

The Role of Regional Organizations in Humanitarian Intervention: The Case of Liberia Peacebuilding Operation and ECOWAS Intervention

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Abstract

Humanitarian intervention has been a controversial but also one of the most frequently used instruments of world politics. The literature on the subject is abundant of studies both written in a critical tone and also aiming at proposing a better framework for humanitarian intervention. On that sense, the identity of the intervening body is an important part of the debates on the humanitarian intervention. According to a line of argument in the literature, the interventions in which regional international organizations play significant roles give much more effective results for consolidating a long-lasting peace and security compared to the interventions conducted solely by broader international bodies. Addressing to this debate, this article focuses on the case of intervention to Liberian civil war and the role played by ECOWAS, a regional international organization established by West African countries, in this operation. Throughout the article, it is suggested that ECOWAS's regional identity facilitated the acceptance of the operation by both the peoples and the political figures in the country. With this aspect, the article underlines that the case of Liberia presents many lessons for international community in order to practice more effective and fruitful interventions.

Keywords: Humanitarian intervention, peacebuilding, Liberia, regional organizations, international organizations, ECOWAS, Africa, local ownership.

İnsani Müdahalede Bölgesel Kurumların Rolü: Liberya Barış İnşası Operasyonu Örneği ve ECOWAS Müdahalesi

Öz

İnsani müdahale dünya politikasının hem en tartışmalı hem de en sıklıkla kullanılan araçlarında biridir. Konu üzerinde gelişmiş olan yazında insani müdahaleye eleştirel yaklaşan çalışmaların yanısıra, nasıl daha iyi müdahale çerçeveleri oluşturulabileceğine odaklanan çalışmalar da bulunmaktadır. Bu anlamda, müdahale eden kurumların kimliği tartışmalarda önemli bir yer

tutmaktadır. Literatürdeki bir argümana göre, bölgesel kurumların önemli roller oynadıkları müdahale pratiklerinin, yalnızca uluslararası aktörler tarafından gerçekleştirilen müdahalelere göre, uzun süreli barış ve güvenliğin sağlanmasında daha etkin sonuçlar verdiği belirtilmektedir. Bu makale, yazında tartışılan bu konuya katkı sunmak amacıyla Liberya barışınşaası müdahalesine ve bu müdahalede Batı Africa devletleri tarafından kurulmuş bir örgüt olan ECOWAS'ın rolüne odaklanmaktadır. Makale boyunca ECOWAS'ın bölgesel kimliğinin, müdahalenin bölgede yaşayan halklar ve politik aktörler tarafından iyi karşılanmasında kolaylaştırıcı rol oynadığı tezi geliştirilmektedir. Bu yönüyle, makale Liberya örneğinin uluslararası toplumun daha iyi bir müdahale çerçevesi oluşturması için dersler içerdiğinin altı çizilmiştir.

Anahtar Kelimeler: İnsani müdahale, barışınşaası, Liberya, bölgesel kurumlar, uluslararası kurumlar, ECOWAS, Afrika, yerel sahiplenme.

Introduction

In his very influential book, Murphy (1996) asserts that the debate on whether the international society should intervene into the domestic spheres of nation-states in order to prevent humanitarian crises such as massacres, ethnic cleansing, genocide will constitute the core of the evolving world order in twenty first century (Murphy, 1996: 3-4). Several developments that occurred in the post-Cold War era support the prediction of Murphy and many others who suggested that humanitarian intervention will be in the center of world politics. We witnessed the massacres in Somalia (Clarke and Herbst, 1996), Bosnia (Western, 2002), Kosovo (Henkin, 1999) and the interventionist reaction of the international community to these tragedies, while its ambivalent position caused much more severe violent conflicts, even genocides, in several other cases such as Rwanda and Darfur. Although the way international society reacts to such crises became subject to significant criticism, humanitarian intervention, still, appears to be an efficient tool to prevent bloodshed especially in post-colonial contexts where state collapse causes rise of violent instability. According to Murphy (1996: 2-3)

"though United Nations is not a world government and though its powers and ability to generate and enforce its commands are constrained by political pressures and reliance on ad hoc economic and military actions, it nevertheless provides new opportunities for enhancing a just world order through the use of humanitarian intervention in appropriate situations."

Still, not all accounts on humanitarian intervention are positive. Humanitarian intervention as a legal framework and as a political tool practiced by international community is still a controversial issue in world politics. For instance, Bellamy (2005) criticizes the framework of responsibility to protect

which is used as a justification for humanitarian intervention and argues that the efficiency of humanitarian intervention is undermined due to the delinquent and mistaken use of this framework by the international community. In a harsher critique, Nardin (2005) argues that humanitarian intervention represents a new form of imperialism and instrumentalized by the global north to exploit the global south.

Despite the existence of critiques, it is still considered as a legitimate tool of responding against humanitarian crises by international society. The literature increasingly focuses on the question of how to operate humanitarian intervention in more effective ways. In this debate, the identity of the interveners is a widely discussed subject. In this regard, a line of argument in the literature emphasizes that the likelihood of extracting successful outcome from an intervention is higher if the operation is practiced by a regional international organization because the operation would not be perceived as a foreign intervention (Levitt, 1998; Sarkin, 2009). This article addresses to this debate with a specific focus on the humanitarian intervention to Liberian civil war. Throughout the article, the argument emphasizes that the intervention to Liberian civil war is considered as a success story thanks to the efficient operations practiced by Economic Community of West African States (ECOWAS) and its military branch Economic Community of West African States Monitoring Group (ECOMOG), which are regional international organizations formed by West African countries.

