UN, particularly through the UN Office for West Africa (UNOWA). Ambassador Said Djinnit, the then Secretary-General's Special Representative for West Africa, worked closely with ECOWAS in facilitating dialogue with the Guinean leadership, including the signing of the Ougadougou Agreement in January 2010, paving the way for a new interim government following the attempted assassination of Captain Moussa Dadis Camera.²⁸⁷ This facilitated a transitional process in which ECOWAS also contributed \$500,000 to enable the Independent National Electoral Commission to commence its activities²⁸⁸ and also deployed a delegation of election observers to both rounds of the presidential election.²⁸⁹

The international community also played a crucial role in the crisis. Besides condemning the 28 September stadium violence, the AU, United States and EU followed with targeted sanctions against the Guinean authorities, including travel restrictions, freezing of

personal bank accounts of the Guinea leadership circle and arms embargoes as well as the suspension of aid to the country. The UN also set up a tribunal to investigate the events leading to the massacre, following a proposal from the AU and ECOWAS.²⁹⁰ In early December 2009, Dadis Camara was wounded in an assassination attempt through an altercation between him and his aide-de-camp, Lieutenant "Toumba" Sidiki Diakité. Dadis was immediately evacuated to Morocco and subsequently to Burkina Faso through the intervention of President Blaise Compaoré, whose persistent mediation efforts led to signing of the Joint Declaration of Ouagadougou. This paved the way for a transitional government of national unity led by General Sékouba Konaté to oversee the holding of democratic elections in June 2010.

Guinea made a transition from military to civilian rule with the June and November 2010 presidential elections. While some irregularities and a leadership crisis within the Electoral Commission stained the integrity of the polls, they were nonetheless regarded as the first free and fair elections since independence²⁹¹. Alpha Condé was eventually elected president to mark the end of the crisis and set Guinea on the path of democracy. Guinea has since experienced sporadic civil protests, ethnic clashes and political violence in parts of the country. This was evident particularly in the 2013 elections that were fuelled by opposition protests at the lack of transparency in the electoral process.²⁹² In July 2013, there were also ethnic hostilities between the Fula and Malinke people, who are deeply divided along political lines, the latter forming the support base for President Alpha Condé, while the former consists mainly of the opposition.

Assessing Regional Efforts towards Civilian Rule

Regional intervention in the Guinea crisis demonstrates fairly convincing proof of resolute mediation at work. In July 2010, B. Lynn Pascoe, the UN Under-Secretary-General for Political Affairs, while referring to ECOWAS, AU and UN mediation efforts in responding to coups d'état and electoral crises in the region, remarked:

*"We are not out the woods there yet, but Guinea could become a prime example of preventive diplomacy saving us all from another terrible and costly conflict"*²⁹³

Guinea has since made notable progress in embracing democratic governance albeit with intermittent political challenges. Given the potentially explosive nature of the political crisis that unfolded in the country, ECOWAS and other actors largely succeeded in stabilising the situation by maintaining a political presence in Guinea, which is critical in promoting dialogue and resolving conflict. This is in spite of the 28 September massacre, which signalled the critical nature of the crisis. However, ECOWAS did not always maintain an active involvement in the crisis. Sarjoh Bah argues that ECOWAS' response to the Guinean crisis was less assertive compared to their response to the Togolese transition following the death of President Gnassingbé Eyadéma in 2005.²⁹⁴ Regional leaders' hesitance in calling publicly for the retirement of President Conté, despite the nearly unanimous consensus among them, allowed the vulnerability to persist, leading eventually to a constitutional crisis.²⁹⁵ There was sufficient evidence to indicate that Conté's deteriorating health had created a leadership vacuum that would immediately be filled

upon his demise, especially as he had not primed the country for any political transition or democratic leadership. The Guinean crisis could have been avoided if regional leaders had ensured sustained dialogue between all political actors and taken proactive steps to prepare the country for a post-Conté regime. While regional intervention, particularly through mediation and targeted sanctions helped in restoring democracy, the lapse in following up the 2007 negotiations led to a collapse of dialogue and relapse of the crisis into violence.²⁹⁶

ECOWAS mediation efforts had also been complicated by the divergent opinions of some of its members. Former president Abdoulaye Wade's public campaign for international recognition of the junta highlights the tendency for some member states to break ranks with the official position of the regional bloc. While total consensus may hardly be achieved in extremely fragile and sensitive situations, such as those experienced in member states such as Liberia, mechanisms to express divergent opinions must be clearly spelt out and enforced in a way that will not send wrong signals to disputing parties. This will also enable ECOWAS to strictly enforce its decisions and implement effective punitive measures where necessary.

