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ASSESSING THE CONFLICT RESOLUTION ROLE OF REGIONAL ORGANIZATIONS IN WEST AFRICA: THE CASE OF ECOWAS IN LIBERIA.

Abstract

What are the causal factors that led to ECOWAS's failure in its conflict resolution role in Liberia's civil war during the 1990's? The Economic Community of West African States (ECOWAS) is a regional organization established in early 1975. Although it was established with the aim of an economic development mission, but since 1990 it included conflict resolution agenda by creating The Economic Community of West African States Cease-fire Monitoring Group (ECOMOG). In 1991, a year after its creation, ECOMOG intervened in Liberia to restore peace and security. It is assisted in its Liberian conflict resolution mission by other international organizations such as the United Nations (UN) and the African Union (AU). So at the international level, the UN Security Council supported ECOWAS in Liberia with 386 observers and the AU played the role of facilitator for the organization of the presidential elections in 1997. At the regional level, ECOWAS has a lack of common interest and identity because between its French-speaking and English-speaking member countries, there is a difference of opinion when making decisions for its intervention in one of its member countries at war. Finally, at the domestic level, the lack of experience of ECOWAS leaders in the field of conflict resolution and its structural failures have not facilitated the task of ECOWAS in Liberia. This article consists of three different parts that include, Analysis of the role of international organizations, the problem of common interest

and identity and the lack of experience of ECOWAS leaders in the field of conflict resolution and structural failures of the ECOWAS.

Keywords: Conflict Resolution, Regional Organizations, West Africa, ECOWAS, Liberia

BATI AFRİKA'DAKİ BÖLGESEL KURULUŞLARIN ÇATIŞMA ÇÖZME ROLÜLERİNİN DEĞERLENDİRİLMESİ: LİBERYA'DAKİ ECOWAS ÖRNEĞİ.

Özet

ECOWAS'ın 1990'larda Liberya'nın iç savaşında çatışma çözme rolünde başarısız olmasına yol açan nedensel faktörler nelerdir? Batı Afrika Devletleri Ekonomik Topluluğu (ECOWAS), 1975'in başlarında kurulmuş bölgesel bir organizasyondur. Ekonomik kalkınma misyonu amacıyla kurulmuş olmasına rağmen 1990'dan beri Batı Afrika Devletleri Ekonomik Topluluğu Ateşkes İzleme Grubu'nu (ECOMOG) oluşturarak çatışma çözümü gündemini içerdidir. 1991 yılında, yani kuruluşundan bir yıl sonra, ECOMOG barış ve güvenliği sağlamak için Liberya'ya müdahale etti. Liberya çatışma çözme görevinde Birleşmiş Milletler (BM) ve Afrika Birliği (AU) gibi diğer uluslararası kuruluşlar tarafından desteklenmiştir. Dolayısıyla uluslararası düzeyde, BM Güvenlik Konseyi Liberya'daki ECOWAS'ı 386 gözlemciyle destekledi ve Afrika Birliği 1997'deki cumhurbaşkanlığı seçimlerinin düzenlenmesinde kolaylaştırıcı rolü oynadı. Bölgesel düzeyde, ECOWAS'ın ortak çıkar ve kimlik eksikliği var çünkü Fransızca konuşan ve İngilizce konuşan üye ülkeler arasında, savaş dönemindeki üye ülkelerinden birine müdahalesi için kararlar alınırken fikir ayrılığı vardır. Son olarak, ulusal düzeyde, ECOWAS liderlerinin çatışma çözümü alanında deneyimlerinin olmaması ve yapısal başarısızlıkları, ECOWAS'ın Liberya'daki görevini kolaylaştırmamıştır. Bu makale, uluslararası örgütlerin rolünün analizi, ortak çıkar ve kimlik sorunu ve ECOWAS liderlerinin çatışma çözümü alanındaki deneyim eksikliği ve ECOWAS'ın yapısal başarısızlıklarını içeren üç farklı bölümden oluşmaktadır.

Anahtar kelimeler: Çatışma Çözümü, Bölgesel Örgütler, Batı Afrika, ECOWAS, Liberya

1. Introduction

ECOWAS (Economic Community of West African States) created in 1975¹ is the West African organization that resolves conflicts in its member states since the 1990s in the event of civil war. The Economic Community of West African States Cease-fire Monitoring Group (ECOMOG) is an ECOWAS military force created in 1990² to ensure peacekeeping missions and security in the event of war in one of its member countries . Liberia was the first country to experience the civil war between 1989 and 1997³ in which ECOWAS made its first experiences of conflict

¹ECOWAS, accessed October 25, 2021, <https://www.ecowas.int/about-ecowas/basic-information>

²Folder S-1834-0146-0005 - Economic Community of West African States Monitoring Group (ECOMOG), accessed October 25, 2021, <https://search.archives.un.org/economic-community-of-west-african-states-monitoring-group-ecomog-2>

³Aning, E. K. (1999). Eliciting compliance from Warlords: the ECOWAS experience in Liberia, 1990–1997. *Review of African Political Economy*, 26(81), 335-348.