The article is organized into three main subsections. In what follows, a brief historical background of the modern Liberia is presented. In this brief historical review, the social and political practices that constructed so-called Americo-Liberians as a privileged group, how these social practices caused a civil war are examined. Following this historical review, the civil war in Liberia, the factions fought in the war and how they became political actors in the future of Liberia are analyzed. The third section focuses directly on the external intervention to the civil war and the role played by ECOWAS in this intervention. Here, the article develops the argument that the success of the intervention lies in the fact that the ECOWAS intervention was welcomed and supported by the Liberian society as it was representing a regional identity. In other words, the intervention by ECOWAS was not perceived as a foreign intervention that would destabilize the country, instead its regional identity worked as a facilitator in the intervention and contributed to the success of the operation.

A Brief Historical Background of Modern Liberia its Civil War

The process that led to a civil war which was intervened by foreign powers in Liberia is quite correlated with the country's history and its

establishment. The way societal segments were built in the country is the outcome of the relationship between different classes taking part in the country's societal composition. Therefore, a brief overlook on the history of Liberia is necessary for understanding the historical realities that led to a civil war in the country.

Since its establishment as an independent republic in 1847 until the troublesome era started with coup d'etat in 1980, Liberia had been a stable country which cultivated close relationship with the West, specifically with the US, and prosperous compared to other African countries. Its ties with the United States have shaped the country's political and social structure which later caused a severe problem of unequal distribution of the country's wealth among different groups (Sherman, 2010). The modern history of Liberia is considered to start in 1822 through a reverse-colonization story. In 1822, the country was founded by returning freed slaves from the United States (McPherson, 2008: 7). Therefore, the foundation of Liberia "was motivated by the domestic politics of slavery and race in the United States as well as by US foreign policy interests" (US Department of State Webpage)¹. In early 1800s, African-Americans started to gain their freedom and the number of free blacks increased. The increase in the number of free blacks triggered several discussions about their status in the American society. American Colonization Society (ACS) was born into such a political context. The society was established as a civil society organization which seeks the conditions for resettlement of African Americans in Africa in a form of American colony. It was an attempt to bring effective solutions to African Americans as well as to satisfy the groups who were concerned by the presence of African Americans (Beyan, 1991: 36). Its major aim was to provide support in the building of the conditions for a sustainable colony in Africa, which would constitute excitement for those black Americans who are suffering from bad economic conditions in the US. Once the society voiced this view in 1816, the suggestion encountered considerable amount of support from the American political elites including evangelical groups and Quakers. Former American presidents Thomas Jefferson and James Madison publicly supported the campaigns of the ACS (US Department of State 2015)². The society initiated fundraising campaigns for its project of "repatriating the black Americans in the homeland" (Burin, 2005: 25).

With this aim, the Society sent its three representatives to the western coast of the Africa in 1816 to negotiate with the native people of the region on a piece of territory for the colony. The search focused on the region which is today called Sierra Leone and Liberia. Representatives' goal was to convince

¹ <https://history.state.gov/milestones/1830-1860/liberia> (Last accessed on 8 April 2015).

² <http://www.state.gov/r/pa/ei/bgn/6618.htm> (Last Access: 02.06.2015)

local tribe leaders to sell a piece of land for this colony. despite the fact that the representatives could not find a place for a colony, the US Congress decided to land in west African coasts to build two colonies. The colony in Liberia was one of these two colonies. The forerunner for the Republic of Liberia which continues to be a sovereign state today is this colony. The name "Liberia" comes from the Latin root of "liber" which means free as the colony was founded as a land for free black Americans. In this respect, the country was envisaged to be the "Land of Free" as it was named as Liberia (West, 1970: 44). The colony, as it is apparent in the name, was founded as an entity dependent directly to the US, though it has its own constitution. The constitution of the colony was written in Washington, DC, therefore the colony's political system was modeled directly on the American presidential system. The colony attracted the interest of many African Americans. The idea of having a free country in the African continent constituted a point of attraction mainly because of two reasons: (1) African Americans were facing daily and routine racism in their life in the United States. It was not only social but also an economical problem as it left them uneducated and economically disadvantageous vis-a-vis white American population. Therefore, the idea of living in Africa was sounding sympathetic to those African Americans who were suffering from the results of racist atmosphere in the United States. (2) The ACS, especially in the first years of the colony, was telling the stories of how those black Americans who went to the colony successfully are integrated with the people there. The discourse was emphasizing that the black Americans who got familiar with the techniques of modern agriculture and farming are capable of taking the advantages of the virgin lands in the colony. The stories coming from the colony was singing the song of prosperous lives of black Americans returning to Africa.

The colony founded in the region constituted the ground for modern Liberian state. Although local tribes exist under several administrative structure in the region, they did not form a united state at the time colony was founded (Schick, 1980: 112). Since the colony was equipped with technologically advanced weapons for defense against the attacks of local tribes, it became the dominant political entity in the region. Until 1846, Republic of Liberia remained as a colony which was dependent on the United States. In 1846, the country declared independence to form a sovereign nation state under the name of Independent Republic of Liberia. Independence of Liberia and its establishment as a sovereign state was recognized by the United Kingdom and France who were the major powers in the African continent. Both the UK and France were taking a worrisome stance about the US activism in Africa. Once Monroe's term of presidency was over in 1825, he left his doctrine, "Monroe Doctrine", to the US as a strong tradition of foreign policy. According to President Monroe's doctrine, the US foreign policy should have been built upon some kind of an isolationism which would keep the US away from troubles

from other parts of the world (Falk, 1959). In this respect, US involvement in the African politics was already a controversial issue. Once the independence was declared by the colony as free Republic of Liberia, the US reaction to this step had been negative as it was perceived as a betrayal among the domestic audience. The independence of Liberia was not recognized by the US initially. Yet, the ties of the ruling elite, so-called Americo-Liberians, with the US kept the relationship between two countries alive.