Besides ECOWAS' successes and shortcomings, it is important to highlight the central role played by civil society groups in the political process. The involvement of trade unions, political parties and other civil society groups was also a major contributory factor to the prevailing democratic atmosphere. Peaceful mass protests and persistent nationwide strikes against bad governance and dictatorial rule eventually brought some positive gains despite a heavy human toll. The political pressure exerted by these groups during the periods of President Conté and the botched presidential bid of Dadis Camara was very significant in shaping the existing democratic atmosphere in the country. However, more needs to be done to channel the efforts of civil society groups into positive ends as these institutions are not well organised, and often serve certain political interests. Grassroots politics and ethnic tensions are a major threat to peace and stability in Guinea. Politics rotates around ethnic and family affiliation, and reported violence has exhibited ethnic dimensions in some cases. Political leaders have been quick to exploit this situation by politicising most public spaces available for civil dialogue. For instance, a National Council for Civil Society Organizations exists in Guinea but is seen by many as a platform for achieving political ends.²⁹⁷ In accordance with Article 36 of the Supplementary Protocol, well functioning national mediation systems could serve as an effective platform for crisis resolution. To this end, the existing local structures for dialogue and conflict prevention in Guinea could be harnessed and fed into the broader regional mechanisms.

Conclusion

Guinea's political transition was a difficult one, but ECOWAS' mediation and diplomatic efforts contributed significantly to the international community's reaction with a variety of tools including condemnation, mediation, arms embargoes, targeted sanctions, and threats of coercive measures at resolving the crisis.²⁹⁸ The promptness of mediation efforts and collective enforcement of sanctions against the military junta were major

contributory factors in preventing the situation from deteriorating further and returning Guinea to constitutional order. However, Guinea also demonstrates that rapid response alone is not sufficient to guarantee cooperation from the political elite in crisis situations. Prompt action should be backed by unhindered commitment throughout the crisis period to elicit a similar level of commitment from the political leadership. Further, divergent public statements from regional leaders only serve to weaken the 'collective' position of the bloc on critical issues, by communicating mixed signals to both victims and potential violators of regional protocols. This was evident in Guinea as Dadis Camara attempted to run for president in clear breach of the ECOWAS protocols.