resolution missions in 1990. How to evaluate the achievements and failures of ECOWAS conflict resolution in Liberia between 1989 and 1997 by taking into account the influence of international organizations in international level, the failures of ECOWAS leaders in regional level, and state weakness and role of individual leaders in a domestic level? To answer this question, I will base myself on three factors including the influence of international organizations, the failures of ECOWAS leaders and the weaknesses of the Liberian state and the role of individual leaders. Some studies have already been carried out on the question of the resolution of the conflict in Liberia by several authors, including Obi, CI (2009)⁴ in a comparative study showed that ECOWAS has played the role of maintaining peace and security to bring back peace and security in four different countries such as Liberia, Sierra Leone, Guinea Bissau, and Ivory Coast. In this perspective Adebajo, A., (2002),⁵ in his study on the civil war in Liberia demonstrated the role played by Nigeria and ECOMOG to restore peace and security. In research by Adibe, CE (1997), “The Liberian conflict and the ECOWAS-UN partnership”⁶ concluded that ECOWAS's partnership with the UN (the United Nations Organization has made it possible to resolve the Liberian conflict. In the same vein, Ofuately-Kodjoe, W. (1994)⁷ analyzed how ECOWAS, a West African regional organization, became involved in the internal conflict in Liberia to ensure peacekeeping and bring about peace. Adeleke, A. (1995)⁸ made an analysis at two levels which are the politics and the diplomacy used by ECOWAS for the maintenance of peace in West Africa taking the case of Liberia Aning, E. K. (1999) demonstrated in his study entitled “Eliciting compliance from Warlords: the ECOWAS experience in Liberia,”⁹ that warlords have conforming characteristics in the Liberian civil war. My research framework is quite original because it studies factors at three levels. To conduct this study, five main theories (Neofunctionalism, Social Constructivism, Classical Realism, Liberalism and Third World theory) will be used to analyze the three different levels of this study. It is eclecticism which is defined as the use of several theories to explain different phenomena in a research. These theories will be explicitly defined in the part of the theoretical framework. This article has two essential parts, including the theoretical framework entitled the Reassessing the ECOWAS Conflict Resolution Role in 1990's and the analytical framework for reassessing the ECOWAS conflict resolution role in 1990's composed of four sub-parts, the first sub-part entitled the ECOWAS: from economic integration to a regional security organization, the second sub-part analyzes the international level: the role of international organizations in Liberia Civil War, the third sub-part addresses the regional level: the lack of common interest and identity between ECOWAS member states and finally the fourth subsection analyzes the domestic level: the weaknesses of ECOWAS leaders and

⁴Obi, C. I. (2009). Economic community of west african states on the ground: Comparing peacekeeping in liberia, sierra leone, guinea bissau, and côte D'ivoire. *African Security*, 2(2-3), 119-135.

⁵Adebajo, A. (2002). *Building Peace in West Africa: Liberia, Sierra Leone, and Guinea-Bissau*. Lynne Rienner Publishers, 43-111.

⁶Adibe, C. E. (1997). The Liberian conflict and the ECOWAS-UN partnership. *Third World Quarterly*, 18(3), 471-488.

⁷Ofuately-Kodjoe, W. (1994). Regional organizations and the resolution of internal conflict: The ECOWAS intervention in Liberia. *International Peacekeeping*, 1(3), 261-302.

⁸Adeleke, A. (1995). The politics and diplomacy of peacekeeping in West Africa: The ECOWAS operation in Liberia. *The Journal of Modern African Studies*, 33(4), 569-593.

⁹Aning, E. K. (1999). Eliciting compliance from Warlords: the ECOWAS experience in Liberia, 1990–1997. *Review of African Political Economy*, 26(81), 335-348.

structural limitations in Liberia Civil War. So, within the theoretical framework how to reassess the ECOWAS conflict resolution role in 1990's?

2. Reassessing the ECOWAS Conflict Resolution Role in 1990's: Theoretical Framework

Neofunctionalism is a theory that explains the process of economic integration¹⁰ like the case of ECOWAS. In this article this neofunctionalist theory will be adapted to explain the conflict resolution mission in Liberia from 1990 to 1997. States are coming together to solve their economic problems in order to build a powerful and competitive economy. Intergovernmental relations¹¹ which are also called multilateral relations between several states and bilateral between two states are based on win-win agreements. So we can adapt neofunctionalism to explain ECOWAS' conflict resolution mission during the Liberian civil war because strong regional economic integration is only possible in times of peace and security. So, the economically integrated states within ECOWAS have a duty to intervene in a member country to restore peace and security in the event of civil war. The second theory that we want to use to explain the identity question within ECOWAS is social constructivism¹² which is a theory that allows the analysis of intangible things or subjective objects such as identity, ethnicity, religion and others. Thirdly, to explain the intervention of international organizations alongside ECOWAS in the resolution of the conflict in Liberia, classical realism¹³ which is a theory allowing the interpretation of objective things will be useful. It will allow us to understand the reasons why international organizations have intervened in the Liberian conflict resolution mission. Fourth, liberalism¹⁴ will be used to explain ECOWAS member states lack of common interests because liberal theory is known to interpret phenomena (rights, freedom, security, economy and others) within institutions like ECOWAS. Finally, the fifth theory is Third World theory¹⁵ to describe the weaknesses of ECOWAS member countries because third worldism refers to poor countries that are often highly indebted. So, within the analytical framework how to reassess the ECOWAS conflict resolution role in 1990's?

