ECOWAS’ diplomatic initiatives in resolving Liberia’s Civil War, 1989-1996

Timothy O. Erinosho

Abstract: West Africa was colonized by Britain, France and Portugal. It resulted in the creation of the Anglophone, Francophone and Lusophone zones in the sub-region. The Anglophone and Francophone have engaged themselves in rivalry exemplified by Nigeria and Cote d’Ivoire who command high level of respect in their respective camps and this often created tension between the two countries before the outbreak of the horrific socio-political debacle that permeated the Liberian landscape. However, in spite of their differences, Nigeria and Cote d’Ivoire initiated, coordinated and handled peace talks by leading other member-states of the Economic Community of West African States (ECOWAS) in their desire to put a halt to the genocide taking place in Liberia. This article, therefore, explores the diplomatic efforts of the ECOWAS’ member-nations to restore peace in the war-torn country. These pacific settlement initiatives were in two phases: the pre-ECOMOG formation and the post-ECOMOG creation diplomacy. The paper underscores the belief of the West African leaders in restoring and sustaining peace and security in the sub-region thereby revealing their sense of brotherhood and unity.

Keywords: ECOWAS, Anglophone, Francophone, Liberian Civil War, Pacific Settlement.

Introduction

The New Imperialism which found expression in the imposition of colonial rule undoubtedly created socio-economic and politico-diplomatic cleavages between the Anglophone and Francophone zones in West Africa. The former’s arrowhead, Nigeria, was often regarded as a political cum imperial monster by the Francophone nations led by Cote d’Ivoire. This fact was borne out by Nigeria’s location astride the long Atlantic seaboard, endowment of mineral resources, vast fertile land suitable for agriculture and manpower resources as well as its

* Tai Solarin University of Education, Ijagun, Ogun State, Nigeria. Contact: timothyerinosho@gmail.com.
intimidating demographic paramountcy unrivalled by the population of any other country in Africa.

Indeed, the deep-seated animosity and suspicion between Nigeria and Côte d’Ivoire were outcome of the French attitude who feared Nigeria during the pre-independence period. Consequently, after political independence, France still regarded Nigeria as an economic rival competing with her (France) for the market opportunities in West Africa. It tried to maintain its influence on her former West African colonies and vigorously pursued disunity between the Francophone and Anglophone blocs that Commune Economique d’Afrique Occidentale (CEAO) was established in 1972 to pursue. By then, the Federal Military Government of Nigeria under the retired General Yakubu Gowon had been making efforts to establish ECOWAS which eventually became a reality in 1975.

The political and diplomatic confrontation between the Francophone bloc and Nigeria became more noticeable after the outbreak of the Liberian civil wars which started in 1989. The war was caused by socio-cultural, economic, military and political policies which found roots in the marginalization of the indigenous population by the Americo-Liberians who wielded power and influence. The leaders of ECOWAS’ member-states waded into the crises by exploring diplomatic means towards settling the dispute between the warring factions. The internationalization of the war compelled Nigeria under General I.B. Babangida to suggest the floating of a sub-regional force to counter the violence perpetrated by the ex-warlords and their troops. This move was suggested since there was no response from the international community to put an end to the genocide and devastation of economic locations and infrastructural facilities. The Francophone countries distanced themselves from the creation of what was later to become known as the ECOWAS’ Cease-fire Monitoring Group (ECOMOG). However, after the successful take off of ECOMOG some Francophone countries reluctantly contributed contingents of troops to participate in the ECOMOG military operations in Liberia. But in spite of the apprehension of the former French territories towards Nigeria, they cooperated and worked assiduously by utilizing

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diplomacy before and after the establishment of the ECOMOG Force in the attempt of the sub-regional body to broker peace in Liberia.

ECOWAS’ Heads of States and Governments Pre-ECOMOG Diplomatic Moves

The post-independence African states have been beset by the insurrections of the masses. The bitter truth of this development is that ‘some of these groups are sufficiently independent that they have themselves contracted mercenaries. They are often able to finance their activities by exploiting natural resources such as diamonds and timber in areas under their control’\(^2\). Hence, the ruling class in most of the African states have found it extremely difficult, if not completely impossible, to suppress rebels.