Endnotes

261. See 'Operation Green Sea' or the Portuguese invasion of Conakry in November 1970.
262. Guinea is the second-largest producer of bauxite in the world, accounting for about 30 per cent of the world's known reserves.
263. Guinea ranked 179 out of 187 on the 2013 Human Development Index.
264. Guinea is bordered by Mali, Côte d'Ivoire, Liberia, Sierra Leone, Guinea-Bissau and Senegal. Its neighbours have been beset by civil wars that have threatened the stability of Guinea over the years. It has also played host to a sizable number of refugees who have left Sierra Leone, Liberia, Côte d'Ivoire, Guinea-Bissau, and even Senegal's Casamance region.
265. Interview with Jean Millimouno, National Coordinator of WANEP in Guinea, Conakry, 11 April 2011.
266. Ahmed Sékou Touré ruled the country for 26 years and was succeeded by Lansana Conté who ruled Guinea until his death in 2008.
267. Lansana Conté profile: Death of an African 'Big Man', Guardian News, 23 December 2008, <http://www.theguardian.com/world/2008/dec/23/lansana-conte-profile> (accessed: 1 March 2011).
268. See Prospects for peace in Guinea: Hearing before the subcommittee on Africa and global health of the committee on foreign affairs, House of Representatives, March 22, 2007. U.S. Government Printing office, Washington.
269. Stopping Guinea's slide: International Crisis Group, Africa Report N° 94 — 14 June 2005.
270. Dying for Change: Brutality and Repression by Guinean Security Forces in Response to a Nationwide Strike, Human Rights Watch, April 2007 Volume 19, No.5(A).
271. Interview with Mr Abdoul Kabélé Camara, Minister of National Defence in Guinea, 13 April 2011
272. See Article 34, The 1990 Constitution of the Republic of Guinea.
273. Interview with Mr Abdoul Kabélé Camara, Op. Cit.
274. See "Full text, Guinea military statement", BBC News, 23 December 2008, <http://news.bbc.co.uk/2/hi/africa/7797629.stm> (accessed 2 March 2011).
275. "Guinea coup head could fight poll", BBC News, 16 April 2009, news.bbc.co.uk/2/hi/8001659.stm (accessed 2 March 2011).
276. Known by its original name as Forum des Forces Vives de la Nation.
277. See "Bloody Monday: The September 28 Massacre and Rapes by Security Forces in Guinea", Human Rights Watch, December 2009 1-56432-584-9.
278. Ibid.
279. ECOWAS Condemns Violence in Guinea, Appeals for Calm: Press Release N°: 3/2007 24, January 2007.
280. The president is alleged to have personally intervened to secure the release of some officials of his administration who had been charged and convicted of corruption and embezzlement of state funds.
281. Interview with Zaba N. Jacqueline Marie, Political Advisor, Office of the Special Representative of the President of ECOWAS Commission in Guinea, Conakry, 12 April 2011.
282. "ECOWAS suspends Guinea until democracy restored", Reuters News, 10 January 2009 <http://in.reuters.com/article/2009/01/10/guinea-ecowas-idINLA58450120090110> (accessed 2 March 2011).
283. "Senegalese president urges recognition of Camara's junta", France 24 International News, 27 December 2008, <http://www.france24.com/en/20081227-senegalese-president-urges-recognition-camaras-junta/> (accessed 2 March 2011).
284. "ECOWAS suspends Guinea", RFI Article, 10 January 2009, www.rfi.fr/actufr/articles/109/article_77158.asp (accessed 2 March 2011).
285. The ICG-G includes representatives from the UN, the EU, the Mano River Union, the International Organisation of la Francophonie (OIF), the Organisation of the Islamic Conference (OIC), and the Community of Sahel-Saharan States (CEN-SAD), as well as the African members and the permanent members of the UN Security Council.
286. Interview with Zaba N. Jacqueline Marie, Op. Cit.
287. United Nations Department of Political Affairs. (2010, Fall). Preventive Diplomacy in West Africa. Politically Speaking, p. 1;6.
288. ECOWAS to contribute 500,000 dollars to Guinea's electoral commission, Press Release N°006/2008, 5 February 2008.
289. Observer mission for the second round of the 2010 presidential election in Guinea, Press Release N°: 176/2010 8 November 2010.
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291. Human Rights Watch, World Report 2011, p.127.
292. Reuters (24 February 2013). "Guinea opposition pulls out of legislative elections process". <http://www.reuters.com/article/2013/02/24/guinea-elections-opposition-idUSL6N0BO39F20130224> (accessed 2 March 2011).
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294. See Bah, S. A. (2009). "Military Rule, Human Rights Abuses & Elections: Guinea's Quest for a Peaceful Transition", Presentation at the Annual Africa Diplomatic Forum organised on behalf of the Institute of African Studies and the School of International and Public Affairs Pan-African Network (SPAN), Columbia University, available at www.cic.nyu.edu/peacekeeping/conflict/docs/bah_militaryrule.pdf (accessed 21 February 2011).
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Introduction



Niger, a former French colony, is a vast arid land and drought-prone state. Its population of about 17.8 million is comprised mostly of Hausa and Djerma-Songhai people although the Fulani and Tuareg inhabitants also form about 18 per cent of the entire population.²⁹⁹ Niger shares borders with seven neighbours, presenting a peculiar security challenge to the uranium-rich country.³⁰⁰ Over the years, floods as well as food and water crises causing severe famine have plagued the country. With about

half of the population in dire need of food aid, there have been persistent international calls for urgent action.³⁰¹ In 2009, the UN rated Niger the least desirable place to live in³⁰², prompting furious agitations from certain quarters of the government. The country continues to place bottom on the UN human development index.³⁰⁴

Since the 1990s, Niger has experienced low-level insurgencies by Tuareg rebels who seek more autonomy and demand greater share of mining profits. Niger's political history is somehow a mixture of democratic and military regimes spanning the post-colonial era to the present regime.³⁰⁵ ECOWAS has been quite active in the country since the assassination of President Ibrahim Mainassara Baré in April 1999. However, this chapter focuses on regional diplomatic and political initiatives undertaken during the regime of President Mamadou Tandja, whose undemocratic manipulation of the constitution and unlawful attempts to consolidate his mandate beyond the constitutional limit instigated an equally unlawful and controversial military coup d'état in 2010. It further highlights the mediation efforts undertaken by ECOWAS and the international community, as well as the factors contributing to the success of the peace process.