3. Reassessing the ECOWAS Conflict Resolution Role in 1990's: Analytical Framework

In this part we will try to approach the analytical framework which is the reassessing the ECOWAS conflict resolution role in 1990's by first showing how the ECOWAS of a West African regional economic integration also opted for a conflict resolution agenda in 1990.¹⁶ Then, the analysis will focus on three levels of analysis including the international level (the role of international organizations in Liberia Civil War), the regional level (the lack of common interest and identity between ECOWAS member states) and finally the level domestic (the weaknesses of ECOWAS leaders and structural limitations in Liberia Civil War). So why from the Economic Community of West African States with an exclusively economic objective, ECOWAS became a conflict resolution institution in 1990?

¹⁰ Schmitter, P. C. (2004). Neo-neofunctionalism. Na, 2.

¹¹ Law, D. (Ed.). (2007). Intergovernmental organisations and security sector reform. LIT Verlag Münster, 3.

¹² Hirtle, J. S. P. (1996). Social constructivism. English Journal, 85(1), 91.

¹³ Firoozabadi, J. D., & Ashkezari, M. Z. (2016). Neo-classical realism in international relations. Asian Social Science, 12(6), 95-99.

¹⁴ Bell, D. (2014). What is liberalism?. Political theory, 42(6), 682-715.

¹⁵ Neuman, S. G. (1998). International relations theory and the Third World, St. Martin's Press, 31-54

¹⁶ Francis, D. (2000). ECOMOG: a new security agenda in world politics. In Africa at the Millennium. Palgrave Macmillan, London, 177-202.

3.1. ECOWAS: From Economic Integration to a Regional Security Organization

The Economic Community of West African States was created in 1975 with the main objective of economic development within its member countries. In the late 1980s, some ECOWAS member states such as Liberia in 1989¹⁷ were already showing signs of civil wars. Moreover, Liberia was the first member country of this organization to know the civil war between 1989 and 1997 because of an armed rebellion. To prevent, manage and resolve these civil wars which were already looming on the horizon, ECOWAS underwent a transformation or deepening and became a conflict resolution institution in 1990.¹⁸ Therefore, the reason for adding the conflict resolution mission ECOWAS conflict is to guarantee peace and security for its member states. Liberia being the first country to experience civil war since 1989, ECOWAS had its first experience of conflict resolution missions there. So, to resolve this Liberian civil war by ECOWAS, internationally what was the role of international organizations in the resolution of this Liberian conflict?

3.2. International Level: The Role of International Organizations in Liberia Civil War

In the resolution of the Liberian conflict between 1989 and 1997 international organizations such as the United Nations (UN) and the African Union (AU) played a role in supporting ECOWAS in its mission to resolve this conflict. The West African diplomatic system viewed as a sub-regional system is an integral part of the African regional system and global system.¹⁹ The common point of the UN and the AU is the promotion of democracy in Africa and in the world, but the UN through its Security Council can constitute peacekeepers to send to a country at war as the case of Liberia in 1993²⁰ while the AU only plays the role of facilitator for the return to democracy and therefore to peace and security without military forces. With the aim of returning the management of state power to a civilian, between 1990 and 1995 several ceasefire agreements were signed between the two opposing camps of the Liberian civil war.²¹ These agreements did not lead to a happy ending. So, for 5 years the efforts to resolve this civil crisis were doomed to failure. Thus, tensions rose more in the two warring camps because of the points of contention over the transition from power to a civilian. The military power did not want to leave power so quickly to make way for democracy. Although on September 22, 1993, the United Nations Security Council established a United Nations Observer Mission in Liberia (UNMIL).²² This observer mission was made up of soldiers and civilians. In total, the mission's crew numbered 368 observers.²³ They went to support the ECOMOG military forces which had

¹⁷Kieh Jr, G. K. (2004). Irregular warfare and Liberia's first civil war. *Journal of international and Area Studies*, 57-77.

¹⁸Francis, D. (2000). ECOMOG: a new security agenda in world politics. In *Africa at the Millennium*. Palgrave Macmillan, London, 177-202.

¹⁹Van Nieuwkerk, A. (2001). "Regionalism into Globalism? War into Peace? SADC and ECOWAS compared." *African Security Review* 10, no. 2, 6-18.

²⁰Aboagye, F. B. and BAH, A. M. S. (2004). Liberia at a Crossroads: A preliminary look at the United Nations Mission in Liberia (UNMIL) and the protection of civilians. *Institute for Security Studies Papers*, 2004, vol. 2004, no 95, 20.

²¹Adebajo, A. (2002). Liberia's civil war: Nigeria, ECOMOG, and regional security in West Africa. Lynne Rienner Publishers, 73-131,

²²Aboagye, F. B. and BAH, A. M. S. (2004). Liberia at a Crossroads: A preliminary look at the United Nations Mission in Liberia (UNMIL) and the protection of civilians. *Institute for Security Studies Papers*, 2004, vol. 2004, no 95, 20.