The case of Liberia was not an exception. The political misadventure of the late Samuel Doe was stoutly countered by Charles Taylor who got foreign backing and exchanged diamonds for his military hardware. Hence, Samuel Doe was unable to crush him and other political agitators’ reactionary forces that were opposed to his misrule.

It is noteworthy that prior to the diplomatic manoeuvres of ECOWAS’ Heads of States and Governments before the situation degenerated into a full-blown war, the Liberian Council of Churches (LCC) had tried to intervene in the political crisis. In 1986 the LCC attempted to mediate in the political conflicts after Doe’s inauguration. However, their efforts were frustrated by Doe himself as he persecuted members of the LCC, forcing it to discontinue its mediation efforts. The massacre of people whose headless bodies were found around Monrovia following the Christmas eve in 1989 led to the invasion of Liberia by about 120 men trained in Libya between 1987 and 1989. In spite of the harsh treatment meted to the LCC, the body in 1989, worked with the National Muslim Council (NMC). The two religious bodies organized the Inter-Faith Mediation Committee (IFMC) to negotiate an end to the hostilities\(^3\). The proposal of the IFMC was “a cease fire to be followed by the setting up of a transitional government; comprising recognized, existing political parties and representative ‘pressure groups’. The

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\(^3\) Ibidem, p. 75.
head of the transitional government would not be eligible to contest for the ‘presidency in democratic elections to be held within six months of the establishment of interim governance’. But the IFMC efforts failed because Taylor rejected its proposal and withdrew from the Freetown negotiations.

The political debacle posed serious security problem to the West African sub-region. The peace and security of the zone was threatened. This situation prompted the Heads of States and Governments of the Economic Community of West African States (ECOWAS), established in 1975, to strategize means to finding lasting solution to the conflicts. We should remember that the original objectives of the organization, as contained in the ECOWAS Treaty are, among others’ to promote co-operation and integration in order to create an economic union in West Africa. However, Article 58 of the revised Treaty, which provides for regional security, contains the undertaking of member states ‘to work to safeguard and consolidate relations conducive to the maintenance of peace, stability and security within the region’.

To this end, and in pursuit of these objectives, member states undertake to co-operate with the community in establishing and strengthening appropriate mechanisms for the prevention and resolution of intra-state and inter-state conflicts, paying particular regards to the need to:

1. Maintain periodic and regular consultations between national borders’ administrative authorities;
2. Establish local or national joint commissions to examine any problems encountered in relations between neighbouring states;
3. Encourage exchanges and co-operations between communities, townships and administrative regions;
4. Employ where appropriate good offices, conciliation, mediation and other methods of peaceful settlement if disputes exist;
5. Establish a regional peace and security observation system and peace keeping force where appropriate; and

\[4\] Ibidem.


\[6\] Ibidem.
6. Provide where necessary and at the request of member states, assistance to member states for the observation of democratic election. Thus Article 58 provides ECOWAS’ legal foundation or basis for conflict prevention, management and resolution in the sub-region. It also provides for various aspects of conflict prevention, management, peace keeping and peace-building. Looking at the contents of this legal provision by ECOWAS one would agree that they are in conformity with those in the Charters of the United Nations and the Organization of African Unity (OAU) now African Union (AU). However, the ECOWAS Article 58 made no provisions for peace enforcement which could only be authorized by the Security Council. As David Wippman has remarked:

When disputes can be dealt with through diplomacy, economic sanctions or consensual peace-keeping, regional organizations have a claim to primacy. If coercive measures are required, however, then regional organizations are in a position that is only marginally better than that of individual states. Under Chapter VIII of the (UN) Charter, regional organizations must get the authorization of the Security Council before engaging in coercive measures amounting to enforcement action.

In conflict resolution, pacific settlement has primacy over the use of force. It was in this light that at the Thirteenth Summit of the OAU, held in Banju, Gambia, between May 28-30, 1990, the Community Standing Mediation Committee was established. The Committee was made up of The Gambia, Ghana, Guinea, Sierra Leone and Nigeria. Its communiqué called for an immediate cease-fire in Liberia. At the Summit of the Authority of Heads of State and Government

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7 Ibidem.
on Liberia re-emphasized the ECOWAS Protocol of Non-Aggression adopted in Dakar on 22 April, 1978\(^\text{10}\).