A Tale of Two Coups d'état

After two successive failed attempts, Mamadou Tandja was elected President of Niger in 1999 in a democratic electoral process widely hailed by the international community as fair and transparent.³⁰⁶ Subsequent to his re-election in 2004 for a second term, President Tandja was scheduled to step down from office in December 2009 under the two-term limit prescribed by the Nigerien constitution.³⁰⁷ However, in the period preceding the 2009 presidential elections, Tandja unpredictably began to seek questionable ways to extend his rule for another three years. This position created immediate contention between him and the other arms of government, firstly the legislature and then the judiciary. One of the main reasons he cited for seeking to extend his term in office was 'popular demand' by the Nigerien people for him to stay and complete several crucial developmental and

industrial projects including a hydroelectric dam, an oil refinery, and a uranium mine.³⁰⁸

Tandja's resolve to hold a referendum that would permit him to change the constitution to allow for a three-year extension of his term was met with firm disapproval from the National Assembly, opposition and civil society groups. In an effort to subvert the National Assembly, the President sought the endorsement of the country's Constitutional Court. However, the Court, particularly without the approval of the National Assembly, deemed his attempt unconstitutional. Hours after the Constitutional Court's statement, the president announced the dissolution of the National Assembly and established a Commission to draft a constitution on which the referendum scheduled for 4 August 2009 would be based. In addition, the new constitution would remove presidential term limits and allow the president to contest the next elections. Mass protests and rallies were held with the formation of a coalition of political parties, trade unions and civil groups called the Front for Defence of Democracy (FDD), which accused the President of high treason and eventually challenged the presidential decree before the country's Constitutional Court.

On 12 June 2009, the Constitutional Court delivered a legally binding verdict declaring that the referendum could not be held without the approval of the dissolved National Assembly. On 24 June, Tandja requested that the Constitutional Court rescind its ruling, but the opposition and particularly the trade union alliance intensified pressure on the government. They conducted a 24-hour general strike across the nation to protest the President's referendum proposal. The Court on 26 June upheld its earlier judgment and the President, in a speech broadcast on national television, assumed emergency powers and declared his intention to rule by decree.³⁰⁹ A few days later, he dissolved the Constitutional Court and appointed a new one, eliciting furious agitations and condemnations from opposition groups in the country as well as the larger international community. Despite increasing pressure from regional and international groups and donors, the referendum was held as scheduled, even though opposition parties boycotted the exercise. The contentious referendum allowed President Tandja to remain in power for a further three years after the end of his term in December 2009, removed existing term limits, and transformed the semi-presidential system of government into a presidential system. On 20 October, legislative elections were held to replace the dissolved National Assembly and Tandja's party won the majority of the seats. The voting was boycotted by the opposition and subjected to stern international criticism.

President Tandja's actions attracted huge discontent, and on 18 February 2010, he was toppled in a military coup and arrested along with several members of his cabinet.³¹⁰ A ruling junta named the Supreme Council for the Restoration of Democracy (CSR), led by General Salou Djibo, was formed by the putschists. The junta also announced the suspension of the country's constitution and all state institutions, with a promise to restore democracy, although they were silent on a specific timeframe. News of the takeover prompted euphoria on the streets of the capital Niamey and other parts of the country even if amidst public apprehension. Former cabinet minister Mahamadou Danda was named as Prime Minister in a 20-member transitional government. Voters approved a new constitution in October 2010 to curtail the presidential powers introduced by Tandja. The country struggled through the transitional period due to limited resources

to organise democratic elections. There were also reported cases of attempted counter-coups that complicated the transitional process.

ECOWAS Intervention in Niger

Prior to the military coup d'état that dislodged President Tandja from office, the ECOWAS Mediation and Security Council made a series of efforts to get the government of President Tandja to abide by the provisions of his country's constitution and the sub-regional supplementary protocol.³¹¹ At the 36th Ordinary Summit of Heads of State and Government in Abuja on 22 June 2009, regional leaders reviewed the political developments in Niger and expressed concern over President Tandja's attempt to maintain power through unconstitutional means.³¹² Additionally, ECOWAS initiated other diplomatic efforts including a visit of the Council of the Wise and a tripartite delegation of the President of the ECOWAS Commission, Dr Mohammed Ibn Chambas, the Special Representative of the UN Secretary-General to West Africa, Ambassador Said Djinnit, as well as the AU Special Representative to Cote d'Ivoire, Ambroise Niyonsaba, who met with President Tandja in Niamey. ECOWAS eventually suspended Niger from its membership after a delegation comprising the President of Liberia, Ellen Johnson Sirleaf, the President of the ECOWAS Commission, and former Nigerian leader, General Abdulsalami Abubakar, failed to prevail on the Nigerien leader to postpone the legislative elections.³¹³ The US government and EU followed with the suspension of millions of dollars in aid to Niger.³¹⁴ Additionally, the EU invited Nigerien authorities to Brussels to hold consultations on a way out of the political deadlock.³¹⁵