²³ Ibid.

been there since 1990.²⁴ UNMIL diplomats should enforce the Cotonou (Benin) peace agreement to lead to democratic elections in 1994.²⁵ Unfortunately, this agreement of country had failed and this had caused great panic because the conflict had become more intense and some UNMIL observers were kidnapped. These kidnapped UNMIL people were held hostage with ransoms. This situation had introduced another complication in the management and resolution of the Liberian civil crisis. With the diplomacy of UNMIL and ECOWAS observers in September 1994 a second ceasefire agreement was signed in the town of Akosombo in Ghana.²⁶ This agreement also failed to bring peace and security to Liberia as the fighting had not stopped. So, in October 1994, ECOMOG did not have enough logistical and financial means to continue its mission.²⁷ Likewise, the warring camps were not in the logic of agreeing on the end of the crisis. Thus, the Security Council of the United Nations had reduced to 90 the members of its mission in this country.²⁸ It was this mission of small staff that had supported ECOMOG until 1997 when all missions ended.²⁹ Despite all difficulties, ECOMOG and UNMIL had continued its operations to secure Monrovia and even took some towns around the capital from the rebels of Charles Taylor of NPFL and ULIMO-K of Alhadji Kromah.³⁰ To limit the damage caused by this Liberian civil war, in August 1995, an ECOWAS commission in charge of the crisis extended the 1995 Abuja agreement until June 15, 1997.³¹ The committee also gave an ultimatum for disarmament of the rebels until January 1997 so that the elections could be organized in May 1997.³² Precautions were taken to avoid the supply of arms and bullets to the rebels because without arms the crisis could no longer continue. In November 1996, the warring ethnic groups agreed to surrender their weapons to the UNMIL and ECOMOG missions.³³ There had been encouragement to go very towards total disarmament for the organization of democratic elections in 1997 at the latest.³⁴ In this disarmament operation, over 9,500 weapons and 1.2 million units of bullets were transferred to the military forces of UNMIL and ECOMOG.³⁵ This drop in tension allowed a move towards democratic elections.

²⁴Adibe, C. E. (1997). The Liberian conflict and the ECOWAS-UN partnership. *Third World Quarterly*, vol. 18, no 3, 471-488.

²⁵Adebajo, A. (2002). *Liberia's civil war: Nigeria, ECOMOG, and regional security in West Africa*. Lynne Rienner Publishers, 119.

²⁶Ibid, P. 131.

²⁷Ofoatey-Kodjoe, W. (1994). Regional organizations and the resolution of internal conflict: The ECOWAS intervention in Liberia. *International Peacekeeping*, vol. 1, no 3, 261-302.

²⁸Aboagye, F. B. and Bah, A. M. S. (2004). *Liberia at a Crossroads: A preliminary look at the United Nations Mission in Liberia (UNMIL) and the protection of civilians*. Institute for Security Studies Papers, 2004, vol., no 95, 20.

²⁹Adibe, C. E. (1997). The Liberian conflict and the ECOWAS-UN partnership. *Third World Quarterly*, vol. 18, no 3, 471-488.

³⁰Olonisakin, F. (1996). UN co-operation with regional organizations in peacekeeping: The experience of ECOMOG and UNOMIL in Liberia. *International Peacekeeping*, vol. 3, no 3, 33-51.

³¹Adebajo, A. (2002). *Liberia's civil war: Nigeria, ECOMOG, and regional security in West Africa*. Lynne Rienner Publishers, 181.

³²Paes, W. C. (2005). The challenges of disarmament, demobilization and reintegration in Liberia. *International Peacekeeping*, vol. 12, no 2, 253-261.

³³Nichols, R. (2005). Disarming Liberia: progress and pitfalls. *Armed and Aimless: Armed Groups, Guns and Human Security in the ECOWAS Region*, 109-43.

³⁴Harris, D. (1999). From 'warlord' to 'democratic' president: how Charles Taylor won the 1997 Liberian elections. *Journal of Modern African Studies*, 431-455.

³⁵Paes, W. C. (2005). The challenges of disarmament, demobilization and reintegration in Liberia. *International Peacekeeping*, vol. 12, no 2, 253-261.

To organize credible elections accepted by all sides in civil conflict, all social parties were involved. People delegated by the various camps of rebel ethnic groups, civilians and people from religious congregations. In February 1997 the ECOWAS diplomats who were Foreign Ministers had a meeting with these different social parties designated to fix the date of the presidential elections for May 1997.³⁶ To organize the peaceful elections without risk of clashes the team of the ECOWAS ECOMOG had received new soldiers from Benin, Burkina Faso and Niger. Refugees were invited to return to their countries to participate in the vote. The ECOWAS Mission had taken measures to promote the return of all the refugees who had expressed the desire. When this process of organizing the presidential elections was almost at an end, UN forces had left Liberia under UN instruction. It was ECOMOG and African Union (AU) that continued the mission until the elections. In late 1997, through the UN, the United Nations Peacebuilding Support Office in Liberia (UNIL) was established to strengthen peace, rebuild the country and create democratic structures.³⁷ Finally, it was under the leadership of ECOMOG that favorable conditions for the organization of free and democratic presidential and legislative elections were created and the elections were held on July 19, 1997.³⁸ After these elections Charles TAYLOR who was the party's candidate NPFL had won the presidential elections so that was how this civil war between 1989 and 1997 ended.³⁹

3.3. Regional Level: The Lack of Common Interest and Identity Between ECOWAS Member States

Within ECOWAS there is a lack of common interest and identity among member countries. For example, Nigeria intervened promptly in Liberia's civil war to support President Samuel Doe against the rebels while other ECOWAS members were not consulted.⁴⁰ At the start of the Liberian civil war, the swift intervention of Nigeria alone did not provide much in terms of a solution. Because, Nigeria was aligned behind President Samuel Doe to fight the opposing camp of Charles Taylor.⁴¹ This aid from an important ECOWAS member country was frowned upon because it lacked consultation with other members. Although Nigeria failed to support a dictatorship, other ECOWAS members had criticized this action. For this, the camp of Charles Taylor seeing himself orphaned had accelerated the armed attacks in several important cities of the country except Monrovia which was controlled by the government of Samuel Doe.⁴² So Nigeria's involvement alone in resolving this crisis was a failure. So the resolution of this Liberian civil conflict had started badly with Nigeria. The tension had rather increased

³⁶Harris, D. (1999). From 'warlord' to 'democratic' president: how Charles Taylor won the 1997 Liberian elections. *Journal of Modern African Studies*, 431-455.