The liaison of the country to the United States shaped the political and societal structure of Liberia significantly. Americo-Liberians constituted the key class of the country and had held the both political and economic control of the country until the civil war broke out. The conditions which led to a bloodshed was highly related with the economic and political divergence between the Americo-Liberians, who were holding the political and economic control of the country in their hands, and indigenous people, who were living in a social context shaped by tribal relationships and holding no political significance and economically suffering.

At this point, it is crucial to mention True Whig Party of Liberia, the political movement that held the power until the coup d'etat in 1980. Place of the True Whig Party (TWP) in Liberian politics is one of the main dynamics that shaped the Liberia's sociological composition which in the long run caused a triggering of a civil war. The party was known as the political organization of the Americo-Liberians which constituted a small minority in the Liberian society. Though Americo-Liberians were no more than 5% of the general population, they hold the political and economic control of the country in their hand through the True Whig Party's ascendancy in the political system. The party was founded in 1869, 13 years later the independence was declared. From its foundation to the coup d'etat in 1980, the party not only dominated but also ruled the Liberian politics. The party was organized around the ideology of whiggism, which is a movement inspired from American-evangelical messianism (Ellis, 2001). Americo-Liberian settlers who controlled the country from its colonial times onwards were also attributed a mission to civilize and unite the local people of the region under the protestant school of Christianity. Therefore, the party's whiggist background helped the party elites to motivate their audience to take a role in politics, mobilize them as politically active subjects and fill the political vacuum in the country by not giving local tribes the chance to take country's political control. In this regard, though Liberian political system was considered to be as a democracy since early 1900s, the authoritarian methods of the Whig Party were legitimized as they serve to the aim of "civilizing" the peoples of Liberia.

In early 1920s, the party's rule in Liberia got more authoritarian with the initiation of its national development plans. According to the plans, different parts of the society were considered for different divisions of labor in the

national development. In this regard, Americo-Liberians, which were in minority according to their number, were envisaged to be the ruling class while some tribes were assigned the task of working in heavy labor such as mining. Besides, the plans also included selling of members of several tribes to Spain and Portugal, which were two countries with authoritarian administrations seeking more force of heavy labor (Olukoju, 2006: 12). Therefore, the party was also known for its policies that open the path for forced labor, including child labor, and selling slaves to colonialists coming from Spain and Portugal.

Over the years, as the party sought the status of Americo-Liberians in the economic and political matters of the country, they came to a position that is economically wealthy and politically strong while the other groups in the country were rather subject to the heavier conditions (Ellis, 1995: 168). Though TWP was criticized by the West, especially by the UK and the US, because of its policies that enables forced labor and selling of slave, it was also providing a stable political environment in the west Africa. Indeed, though the differences in terms of distribution of wealth and political power appeared in the country, Liberia was a stable country in terms of politics and economy when it was compared to other African countries. Therefore, TWP survived as a key actor in the Liberian politics and ruled the country until the coup d'etat. TWP's and its elites' survival in the office further deepened the gap between the privileged and disadvantaged segments of the Liberian society. Yet, its policies and the status of the Americo-Liberians in the society also caused the emergence of socio-political reasons that facilitated the break out of the civil war. In the post-Second World War environment, Liberia determined its position in the side of capitalist West. However, its political system did not evolve into a liberal democracy; rather the *de facto* one party system was further consolidated (Ellis, 1995). Despite there was no legal regulation that forbids political opposition, any political initiation that opposes the rule of TWP was marginalized and somehow remained impotent to be a considerable political actor.

The rule of TWP continued until the coup d'etat in 1980. The coup d'etat also started an era in which political crisis threatened the social cohesion of the country and led to a severe civil war in the long run.

The Civil War

The political instability that opened the path to civil war in Liberia was triggered with the coup d'etat against the rule of Americo-Liberians in 1980. With the William Tolbert Jr.'s presidency in early 1970s, Liberia started to reconsider its pro-western stance in the Cold War and converged closer to the non-aligned movement led by Kaddafi's Libya (Tarr, 1993). Besides, the country started diplomatic relations with socialist countries including Soviet Union and China for the first time in its history. This change in the foreign

policy of Liberia caused louder criticisms by western countries for its highly corrupted and undemocratic political environment. In 1978, the US announced that it stopped financial aid to Liberia until it initiates a political reformation process which would allow political opposition in country. At the same time, the opposition put more effort to be politically visible both at domestic and international levels. Liberian diaspora, which were spread both to western and other African countries were pursuing a policy to create political awareness about the corrupt regime in Liberia in world. At domestic level, especially Krahn ethnic group was leading the political opposition (Tarr, 1993: 82).