ECOWAS also held two meetings in Abuja to consider the constitutional deadlock in Niger. On 21 December 2009, ECOWAS began the Inter-Nigerien Dialogue under the facilitation of General Abdulsalami Abubakar. The mediation team comprised General Seth Obeng, former Chief of Defence Staff of Ghana and former force Commander of the United Nations Peacekeeping Force in Liberia, General (Rtd) Ishola Williams of Nigeria, Senator Lawan Gana Guba, former Minister of Cooperation of Nigeria, Ambassador Bagudu Hirse, former Minister of Foreign Affairs of Nigeria, Dr. Abdel-Fatau Musah, Director of Political Affairs at the ECOWAS Commission, Ambassador Wisdom Baiye of Nigeria, and Mr Babacar Guèye of Sénégal. Others were Dr. Kwaku Asante-Darko of the African Union, Mr Mohamed Diagne, former head of ECOWAS Bureau in Ouagadougou, and Mrs. Pierrette Kpegba, Secretary to the President of the ECOWAS Commission. General Abubakar later proposed an interim government of national reconciliation. However, little progress was made under this arrangement due to significant differences between the new government and the opposition. On 16 February 2010, the regional leaders called another meeting during their 37th Ordinary Summit of Heads of State and Government in which they appointed then Senegalese president, Abdoulaye Wade, as mediator to support Abdulsalami Abubakar and Acting President of Nigeria, Dr. Goodluck Ebele Jonathan, in negotiating the dispute between President Tandja and the opposition.³¹⁶ Two days after the Abuja Summit, President Tandja was toppled in a coup when a military junta besieged the presidential palace and seized him with other members of his cabinet.

Towards Civilian Rule

Like the constitutional manipulation, the military coup attracted widespread criticism with many calling for a speedy return to civilian rule. The AU suspended Niger after the military takeover and called for a swift return to constitutional order. The UN Secretary-General as well as the EU and France also urged the junta to restore constitutional order.³¹⁷ In spite of being a major critic of the CSRD's unconstitutional accession to power, ECOWAS continued to engage the military junta in negotiations aimed at returning Niger to civilian rule. Through the Inter-Nigerien Dialogue, opposition parties, civil society groups and other stakeholders engaged the transitional government in series of dialogue despite significant differences. A proposal put forth by the transitional government included modification of key legal texts such as the Electoral Code, the Political Parties Charter, the Status of the Opposition, and the National Council for Political Dialogue (CNDP).³¹⁸ However, it was the timelines proposed for presidential elections in 2012 and legislative elections in 2014 that generated contention as the opposition parties viewed the lag as an attempt to entrench the rule of an illegal 6th republic. At a time when the military junta in Guinea had repeatedly reneged on its promise to hold presidential elections and hand over power to a civilian government, it is not surprising that regional leaders exerted enormous pressure on the stakeholders in the Nigerien peace process. Diplomatic efforts yielded results as the junta held presidential elections on 31 January 2011 as previously pledged.

Ten candidates contested the presidential elections among which were two former Prime Ministers, Seyni Oumarou and Hama Amadou, as well as veteran politician Mahamadou Issoufou. Issoufou's party received 36 per cent of the votes and was trailed by former Prime Minister Seyni Oumarou with 23 per cent of the votes. The sub-regional bloc monitored events closely by deploying an election observation mission to Niger.³¹⁹ Although turnout was a low 50 per cent for a population that was perhaps experiencing electoral fatigue from six elections in just twenty months, the process was deemed free, fair and transparent. Since no one presidential candidate obtained an absolute majority, a runoff election was scheduled for 12 March with the two front-runners: Mahamadou Issoufou and Seyni Oumarou.

Less than a week before the elections, representatives of civil organisations and the armed forces signed a stability agreement ("republican pact") to affirm their "will to... build a democratic, social and well-governed republic and to guarantee the stability of the country".³²⁰ Given the erratic political history of Niger, the pact was necessary to ensure that civil society and political parties adhere to the principles of good governance and democracy whereas security forces avoid armed intervention to challenge constitutional rule. Mahamadou Issoufou won the run-off election, which was described as "an example for the rest of Africa" by the president of the CSRD.³²¹ He prevailed with about 58 per cent of the votes to round off a year's relatively peaceful transition to civilian rule. However, there was allegedly a foiled plot to assassinate the president a few months after he assumed office.³²² Since then, the political atmosphere in the country has remained relatively stable though internal and external security threats have contributed to fragility in the country.