³⁷Podder, S. (2013). Bridging the 'Conceptual-Contextual' Divide: Security Sector Reform in Liberia and UNMIL Transition. *Journal of Intervention and Statebuilding*, vol. 7, no 3, 353-380.

³⁸Aning, E. K. (1999). Eliciting compliance from Warlords: the ECOWAS experience in Liberia, 1990-1997. *Review of African Political Economy*, 1999, vol. 26, no 81, 335-348.

³⁹Harris, D. (1999). From 'warlord' to 'democratic' president: how Charles Taylor won the 1997 Liberian elections. *Journal of Modern African Studies*, 431-455.

⁴⁰Adebajo, A. (2002). *Liberia's civil war: Nigeria, ECOMOG, and regional security in West Africa*. Lynne Rienner Publishers, 1-19.

⁴¹Adebajo, A. (2002). *Liberia's civil war: Nigeria, ECOMOG, and regional security in West Africa*. Lynne Rienner Publishers, 73.

⁴²Outram, Q. (1997). 'It's terminal either way': an analysis of armed conflict in Liberia, 1989-1996. *Review of African Political Economy*, vol. 24, no 73, 355-371

especially in the camp of Charles Taylor who saw unjust the taking of part of Nigeria. But with the mechanism of collective actions for crisis management and resolution by ECOWAS through its military force ECOMOG and the support of other continental and global organizations, ceasefire agreements were signed for gradually lead this country towards peace and security in order to organize democratic elections.⁴³ With the aim of returning the management of state power to a civilian, between 1990 and 1995 several ceasefire agreements were signed between the two opposing camps of the Liberian civil war.⁴⁴ These agreements did not lead to a happy ending. So, for 5 years the efforts to resolve this civil crisis were doomed to failure. Under the ceasefire agreements, in December 1994, there was the Accra agreement in the Ghanaian capital.⁴⁵ Also, this had not led to the result of peace and security. In this order of thought, there were several cease-fire agreements which were doomed to failures before 1994.⁴⁶ The first is that of Bamako (November 1990); the second is the Yamassoukro Accord (October 1991); the third refers to the Cotonou Agreement (July 1993).⁴⁷ But after the failed agreements between 1990 and 1994, ECOWAS member countries decided to try yet others in Nigeria. Thus, there were two agreements in Abuja, the capital of Nigeria respectively in August 1995 and 1996, these are the Abuja I (August 1995) and Abuja II (August 1996) agreements.⁴⁸ All these agreements aimed to promote the ceasefire with the ambition of a democratic transition of state power. The most important ceasefire agreement was observed in Nigeria with Abuja I in August 1995 because seven camp leaders in civil conflict had accepted its signature.⁴⁹ It was the first time that there had been such a peace commitment. This result was obtained following negotiations by special ECOWAS diplomats. A transitional government was chosen despite some discrepancies between the conflicting rebel groups. The composition of this transitional government had raised a lot of hope in the way of resolving this crisis. But the covetousness of strategic ministerial positions between the rebel groups of Charles Taylor, George Boley and Alhadji Kromah had again engendered a rupture of peace and security. However, within ECOWAS for the political leaders of the English-speaking countries, if a member government is attacked by the rebels for example as in the case of Liberia, ECOWAS must support this government to fight against the rebels. The political leaders of the English-speaking countries opt for the protection of governments in civil war. French-speaking political leaders do not share the same opinion. For them, a government that does not respect democratic standards does not deserve the support of ECOWAS. These were signs that his mission to resolve the Liberian conflict was not won in advance.

⁴³Levitt, J. (1999). Pre-intervention trust-building, African states and enforcing the peace: the case of ECOWAS in Liberia and Sierra Leone. *Liberian Studies Journal*, vol. 24, no 1, 1-26.

⁴⁴Adebajo, A. (2002). Liberia's civil war: Nigeria, ECOMOG, and regional security in West Africa. Lynne Rienner Publishers, 73-131,

⁴⁵Adebajo, A. (2002). Liberia's civil war: Nigeria, ECOMOG, and regional security in West Africa. Lynne Rienner Publishers, 155.

⁴⁶Paes, W. C. (2005). The challenges of disarmament, demobilization and reintegration in Liberia. *International Peacekeeping*, vol. 12, no 2, 253-261.

⁴⁷Adebajo, A. (2002). Liberia's civil war: Nigeria, ECOMOG, and regional security in West Africa. Lynne Rienner Publishers, 73-155.

⁴⁸Ibid, P. 181.