The warlike crisis that facilitated the coup d'etat in 1980 was triggered after a demonstration organized by the members of Krahn tribe in Monrovia in 1979. Demonstrations started after Tolbert's government proposed an increase in the subsidized price of rice from \$22 to \$26 per 100 pound bag (Woodward, 2003: 925). The opposition pointed that this increase was serving to the aim of self-aggrandizement of Tolbert family, which owns large rice farms. The demonstrations started in the streets of the capital, Monrovia. President Tolbert Jr. ordered armed forces fire on the demonstrators which caused death of over 70 people (Sherman, 2010: 50). With the harsh criticisms of regional countries and western powers, the political opposition started to several attacks on government targets. The army intervened in the country-wide riots in April 1980 and declared that the government and the parliament is abolished and Tolbert was taken into custody. Not long after, it was announced that Tolbert was executed when armed forces entered into his palace. The overthrow of the Tolbert's government was symbolizing the long-lasting Americo-Liberian's rule over the country. The military coup was led by a master sergeant, Samuel Doe, who was member of Krahn ethnic group. Though Doe was a member of military and trained by the American Special Forces, it was argued that he was illiterate when he initiated the coup and assumed the power in Liberia. After a quick trial process for the members of Tolbert's cabinet, almost the whole cabinet was sentenced to death.³ Following the trial process, Doe formed the People's Redemption Council (PRC), which was practically a junta government. The council assumed the all powers of government and led by Doe himself. Though Doe was a poorly trained person who lacked political capabilities to administer a country, he found extensive support in public. Main reason to that was the fact that people were sick of the Americo-Liberian rule which was seen as the source of economic inequalities between the indigenious and ruling segments of Liberian society.

³ Only four members of the cabinet survived the trial process, including the Minister of Finance, Ellen Johnson-Sirleaf, who later initiated a political campaign against the warlord, Charles Taylor and became the first female president of the country. As of December 2015, Johnson-Sirleaf is still in the office as the President of Liberia.

Following the settlement of the military regime in Liberia, Doe took several clever steps to gain further support from the public. Tolerating a relatively free press and enabling several political parties in the political system created sympathy both in public and also in international level. Doe was already closer discourse to western world. After assuming power, he closed the Libyan Embassy in Monrovia and put a clear distance with powers opposing the United States in world politics. This pro-western stance provided Doe considerable political and financial support from the United States. In 1981, the US announced that it reinitiated its financial aid to Liberia and increased the amount to over 100 million US dollars (Sherman, 2010: 52).

As of 1982, the military regime started to evolve into a more authoritarian system. The symbolic reforms initiated just after the coup was taken back and the oppression of the press turned into ban on several newspapers. Besides, the military regime enforced a law which required any political party to get the permission of PRC to legalize. In practice, this law was applied as a ban on any other political party. The main reason of the regimes gradually increasing authoritarianism was the fear of a counter coup d'etat. Considering that the 1980 coup was not operated under the chain of command, the military regime was concerned that other minor groups in the army would be preparing for a counter coup. Along with authoritarianism corruption rumors about the members of PRC started to be voiced louder. The criticisms were not only from outside the PRC, rather there were several PRC members which criticized Doe of working for self-aggrandizement of his and his family's wealth. In 1984, Doe started to eliminate these PRC members who criticized Doe harshly. Doe was re-arranging the composition of PRC in a manner it would be consisted mainly of the members of Krahn background.

Before 1985 presidential elections, 9 political parties applied to compete in the elections. Only three of them were allowed by the Council. Though the elections were a multi-party election, the process before the elections alarmed for a fraudulent election. Before the elections, political assassinations against important figures of the opposition started. Elections were done under the conditions of heavy oppression by the PRC over other parties. Though Doe won the elections with formally declared 51% votes, international observers reported that the elections were heavily corrupted and fraudulent (Aboagye and Bah, 2005: 34). Therefore, the Doe's victory in the elections did not bring with the stability to Liberia.

After the 1985 elections, the country went through several failed counter coup attempts. Just after the elections, former vice chair of PRC, Thomas Quiwonkpa attempted a coup against Doe along with a few hundreds of troops. Although this attempt ended with failure and cost to lives of all attendants, this triggered further oppression on the opposition. Doe saw several tribes/ethnic origins as the source of societal opposition to his rule. Therefore,

the pressure against these tribes such as Gio and Mano increased in the post-election process. The pressure on the tribes played an important role in the mobilization of these tribes against Doe's regime. Charles Taylor, who was a former member of PRC and fled from the country in 1983 due to Doe's accusation of organizing a conspiracy against the regime used this opportunity very effectively.

Charles Taylor was coming from a family of mix marriage between an indigenous mother and Americo-Liberian father. As a son of wealthy family, he had an upper class formal education and took his degree in economics from the Bentley College in the US. After leaving Liberia in 1983, he took a very critical stance on the regime. Later he came to the Ivory Coast, the neighbor of Liberia to organize a political and military struggle against Doe's regime. As the Ivory Coast located just in the northern border of Liberia, Taylor's main target to collect support was the tribes living closer to the northern border. Gio and Mano tribes, which have been under heavy pressure of Doe's regime became the main supporters of Taylor's National Patriotic Front of Liberia (NPFL). After collecting of sufficient number of militants from Gio and Mano tribes, NPFL entered to Liberia from the north in 1989 and invaded Nimba County. With the entrance of NPFL to the country, not only Gio and Mano but members of other ethnic groups supported and joined to NPFL. As response to the rebellion, Armed Forces of Liberia under the control of Doe targeted the towns on the northern border without distinguishing between the civilians and the militants (Sherman, 2010: 67). As the conflict turned into a clash between armed forces and civilian tribes, Taylor's NPFL found even more extensive support from the public.