Analysing Regional Intervention in Niger

Regional intervention can be said to have succeeded in restoring constitutional order in Niger. Besides achieving this goal and the large-scale violence averted during the period of the crises, ECOWAS diplomatic and political intervention can be described as relatively successful. ECOWAS became the most important external actor in the Nigerien crisis and many actors believe that though ECOWAS could not initially dissuade President Tandja from manipulating the constitution, continuous dialogue with all the political actors gave hope to the Nigerien people and succeeded in averting possible violence in the country.³²³ It was General Abubakar's unflinching mediation that eventually brought both the opposition and the government of President Tandja to the negotiating table for the first time, in what subsequently became the Inter-Nigerien dialogue. There would not be a peaceful resolution if initial efforts to facilitate dialogue between the disputing parties had failed. While there were significant differences between the government and opposition at various stages of the crisis, continuous dialogue yielded success when presidential and legislative elections were held to return the country to democratic rule. The success of the mediation efforts is, however, attributed to both internal and external factors. Internal factors include a vigilant civil society, relatively strong political institutions, and the existence of a legal-institutional framework. Some of the external factors which contributed to the peace process are the experience and personality of the mediator, strong political will on the part of the regional body to intervene, as well as the political and economic pressure exerted by the international community.

Specific elements of regional intervention are further discussed below:

Choice of Mediator: The choice of the mediator was a critical factor in the success of the peace process. To be successful, the employment of skilled mediators is a critical factor for effective mediation.³²⁴ The mediator's personality should appeal to the disputing parties and instil confidence in the negotiation process. This is possible if the mediator is seen to be neutral by the parties in dispute. In mediating Niger's political dispute, the choice of General Abubakar was critical in the peace process. Unlike in the Ivorian crisis, where the choice of a mediator became a huge source of contention, General Abubakar had a particular appeal to both the military regime and the opposition groups. Having presided over the Liberian peace talks between Charles Taylor and the rebel opposition in 2003, and appointed United Nations Secretary-General's Special Envoy to Democratic Republic of Congo, as well as African Union Special Envoy to Chad and Sudan, General Abubakar's mediation and facilitation experience was a great asset. He also worked with an experienced team of mediators who appreciated the local dynamics and nuances of conflict resolution in the African context. Some members of his support team had been engaged in several high-profile mediation processes in the region including as part of the ECOWAS Council of the Wise.

Early Action/Political Will: Early and persistent intervention in Niger contributed significantly to the success of regional efforts. ECOWAS' diplomatic efforts through its high-powered delegation, including President Ellen Johnson Sirleaf and Mohammed Ibn Chambas, has been deemed a demonstration of political will by ECOWAS to use available diplomatic options to resolve the crisis. It is also believed that the gradual and

unrelenting nature of ECOWAS intervention efforts increased pressure on the Tandja regime and the military junta to preserve the fragile political order that was established in the aftermath of the 1999 post-coup transition.³²⁵ At a time of mounting political tensions, ECOWAS engagement with large sections of political stakeholders and civil society instilled confidence in the population. Regional leaders also benefited from the lessons of the Guinea crisis to deal decisively with the Nigerien situation. ECOWAS had, at the time of the military coup in Niger, learnt bitter lessons through the events of the 28 September stadium massacre in Guinea that nearly brought the country to the brink of a civil war. Hence, the firmness of ECOWAS was brought to bear on Niger with the immediate suspension of the country after President Tandja defied directives to shelve the 2009 legislative elections. This action marked the first in the history of ECOWAS where a sitting president has been sanctioned for constitutional manipulation.