⁴⁹Ibid

3.4. Domestic Level: The Weaknesses of ECOWAS Leaders and Structural Limitations in Liberia Civil War

In the resolution of the Liberian conflict between 1989 and 1997, ECOWAS had structural problems and its leaders lack of experience in the field of conflict resolution. The process of resolving the Liberian civil war has revealed that ECOWAS leaders still have to make many efforts to make their missions competitive. ECOWAS leaders did not have enough experience in conflict resolution missions because their first conflict resolution intervention was in Liberia. The leaders of this regional integration have weaknesses (lack of experience in the field of conflict resolution) that must be corrected for the organization's effectiveness. ECOWAS leaders took six months to at least a year before agreeing on the decision to intervene for conflict resolution because in the case of Liberia ECOWAS had intervened in 1991 two years after the start of the Liberian civil war. First to get involved in a war, the leaders of ECOWAS have a slow diplomacy which requires an understanding between them before going on in the member country at war. In the case of the Liberian conflict, ECOWAS leaders took five years for negotiations between member countries while the war was causing enormous damage.⁵⁰ ECOWAS conflict management and resolution mechanisms are not prompt. This administrative slowness of ECOWAS offers an opportunity to the warring camps to commit atrocities on the people. In the hierarchical composition of ECOWAS, the Heads of State are like the players and the referees at the same time. They are the references downstream and upstream of all integration decisions that they are able to influence in their interests. The Conference of Heads of State is a body that gives them these attributes of veto holders over ECOWAS decisions.⁵¹ If the Liberian civil crisis took a long time to settle, it is because decisions are often flouted for interests and friendship between leaders. In addition, in the field of combat against the rebels in Liberia, faced with the insufficiency of the number of soldiers, the logistical and financial means, the leaders of ECOWAS turned to the UN for a conflict resolution partnership that sends military equipment, blue helmets and its diplomats to start negotiations between the protagonists in civil war.⁵² In Liberia, where the American-Liberians were the sole beneficiaries of power from independence until 1992,⁵³ is just one example among many about democratic problem. For this reason, the military ruled several countries in West Africa after independence without power sharing as in the cas of Liberia. They assumed that civilians did not have a great deal of experience in running the affairs of their respective countries. They were outright flouted for the benefit of dictatorship in all its forms. As they were trained for weapons, these soldiers functioned only under dictatorship. All the leaders of ECOWAS member countries were in this perspective since democracy began on the eve of 1990 in the West African part.⁵⁴ It was this wind of democracy that had amplified the struggles for the alternation of power in Liberia.

⁵⁰Kieh Jr, G. K. (2004). Irregular warfare and Liberia's first civil war. *Journal of international and Area Studies*, 57-77.

⁵¹Chapter I of ECOWAS Treaty of May 28, 1975 in Lagos (Nigeria), Article 2., accessed June, 12, 2021, <https://investmentpolicy.unctad.org/international-investment-agreements/treaty-files/5560/download>

⁵²Adibe, C. E. (1997). "The Liberian conflict and the ECOWAS-UN partnership." *Third World Quarterly* 18, no. 3, 471-488.

⁵³Buell, R. L. (1931). "The Liberian Paradox." *The Virginia Quarterly Review* 7, no. 2, 161-175.

⁵⁴Chazan, N. (1992). "Africa's democratic challenge." *World Policy Journal* 9, no. 2, 279-307.

In addition, the integration of ECOWAS in general also has its shortcomings related to incompetence in its management by its leaders since its creation in 1975 until today.⁵⁵ The leaders of ECOWAS have not bothered to plan the means to deal with the scourges facing their region because to govern is to foresee. Despite some efforts made through the interventions of ECOMOG as an intervention force in Liberia, Sierra Leone, Guinea Conakry and Bissau, and highlight in Ivory Coast and Mali, the incompetence of ECOWAS has been almost permanent in its actions.⁵⁶ The lack of cohesion on shared values is one of the weaknesses holding back the development of ECOWAS. Therefore, the major problems that hinder the community's proper functioning are to be found within it. Micro nationalism manifests itself in the selfishness of ECOWAS heads of state. Following the provisions of the founding treaty (article 2) of ECOWAS, the Conference of Heads of State is the supreme organ of integration.⁵⁷ Therefore, it should be understood that the proper functioning of the community largely depends on the main body that directs it. This means that all major decisions emanate from integration heads of state. But the latter have different opinions regarding the philosophies developed for the management of the Community. Because, the nature of the political regimes embodied by these West African heads of state also impacts the functioning of integration. All these evoked realities have led to less good results for ECOWAS in its crisis management in its member countries. Like the case of Liberia which had recorded thousands of deaths, wounded, displaced persons, refugees and the destruction of community infrastructure in this country. The actions and the will of the heads of state of West Africa influence the functioning of ECOWAS.