Not long after, Taylor's NPFL defeated Liberian Armed Forces in many different regions of the country. In July 1990, more than half of the country was controlled by NPFL. However, there were also tensions within the NPFL. Yormie Johnson, one of the prominent figures in NPFL, broke out with NPFL in mid-1990, and started a new fraction called Independent National Patriotic Front of Liberia (INPFL), which was mainly composed of the members of Gio tribe. With this fraction, the war turned to also to an ethnic war, which fueled ethnic hatred in the country. In the August of 1990, the militias' siege of the capital, Monrovia started. One of the most shocking points about the Liberian civil war is that the war fought between the government and paramilitary groups was not a simple civil war between rebelling militias and formal armed forces of a state. The government also initiated militias relied mainly on child soldiers who have been taken from families suffering from the poverty (Murphy, 2003).

Intervention to the Civil War in Liberia and ECOWAS's Role

Following the death of Doe, the civil war disseminated all over the country. The intervention of the ECOWAS started actually before Doe's death. At this point, it is worth to note that the first intervention to the civil war in Liberia came from a regional actor, ECOWAS, which was envisaged to be a regional organization of economic, political and customary union of West African states including Sierra Leone and Liberia. The intervention was stick to the idea of national sovereignty. Therefore, ECOWAS declared that it acknowledges Doe's regime as the legitimate sovereign power in Liberia.

ECOWAS intervention in Liberian civil war has been a controversial political issue among the regional powers and members of the organization. The organization was established in 1981. Liberia, as one of the founding members, was part of the organization since its inception. Therefore, the organization's institutional relationship with Liberia was based on its interaction with Doe's regime. Once the civil war in Liberia broke out, ECOWAS invited the rebel groups to acknowledge Doe's authority, while called Doe to provide the ground to opposition to act on a political basis. However, when Monrovia was sieged by the rebel groups, ECOWAS gathered its summit in Banjul, Gambia in order to take necessary steps to stop the bloodshed in Liberia. Serving to this aim, Economic Community of West African States Monitoring Group (ECOMOG) was activated as an armed force to which main contribution was provided by Nigeria (Howe, 1996/1997). More than half of the troops taking place in ECOMOG were provided by Nigerian Armed Forces, while remaining was coming from Sierra Leone, Gambia, Guinea, Ghana and Mali. ECOMOG forces entered to country from the northern borders with Ivory Coast and settled in Monrovia in less than a week. Although the ECOWAS officially acknowledged Doe's regime as the legitimate power in country, ECOMOG forces did not only fight with rebels but also with government forces during its march to Monrovia. However, just after settling the headquarter in Monrovia, Doe announced that intervention forces are welcomed to the country. As noted earlier, he was captured by INPFL during a visit to ECOWAS headquarter in Monrovia (Howe, 1996/1997: 145-149).

Following the death of Doe, ECOMOG's major aim was to separate the warring factions and to stop the bloodshed as soon as possible (Human Rights Watch, 1993). The justification for the Western African countries which took part in the intervention was that the conflict was not a domestic one anymore and has the potential to disseminate towards other countries in the region. The conflict was not domestic anymore indeed. There were thousands of Nigerians living in Monrovia when the war broke out. NPFL kept hundreds of foreigners as hostage and later killed much of them. Besides, neighboring countries which also suffering from heavy economic and political conditions were concerned that the war would cause a refugee flow from Liberia, which turned into a reality after first three months of the civil war. ECOMOG's utmost aim was to

impose a ceasefire over warring factions and facilitate establishing an interim government that could rule country until free elections. However, NPFL under Charles Taylor got so strengthened that had the capability to challenge an international power in the country. In the following weeks of Doe's death, ECOMOG forces entered into a severe war especially with NPFL forces (Tuck, 2000: 2).

There have also been speculations about ECOMOG's intervention in Liberia civil war. As noted above, Nigerian soldiers constituted the vast majority of the ECOMOG's forces. It is argued that the major aim of Nigerian involvement in the intervention was to support Doe's regime in Liberia because Doe and Nigerian president Babangida have been allies since almost a decade in the region (Adebajo, 2003). Besides, it is also correlated with Nigeria's aspirations to be a regional playmaker in the West African region. One way or another, the ECOWAS's intervention to the civil war in Liberia through ECOMOG forces were a typical peacekeeping intervention. Its major aim had been to honor the legitimate sovereigns in the country, impose a ceasefire and rebuild the political stability in Liberia. Though none of the participant countries were known for its successful record of respect to human rights, it is fair to argue that ECOMOG's intervention in the civil war accomplished a certain degree of goals in its first six months (Tuck, 2000: 12).