Vigilant Civil Society/Strong Institutions: Well functioning civil society constitutes a potent tool for crisis prevention and peace promotion in the region. The central role played by civil society groups in the political process was also a major contributory factor to the prevailing democratic atmosphere. Two Commissions for National Dialogue have been established by presidential decree, with government represented by the Prime Minister.³²⁶ Particularly, the National Council for Political Dialogue (CNDP) creates a platform for consultations on issues of prevention, resolution, and management of political disputes.³²⁷ Additionally, the existence of a Constitution that clearly stipulates the limits of executive power, as well as a functioning legislative body willing to apply the provisions of the Constitution, reinforced the legitimacy of the Constitutional Court's ruling on the dispute. President Tandja's earlier attempt to force a referendum was met with protests from Trade Unions and political parties as well as strong resistance from the National Assembly and the country's Constitutional Court. The collective resistance of these institutions contributed to delegitimising Tandja's regime, thereby adding to political pressure on his government. Likewise, their independence proved crucial in restoring democracy to Niger. However, polarisation of civil society along political lines is an impediment to effective dialogue, with parties coming to the negotiating table only where the process holds potential benefits.³²⁸ At the same time, grassroots politics and ethnic tensions are a major threat to peace and stability in the country. Niger also has to contend with ethnic Tuareg insurgents demanding fair representation and autonomy. The appointment of Brigi Rafini, an ethnic Tuareg, as Prime Minister has, however, contributed to easing tensions between the government and Tuareg community and improved the general political atmosphere.

International Pressure: External actors, particularly the EU, UN and US, played a critical role in supporting the political process in Niger. For a country that relies heavily on bilateral and multilateral development and military aid, the exertion of real economic muscle, coupled with political pressure by the international community contributed significantly to the process. The EU, France, US, World Bank and IMF are important donors in Niger. After the suspension of Niger by ECOWAS, the EU and US followed with the suspension of foreign aid to Niger, adding another layer of pressure on the government. It can be argued, however, that Tandja's intransigence to proceed with the referendum and subsequent extension of his mandate was influenced, to some extent, by his close association with external private investors. The excuse of completing

critical infrastructural projects cited by Niger's President Tandja as among the reasons for extending his mandate had as much to do with the quest to retain power as the \$5 billion Chinese-financed oil refinery and the \$1.7 billion agreement with French nuclear giant Areva to build Africa's biggest uranium mine. Although the EU and the US government suspended millions of dollars in aid to Niger, these private investment deals effectively dwarfed any development aid and provided great incentive for Tandja to circumvent diplomatic pressure and cling onto power. It is absolutely essential for conglomerates to ensure that their investments do not serve as catalysts for regimes to entrench themselves beyond constitutionally mandated limits.

Conclusion

Mediation efforts in Niger's constitutional crisis provide one of the success stories in the ECOWAS region. In addition to the commitment and diligence of regional leaders, an active civil society and institutional framework contributed to the restoration of peace to Niger following the 2009 political crisis. However, both internal and external factors contributed to the success of the peace process. Niger's political crisis occurred at a time when ECOWAS had benefited greatly from their experience in resolving violent conflicts in West Africa, including in Liberia, Sierra Leone, Guinea-Bissau, Côte d'Ivoire and Guinea. Through engagement with various actors and dealing with varying conflict issues, the regional bloc has developed an extensive mechanism for conflict resolution and management. This meant regional leaders had the normative arsenal at their disposal, such as the 2001 Supplementary Protocol on Democracy and Good Governance, to intervene in Niger. The political will to engage the disputing parties at an early stage of the dispute, as well as the skills and expertise of the mediation team proved crucial in the inter-Nigerien dialogue process. The Nigerien peace process illustrates the benefits of early intervention as well as the advantages of unanimous application of external political and economic pressure. ECOWAS intervened in Niger at a time when any form of political pressure could be cited as undue external interference in the affairs of a sovereign country. However, learned lessons from previous experience in the political crises in Togo and Guinea provided added incentive for early engagement.

It is important to acknowledge that external efforts would not have succeeded without an active civil society willing to engage in restoring democracy to the country. The existence of an institutional structure for dialogue attests to the importance of local structures for conflict resolution and the need to support these sources of resilience for sustainable democratic governance in Niger.

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Conclusion

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The need to consolidate and maintain peace and security within a sub-region that is as culturally diverse, linguistically heterogeneous and possesses complex historical narratives such as West Africa is very important. The nature of the diversity and the socio-economic realities found in the sub-region make its natural exposure to conflict inescapable. The region has no option but to attach high importance to all morally sound actions necessary for peace to prevail.

As highlighted in the preceding chapters, the Economic Community of West Africa States (ECOWAS) plays a pivotal role in the realisation of peace and security within the sub-region. The different country experiences discussed in the various chapters illustrate numerous successes of ECOWAS interventions in conflict settings in the sub-region. Chapter 2 elucidated on the importance of key ECOWAS conflict prevention organs such as the Early Warning System, the Mediation and Security Council, Office of the Special Representative, the Council of the Wise, and Special Mediators who together form part of its comprehensive architecture for conflict prevention and management. The violent conflicts that engulfed the Mano River region between 1989 and the 1990s, and the conflicts in Guinea-Bissau and Côte d'Ivoire in 2002 did, however, expose the inherent weaknesses in the ECOWAS normative framework for tackling conflicts. The contributions to this volume illustrate the numerous failed attempts at mediating conflicts and attest to the fact that there is the need for special attention to be given to mediation within the ECOWAS region.