Likewise, the influence of the actions and the will of heads of state and government is distinguished by the organizational structure of the ECOWAS treaty, which is composed as follows: the Conference of Heads of State, the Council of Ministers, the General Secretariat, and the Specialized Commissions. This structure shows the hierarchy of powers of the Community. It is a pyramidal structure whose most of the powers are in the hands of the Heads of State who are at the top of the integration management positions. So the Council of Ministers is totally dependent on the Conference of Heads of State and its decisions are always subject to the control of the Conference which can modify or cancel them as it wishes. The Executive Secretary, he is appointed by the Conference of Heads of State and this appointment is not without the influence of one or more of the Heads of State. Without exaggeration, the fate of ECOWAS lies in the hands of the Heads of State who compose it because all the power of this institution is concentrated at their level.⁵⁸ They have the power to make or break integration because all decisions are amended by them hence their 'right of veto' in ECOWAS. Certainly, seeking regional integration after Africa's dark periods of transatlantic trade, slavery and colonization was necessary.⁵⁹ These horrific times on the African continent left several wounds

⁵⁵Nurudeen, A., Abd Karim, M. Z., & Aziz, M. I. (2015). Corruption, political instability and economic development in the Economic Community of West African States (ECOWAS): is there a causal relationship?. *Contemporary economics*, 9(1), 45-60.

⁵⁶Adebajo, A. (2002). *Building Peace in West Africa: Liberia, Sierra Leone, and Guinea-Bissau*. Lynne Rienner Publishers, 43-111.

⁵⁷Chapter I of ECOWAS Treaty of May 28, 1975 in Lagos (Nigeria), Article 2., accessed June, 12, 2021, <https://investmentpolicy.unctad.org/international-investment-agreements/treaty-files/5560/download>

⁵⁸Cowell, F. (2011). "The impact of the ECOWAS Protocol on Good Governance and Democracy." *African Journal of International and Comparative Law* 19, no. 2, 331-342.

⁵⁹Fage, J. D. (1969). "Slavery and the slave trade in the context of West African history." *Journal of African history*, 393-404.

that once independent heads of state should strive to heal. But unfortunately, the idea of coming together in a Community has not abolished the mistrust, disparity, contradiction and egalitarianism between the leaders of ECOWAS. Each state wants to safeguard its sovereignty which makes integration difficult. In addition, within ECOWAS, Heads of State have great authority so if a Head of State finds that a decision goes against his interests, he uses his power to block the decision. So, to boycott a decision, some Heads of State refuse to give their annual deposit in order to wean the integration of the means for its operation.⁶⁰ All these problems hamper the organization towards the achievement of its goals. Thus, the political differences of the Heads of State of ECOWAS do not converge towards the achievement of the objectives sought by the Community. For their own interests, some Heads of State support rebellions by giving them many means to fight another Member State of the Community. Therefore, the desire for personal interests is not likely to strengthen the ties of ECOWAS member states. The following table shows the level of analysis according to the causal factors and the theories corresponding to each level of analysis.

Table 1: Level of analysis of the causal factors regarding ECOWAS conflict resolution role in Liberia and the theories corresponding to each level of analysis.

Level of Analysis		Causal Factors	Theories of Each Level of Analysis
Liberia	Country	* United Nations	=> Realism
	International Organizations (IOs) And Former Colonizers	- Role of continenatal actors * AU * Nigeria	=> Realism
	Regional Actors	- ECOWAS members states lack of common interests - ECOWAS weaknesses as an institutional source of common identity ECOWAS political deepening - The Role of the Regional hegemon: Nigeria	=> Liberalism => Constructivism => Neofunctionalism => Realism

⁶⁰Yansane, A. Y. (1977). "The economic community of West African States (ECOWAS)." *The Review of Black Political Economy* 7, no. 3, 215-237.

	Domestic Actors	- Perception of individual state leaders -Weaknesses of African states	=> Neoclassical Realism => Third World Approaches
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Source: Autor's elaboration based on the frawork of Helene Gandios (2009)⁶¹

4. Discussion and Conclusion

Most of the west African states have almost the same characteristics politically, economically and socially. They are experiencing the same political, economic and social problems because they are not yet independent in these areas. They depend on external aid in times of peace and war to solve their vital problems. This Liberian civil war stemmed from ethnic discrimination, beacause the minority ethnic groups had all the advantages of power by excluding the majority ethnic groups from the management of state affairs.⁶² The causes of the Liberian civil war lay in the exclusion and discrimination of the broad social strata which are the majority ethnic groups from the enjoyment of their country's wealth. The American-Liberian ethnic group is the minority in Liberia but governed these country without alternation until the day after the 1990s.⁶³ This confiscation of powers by the minority ethnic group triggered rebellion in Liberia. The rebels denounced the autocracy and the dictatorship of the power of minority ethnic group. Faced with the refusal to negotiate democratic alternation with this minority in Liberia, the rebels took up arms to quickly make themselves heard. So, it would be important to show the responsibilities of the different actors who have been involved in the resolution of this conflict. The main actor is the regional organization of ECOWAS whose mission is to provide economic, political and social solutions in its area for sustainable development.⁶⁴ However, to achieve its objective, there must be peace and security for the free movement of people and goods. Therefore, it necessarily has the responsibility of preventing, managing and resolving conflicts in the event of a breach of peace. It is helped in its multiple tasks by certain rich countries which are the former colonizers of African countries and international governmental and non-governmental organizations. So, all these actors are accountable for the successes and failures of ECOWAS in its missions. Responsibilities are located at three levels in Liberia conflict resolution. It is about the involvement of external forces (international organisations, great world powers like US that is former colonizer of Liberia) in international level, the incompetence of the leaders of ECOWAS in regional level, and state weakness and role of individual leaders in a domestic level. The successes or failures of ECOWAS are not only linked to international organizations. There is also the lack of experience in conflict resolution

⁶¹Gandois, H. (2009). The emergence of regional security organisations. A comparative study on ECOWAS and SADC. [PhD thesis]. Oxford University, UK, 94.