ECOMOG's intervention in the civil war succeeded to confine the Liberia Armed Forces and several warring factions into their barracks (Human Rights Watch, 1993). Though NPFL under the command of Charles Taylor was still attacking to government and ECOMOG targets, INPFL was convinced to remain in the barrack. With the relative decrease in the bloodshed, international human rights watch groups returned to Liberia again in the October of 1990. In November, ECOMOG gathered a negotiation summit among the Liberian officials, AFL chief of staff and INPFL under Johnson. The negotiations gave the outcome of a ceasefire between parties and an interim government, with the name Interim Government of National Unity (IGNU) was established under Amos Sawyer to install the conditions of ceasefire. IGNU established its control over the most of Monrovia with the help of ECOMOG and also a government backed paramilitary police force called Black Berets (Human Rights Watch, 1993). Another accomplishment of the intervention by ECOWAS was to stop the massacres of Krahn ethnic group. As Doe was coming from Krahn ethnic origin, the tribe became the main target of rebel groups. Most of the members of Krahn tribe was located around the capital's suburbs. Therefore, ECOMOG's control of Monrovia also stopped the slaughter of members of Krahn tribe. Through such concrete accomplishments, ECOMOG gain extensive sympathy among the civilian population of Liberia. Human Rights Watch report published in 1993 notes that

"one would be hard-pressed to visit Monrovia without hearing, time and again, 'Thank God for ECOMOG.' The sentiments of many Monrovia residents were summarized by a Liberian medical worker who said: 'ECOMOG was our savior; it was a salvation. ECOMOG saved the population of Monrovia. They avoided fighting, but were pushed into a corner. We feel sorry for them; they have no cause to die here for this stupid, senseless war'."

Following the establishment of interim government, the role of ECOMOG was limited to act as a police force in the country. Charles Taylor's forces withdrew to places outside of Monrovia mostly to rural places. This was taken as a signal of NPFL's decline and ECOMOG's success. However, in middle 1991, a group of former AFL soldiers formed another rebel group with the name of United Liberation Movement of Liberia for Democracy (ULIMO). With ULIMO's entrance to the country from the western borders, the civil war got intense again. ULIMO's main target was the combatants of NPFL. Yet, once again it is crucial to note that in Liberian civil war, it was very difficult to distinguish between armed groups and civilians. In most of the cases, combatants were spending their days as ordinary civilians living in villages and towns. Therefore, ULIMO's targets were directly civilians as well as NPFL's combatants.

Charles Taylor and NPFL categorically rejected to negotiate with ECOWAS which they argue an invasion force of Nigeria. During the operations of ECOMOG against NPFL targets, there were several civilians got harmed indeed. Based on these civilians losses, Charles Taylor accused ECOMOG making a genocide against Liberian people. When ULIMO also started to attack on NPFL targets, NPFL responded so ruthless that the scenes of the street wars and cannibalism⁴ startled the international audience. International campaign that calls the international community to stop the bloodshed in Liberia got intense. The campaigns succeeded to trigger awareness in the American society, and the United States sent a carrier ship to the Monrovia offshore to support the ECOMOG's presence in the country. After two months in 1993, ECOMOG controlled most of the country and convinced the warring factions negotiate on a ceasefire. After getting the ceasefire, ECOWAS brokered a peace agreement which was signed in Cotonou, Benin. The Cotonou Agreement was envisaging

⁴ Cannibalism during the Liberia civil war was a fact that is both about warring and also poverty. The warring factions were thinking that eating the human parts of their enemy would make them stronger, even bullet-proof. Besides, because of the poverty in the country, dead bodies were collected and eaten by people suffering from heavy conditions of poverty. For more information about the cannibalism during Liberia civil war see Utas, Mats. 2003. Sweet Battlefields: Youth and the Liberian Civil War. DICA: Uppsala, Stockholm; ch. 4.

a gradual disarmament of the combatants and forming political parties to act on a legal ground for each warring factions (Adibe, 1997).

United Nation's involvement in intervention to Liberian Civil War started with this agreement. United Nations Security Council decided to form a monitoring force to support ECOWAS in the establishment of the conditions to honor the peace agreement. United Nations Observer Mission in Liberia (UNOMIL) was established in 1993 and sent to Liberia along with 2000 international troops. It was established by the Security Council resolution 866. UNOMIL defines its mission as follows:

"UNOMIL was established to exercise good offices in support of the efforts of the Economic Community of West African States and the Liberian National Transitional Government to implement peace agreements; investigate alleged ceasefire violations; assist in maintenance of assembly sites and demobilization of combatants; support humanitarian assistance; investigate human rights violations and assist local human rights groups; observe and verify elections." (UNOMIL official webpage).⁵

ECOWAS utilized the support of the UNOMIL significantly indeed. Following the arrival of the UN mission to Liberia, warring parties respected the implementation of the peace agreement for the first two months. The clashes between parties started again in November 1993. Factions were trying to gain power as much as possible before upcoming elections. Controlling areas also meant guaranteeing the votes of the residents of that specific areas during the elections as they constituency were threatened by the controlling group. In March 1994, Amos Sawyer's interim government was replaced by Council of State composed of six members. The council was some kind of a technocrats' government headed by David Kpormakpor. Yet, those groups who were upset by the composition of new technocrats' government kept assaulting on government targets. In 1994, ULIMO were separated into two factions, a separation based on ethnicity. Krahn members of ULIMO separated from the group and started ULIMO-J under Roosevelt Johnson. The other faction was based on Mandigo tribe and named ULIMO-K headed by Alhaji Kromah.

Following this separation, factions started attack each other and ECOMOG used this opportunity to control the rural areas. Biggest accomplishment of the intervention was to keep Charles Taylor's NPFL out of the conflict throughout the course of 1994. Somehow, NPFL was convinced to honor the peace agreement at least until the elections. Once again, with the brokering of Ghana and ECOWAS, parties were convinced to sign another peace agreement in Ghana. However, the peace agreement was not implemented

⁵ <http://www.un.org/en/peacekeeping/missions/past/unomil.htm> (Last accessed 2.05.2015).

widely in practice. In December 1994, the UN decided to reduce the number of UNOMIL observers because of parties' constant violation of peace agreements and assaults on the UN mission in Monrovia. This was perhaps the biggest mistake of the UN in the region and criticized harshly by ECOWAS officials (Adebajo, 2002: 54). Not surprisingly, the bloodshed got intense following the UNOMIL's reduction in the number of its mission.