The apparent weaknesses were partially addressed in 2008 when Member States adopted the ECOWAS Conflict Prevention Framework (ECPF). The ECPF is a comprehensive operational conflict prevention and peacebuilding strategy that draws upon human and financial resources at the regional and international levels to creatively transform conflict.³²⁹ The framework has also become the main guide for enhancing cohesion and synergy between relevant ECOWAS departments on conflict prevention.³³⁰ Despite this very important development, the very nature of mediation in the present peace and security architecture is being forced to undergo continuous changes because of the changing nature and complexity of conflicts and the actors involved. Successful mediation is now contingent on the active involvement of several stakeholders from varying constituencies presenting vested interests in dialogue. The efficacy of mediation in such a milieu, therefore, depends on a well-framed strategy and skills on the part of the mediator and their support team. As the processes leading to the resolution of the Liberian conflict clearly depict, any approach to mediation involving a multiplicity of actors is likely to be fraught with several challenges. How to make a cohesive whole out of the independent third-party peacemaking initiatives; building on the positive results of earlier mediations; keeping simultaneous intervention by different actors from cancelling each other out; and bringing along the many interests that lie behind the mediation endeavour, are some challenges that should be overcome.³³¹

So far, the narratives provided by the various authors illustrate some of the structural and systematic flaws in the way mediation has been approached in West Africa in the last couple of decades. In an extensive inquiry into the current peace architecture, Laurie Nathan³³² outlines key deficits facing the enterprise of mediation on the African continent in general. He contends that there is inadequate training and nurturing of international mediators on the continent and only few opportunities exist for such training. According to him, this situation has limited the pool of proficient mediators on the continent, and this applies equally to the West African region. Another major deficit is the inability of 'high-level' mediators to broker long-lasting peace on the continent. Some of those appointed turn out to be poor mediators and end up exacerbating the conflict. International organisations also repeatedly deploy mediators in complex and protracted conflicts without adequate political, technical, administrative and financial support.³³³ In addressing these challenges, attention should be placed on a comprehensive look at the skill set deficit in mediation practice in the sub-region. Instead of relying solely on the clout that former presidents and notable personalities bring to the mediation process, particular attention should be given to mediation training and major skill set acquisition for those who provide support to the process. In addition, mediators in the sub-region should acquire grounded knowledge and basic skills to enhance effectiveness and functionality in their assigned roles.

The authors have also illustrated that a very important element that serves as the fulcrum for successful mediation is the ability to rally all stakeholders and key actors towards the acceptance of the process of mediation before it begins. Although this is not a feat that can be easily achieved, it should be the cardinal thrust behind any mediation effort. The successes chalked by ECOWAS and other regional bodies in facilitating the peace process in Sierra Leone can, to a very large extent, be attributed to the role played by non-state actors like the Women's Movement for Peace and the Inter-Religious Committee towards the acceptance of the process of mediation and negotiation.

In conclusion, mediation should be positioned as a specialised activity that can be relied upon to douse the threat of conflicts in their incipient stages. In this light, the effort being made by ECOWAS to have a functional mediation unit comes at the right time. However, such a unit can only realise its objectives if concrete steps are taken to ensure that issues of adequate staffing, sufficient funding for activities, appropriate logistics, and the mandate for its entry into conflicts are clear and well-crafted. The challenges being encountered by mediators in resolving some of the protracted low-intensity conflicts, like that of the Casamance region in Senegal and the Nkonya–Alavanyo area in Ghana, clearly depict the inherent complex drivers of conflicts in the sub-region and bring to the fore the utility of mediation. The chapters in this volume have also demonstrated that conflicts can be avoided if issues relating to marginalisation, official responsiveness, equity, the economy, and the general tenets of good governance are properly addressed by the leadership of the respective governments in the sub-region. Finally, the chapters on Sierra Leone, Liberia and Niger highlight the need for the initiation of early mediation, and also the importance of having the appropriate enforcing mechanisms in place to secure the negotiated terms. The various authors have shown that the mediation process can be effectively used in preventing conflicts, but the narratives also bring out the need for Member States to attach importance to its utility and consciously support ECOWAS in its application as a conflict prevention tool in the sub-region.

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