⁶²Batty, F. (2011). "Do ethnic groups retain homogenous preferences in African politics? Evidence from Sierra Leone and Liberia." *African studies review*, 117-143.

⁶³Ibid.

⁶⁴Bach, D. C. (1983). "The politics of West African economic co-operation: CEAO and ECOWAS." *The Journal of Modern African Studies* 21, no. 4, 605-623.

of the leaders of ECOWAS. This West African regional organization did not have too many experiences in conflict prevention, management and resolution because ECOWAS assigned this mission in 1990 in the face of recurring political crises in its area.⁶⁵ Also, the Liberian civil war is the first experience of ECOWAS in the field of conflict resolution. So, it was obvious that the leaders of ECOWAS are not up to their missions given the lack of experience and financial and material means to fully play this role. Recourse to foreign aid was essential and still is essential to ECOWAS when carrying out its missions in its member countries that need it. The military power did not want to leave power so quickly to make way for democracy. Although on September 1993, the United Nations Security Council established a United Nations Observer Mission in Liberia (UNMIL).⁶⁶ This observer mission was made up of soldiers and civilians. In total, the mission's crew numbered 368 observers.⁶⁷ They went to support the ECOMOG military forces which had been there since 1990.⁶⁸ UNMIL diplomats should enforce the Cotonou (Benin) peace agreement to lead to democratic elections in 1994.⁶⁹ On the continental level, there is the participation of the African Union and on the world level the UN and all other competent organizations to help resolve the crises in the West African region. The African Union has assisted ECOWAS by playing the role of facilitator in the resolution of the Liberian conflict.⁷⁰ The role of the AU in conflict resolution in Africa is to uphold democratic standards for the organization of elections. Therefore, the contribution of the AU in the resolution of the Liberian conflict was to lead the political class towards democratic elections in 1997.⁷¹ It is an institution which opts for democracy for the return to peace and security.

Finally, the management and resolution of the Liberian conflict were experiences that enabled ECOWAS leaders to know the scope of the new missions assigned to this regional organization in 1990.⁷² Despite its achievements and setbacks, ECOWAS remains the West African organization that responds promptly to the problems of its member countries even if it is assisted in its missions by several other actors for lack of financial and material resources. It is still an organization that depends on the former colonizers and several international actors for aid for its functioning. For ECOWAS to be up to its missions and have a place within the bodies of major decisions, its leaders must review its mode of financing and operation. It cannot have international influence if it continues to receive instructions and help from the efforts of citizens of other countries and continents. It either commit to providing efforts to have in large part the means for its missions. Even if no country and organization is completely independent, foreign influences and interference in internal decisions are no longer important when a country or an organization has the means for its policy. For ECOWAS to become essential for its space, it

⁶⁵Da Costa, P. (1991). "A new role for ECOWAS." *Africa Report* 36, no. 5, 37.

⁶⁶Aboagye, F. B. and BAH, A. M. S. (2004). *Liberia at a Crossroads: A preliminary look at the United Nations Mission in Liberia (UNMIL) and the protection of civilians*. Institute for Security Studies Papers, 2004, vol. 2004, no 95, 20.

⁶⁷ Ibid.

⁶⁸Adibe, C. E. (1997). The Liberian conflict and the ECOWAS-UN partnership. *Third World Quarterly*, vol. 18, no 3, 471-488.

⁶⁹Adebajo, A. (2002). *Liberia's civil war: Nigeria, ECOMOG, and regional security in West Africa*. Lynne Rienner Publishers, 119.

⁷⁰Oguonu, C. N., & Ezeibe, C. C. (2014). African union and conflict resolution in Africa. *Mediterranean Journal of Social Sciences*, 5(27 P1), 325.

⁷¹Harris, D. (1999). From 'warlord' to 'democratic' president: how Charles Taylor won the 1997 Liberian elections. *The Journal of Modern African Studies*, 37(3), 431-455.

⁷²Da Costa, P. (1991). "A new role for ECOWAS." *Africa Report* 36, no. 5, 37.

must carry out structural reforms by reducing the excessive presence of heads of state at all decision-making levels. The strength of the presidents of the member countries weighs too heavily on the functioning of integration. Each member country must regularly honor its annual bonds to provide ECOWAS with the financial means for its operation. If it had its own means, the Liberian civil war could have found a solution quickly without leading to long durations that caused atrocities to these peoples. Therefore, the means are essential for the efficiency and success of ECOWAS missions. At the international level, ECOWAS is supported by international organizations such as the UN Security Council and the AU in its mission to resolve the Liberian conflict, but at the regional level, the lack of common interest and identity between ECOWAS member states and on the domestic level, the weaknesses of ECOWAS leaders and structural limitations in Liberia Civil War weakened ECOWAS in its Liberian conflict resolution intervention between 1989-1997. Even in the 2010s, ECOWAS continues to be assisted by the UN Security Council for its conflict resolution missions as in the case of Côte d'Ivoire in 2011⁷³ because of a post- electoral civil war.

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⁷³Hara, F., & Yabi, G. (2013). Côte D'ivoire, 2002–2011. In Responding to Conflict in Africa. Palgrave Macmillan, New York, 145-175.

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