As the conflict turned into a cross-border conflict that disseminated to Ivory Coast and Sierra Leone, other countries in the region took more initiative to impose a peace agreement on the factions. In the course of 1994 and 1995, several peace talks were initiated with the efforts of these neighboring countries. In December 1994, representatives of several warring factions gathered in Accra and signed the Accra Peace Agreement, which remain obsolete later in 1995 because of the continuing violence. In March 1995, Ghanaian President explicitly threatened the warring factions by declaring that Ghana is ready to send more troops to Liberia under ECOMOG, if they do not stop the bloodshed in the country. Following Ghana's rising concentration on the Liberian Civil War, the peace talks started again in June 1995. Parties signed an agreement which was brokered by Ghanaian President, Jerry Rawlings. Major accomplishment of the agreement was to convince Charles Taylor to remain NPFL out of the violence. Given that NPFL had the biggest force of armed combatants, convincing Charles Taylor to remain out of violence contributed to the creating a relatively stable environment in the country.

After reducing the violence in the country, the Council of State headed by Kpormakpor was replaced by a new council headed by Wilton Sankawulo. Most important feature of the new council was the fact that it included three of the faction leaders in the council. Charles Taylor was one of them. Though conflict between warring parties continued as low intensity clashes, with the initiation of Nigeria, 1996 became the year that Abuja Peace Accords was signed by all warring parties. According to the agreement, all factions formed their political parties to run in the presidential elections that was planned for 1997.

The presidential elections were decided to be held in 1997. More than 10 candidates ran in the elections. Charles Taylor, the head of NPFL, won the elections with 75% of the votes while his closest rival candidate, Ellen Johnson Sirleaf got 9.5% (Harris, 1999: 437). The election slogan of Charles Taylor's National Patriotic Party (NPP) was gory but also irrationally effective: "He killed my pa, he killed my ma, but I'll vote for him." (The Guardian, 4 August 2003)⁶. International observers reported that the elections were free and fair (Harris, 1999: 438). However, it was also reported that NPFL's armed threats

⁶ <http://www.theguardian.com/world/2003/aug/04/westafrica.qanda> (Last accessed 4.05.2015)

were effective especially in some rural areas of the country. With the 1997 elections, Charles Taylor became warlord-turned-president of the country. The scale of the violence did decrease though was not over after the elections. Those leaders which took part in the Council of State before the elections declared that they do not recognize the election results and will mobilize again to fight against Taylor's authority. At the very same time, Taylor focused on consolidating his power over the country and also on the cross-border regions. Serving to this aim, Taylor was seeing the diamond sources in Sierra Leone of critical importance. With this in mind, he explicitly supported the paramilitary group Revolutionary United Front (RUF) in Sierra Leone and provided arms and weapons. With his intense support to RUF, Sierra Leone got destabilized and dragged into a severe civil war. The main aim of Taylor was to establish a pro-NPP government in the neighboring country, Sierra Leone and transfer the diamond sources to Liberia in return of the weapons (Hirsch, 2001: 25). With the break out of a severe civil war in Sierra Leone and his role in this conflict, Taylor drew a harsh rebuff from western world including the United States and the United Kingdom.

During the relative slow down of the violence following the elections, especially ULIMO lost significant ground in the country. Most of the ULIMO combatants withdrew to northern border and neighboring country Guinea. Still, they were supported also by Guinean government to remobilize against Taylor's administration in Liberia. International observers warned for the highly rising possibility of recurring civil war in Liberia. Yet, at the very same time, Taylor's support for paramilitary groups in Sierra Leone and Guinea made him the target of international community. Though 1997 and 1998 were passed with relatively low intensity violence, 1999 became the year in which civil war was fueled once again. ULIMO-J faction reformed itself under the name of Liberians United for Reconciliation and Democracy (LURD) and entered the country from the northern borders in late 1999. According to UNOMIL's report, both the Taylor's government and LURD were using child soldiers. The brutality of the civil war was even worse this time. Apart from other minor groups, a third big group joined to the civil war in late 2002. Former combatants from the ULIMO-K faction formed a paramilitary group under the name Movement for Democracy in Liberia (MODEL) and started to fight against Armed Forces of Liberia in the south of the country (Adebajo, 2003).

The recurrence of the conflict in Liberia triggered two reactions in the international community represented by the United Nations. Firstly, the United Nations Security Council decided to employ more troops under UNOMIL in Liberia. The intervention force fought against both government and paramilitary forces in the country because the UN mandate was setting the protection of unarmed civilians as its utmost aim for its intervention. In other words, the UN was giving the message that the UN is ready to challenge any group including

the legitimate sovereigns of Liberia when they threaten the civilian population. Secondly, the UNSC passed Resolution 1343 which was banning arms sale to Liberian government, buying diamonds from Liberia (which was the main source of funding of government's support for RUF in Sierra Leone) and banning the members of Liberian government to any member country of the UN. With resolution 1343, the UN picked its side in Liberia explicitly and the circle around Taylor's government got narrower. Unfortunately, the international pressure on Taylor got his regime even more aggressive against some specific tribes which Taylor thought providing support to LURD and MODEL.

In 2003, LURD and MODEL were forming an implicit alliance against the government. LURD was active especially around the capital Monrovia. MODEL, on the other hand, was controlling the southern territories of the country. In middle 2003, LURD started an assault on the capital Monrovia and sieged the government building. At the very same time, the international pressure on Taylor's government got intense because of its constant attack on civilian tribes outside Monrovia. UN passed another resolution (number 1478) which implement ban on timber import from Liberia, which was the major product of Liberia's export. A third series of intervention started with this embargo. ECOWAS was once again on the stage and organized peace talks in Accra, Ghana. Both LURD and MODEL was convinced to attend in talks and negotiate with Taylor's government. Taylor himself was attending to the negotiations and left Monrovia for Accra on June 4, 2003. When he arrived in Accra, Special Court for Sierra Leone declared its decision of taking Charles Taylor into custody because of his guilt of war crimes and crimes against humanity during the civil war in Sierra Leone. The government of Sierra Leone was asking Ghanaian government to arrest Taylor and extradite to Sierra Leone. Ghana responded that it is not possible to arrest a president which Ghana government itself invited for peace talk. Upon this development, Taylor turned back to Monrovia but left the representatives of Liberian government to take part in the peace negotiations.

When peace talks were continuing, rebel groups LURD and MODEL were assaulting government buildings in Monrovia. Taylor's government was now not capable of controlling even the streets of the capital. Taylor was coming to understand that there was no future for his government and regime in Liberia. Nigeria offered safe exile to Taylor in July 2003. Though Taylor refused to leave the country in the first plan, following the Resolution 1497 taken by the UNSC which would form an international peacekeeping force to deploy in Liberia, Taylor resigned and fled to Nigeria. ECOWAS was once again the dragging force for international interveners and provided the safety in the streets of Monrovia in 2003 through ECOMIL. Besides, the United States sent a carrier ship and also supported the peacekeeping force logistically. In

August 2003, the negotiations were concluded with Accra Comprehensive Peace Agreement between warring factions and the interim government of Liberia which would rule the country until the elections. Now it was time to build the ground for a consolidated peace. With this in mind, the intervention in Liberian Civil War turned into a broader peacebuilding operation (McCantless, 2008).

ECOWAS was also an important stakeholder of the post-conflict peacebuilding operation. Following Accra Comprehensive Peace Agreement, the main target of the intervention forces was to keep country away from violence until the elections. Serving to this aim, the National Transition Government of Liberia (NTGL) were assigned the duty of administer the country until the next presidential elections. Charles Gyude Bryant was selected as the head of the transition government. Since Bryant was a businessman and considered among the economic elites of the country, it was planned that his government would take the steps to attract international investment to the country which would provide economic buoyancy in the country in the short run. Another important step was to increase the number of peacekeeping forces in Liberia. In October 2003, the number of the ECOWAS personnel in Liberia reached over 4000. Again in October 2003, the United Nations passed the Resolution 1497 which established United Nations Mission in Liberia (UNMIL) that took over the duties from UNOMIL and superseded its mandate. After its establishment, UNMIL took the peacekeeping duties from ECOWAS and the ECOMOG personnel were deployed as United Nations Peacekeeping Force in Liberia along with other 15000 troops (UNMIL Web Page, 2015)⁷

Conclusion

Humanitarian intervention experience in Liberia shows that the regional identity adopted by ECOWAS facilitated the acceptance of the operation by the people of Liberia. This research emphasized that the regional international organizations, especially in the African context, are much more effective stakeholders of the intervention practices compared to the international organizations which are unfamiliar to the political context, societal values and peoples in the intervened country. Three main implications can be noted from this research.

First of all, the case of Liberia depicts that identity of the operation is an important independent variable for the success of the operation. ECOWAS, as a regional organization, was perceived as a rightful international organization which is capable of practicing effective intervention. The analysis of the

⁷ <http://www.un.org/en/peacekeeping/missions/unmil/background.shtml> (Last Access 10.05.2015)

intervention process confirms this argument in the sense that the intervention to Liberia is considered as a successful case. In this process, ECOWAS played the role of being a locomotive both in the intervention practices and also entranced the interest of international community in Liberian civil war. ECOWAS's presence in the rural areas of Liberia was welcomed by both ordinary people and smaller warring factions in the region. Most effective element in this welcoming was the sense that ECOWAS is a regional actor rather than an international body which would have a motivation different than consolidating peace behind its intervention agenda. Secondly, as related with the first point, ECOWAS has been a good and effective partner of the United Nations in the context of broader peacebuilding operation. The monitoring group that was established by the UN entered to the region with the protection of ECOWAS soldiers. Besides, ECOWAS also played a significant role in the fair distribution of the funds for the projects that aimed at consolidating security in a manner that would address different sectors of peace and security. Projects on gender security, capacity building in judiciary mechanisms, police and gendarmerie training are organized and monitored by the representatives of the ECOWAS. These projects helped the Liberia peacebuilding operations differentiate from previous intervention practices which overlooked the societal segment in the security building and focus more on state security. Finally, the presence of a regional organization in the intervention also helped the increasing the scale of local ownership in the peacebuilding activities.

In the final word, it is possible to emphasize that the humanitarian intervention experience in Liberia shows that the intervention gives better results once the regional actors which are part of the intervened political context are integrated to the operations. On that sense, the case of Liberia presents many lessons for international community in order to practice more effective and fruitful interventions.

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