As the war progressed with Charles Taylor recording resounding military success to the detriment of Samuel Doe whose AFL was losing ground to the rebels, ECOWAS Standing Mediation Committee intensified efforts so as to broker peace between the duo. Between July 5-20, 1990, it initiated peace negotiations between them in Freetown. But it was a failure as Taylor remained adamant, insisting that Doe must first step down. By then, a factional group led by Yormie Johnson had broken away from the NPFL, forming the INPFL because of the political savagery being displayed by Charles Taylor. Taylor’s refusal to back down was informed by the great success he was having.

As the belligerents stuck to their guns, not willing to agree to a cease fire agreement, the Mediation Committee proposed to set up an Interim Government of National Unity (IGNU) which would include the representatives of all the political parties and the rebels, but certainly not headed by Samuel Doe or Charles Taylor\(^\text{11}\).

The ECOWAS Standing Mediation Committee (SMC) was not weary of the assignment ahead of it. Consequently, on 6 August 1990, the first session of the ECOWAS SMC was held at the Kariaba (or Kariba) Conference Centre Banju (Gambia). It was chaired by Sir Dauda Jawara, The Gambian President. Participants included the heads of state of Ghana, Guinea, Nigeria, Sierra Leone, Mali and Togo. Also present were the OAU Secretary General and members of the Inter-Faith Mediation Committee in attendance as observers. The Committee began by noting ‘the wanton destruction of human life and property and the displacement of persons caused by the armed conflict’\(^\text{12}\). At the end of the meeting, a communiqué was issued, again calling for an immediate ceasefire and established an ECOWAS Cease-fire Monitoring Group (ECOMOG) ‘for the purposes of keeping the peace, restoring law and order and ensuring that the cease-fire is respected’\(^\text{13}\). In addition, all the parties were to surrender all arms and ammunition to the custody of ECOMOG. Furthermore, the Communiqué called for the establishment of an interim government. It stated further:


It is also agreed that none of the leaders of the warring parties be allowed to hold office as leaders or members of the interim government, and that the leader of the interim government shall be ineligible to stand in the presidential elections. The interim government is to be charged with creating the necessary conditions for free and fair elections and to facilitate the return of refugees and political exiles. Finally, the Communiqué calls for a national conference of all political parties and interest groups, and establishes a Special Emergency Fund for ECOWAS and ECOMOG activities in Liberia. Lt. General Arnold Quainoo of Ghana is named ECOMOG Commander\textsuperscript{14}.

A critical examination reveals that the peace talks were undertaken by the ECOWAS Anglophone countries – Nigeria, Ghana, Sierra Leone and the Gambia. Apart from Togo and Mali, Francophone countries appeared complacent since Liberia was not a French speaking country and there was a wedge being thrown between the Anglophone and Francophone blocs by France. This will be dealt with later in this chapter.

The second reason for the French-speaking countries’ indifference was the bad leadership exhibited by C’oted’Ivorie, which is the richest and most influential among them. Burkina Faso also remained indifferent. The acrimony that the two countries had against Samuel Doe and Nigeria discouraged them from participating in the peace moves. As E.G. Berman and K.E. Sams have asserted:

The leaders of these two countries supported Charles Taylor and the NPFL in their bid to oust President Doe. When Doe had seized power in 1980, he killed then President William Tolbert and imprisoned Tolbert’s eldest son, Adolphus, who died in custody. This incensed Ivorian President Felix Houphouet-Boigny who had been a close friend of President Tolbert and the father-in-law of Adolphus. Houphouet –Boigny’s same daughter subsequently

\textsuperscript{14} \textit{Ibidem}, pp. 384-385.
married Burkinabe President Blaise Compaore. Beyond fulfilling personal vendettas, francophone states more generally viewed Taylor’s ascension to power a means of checking Nigeria’s hegemonic designs.\textsuperscript{15}

With the launching of ECOMOG notwithstanding, ECOWAS Heads of States and Governments did not relent in exploring diplomacy to resolve the crisis. The ECOMOG peace-keeping and peace-enforcement went along with peace talks.

\textbf{Post-ECOMOG Formation Diplomatic Efforts and Settlement Between the Warring Factions}

Naturally, it is a general belief that war only creates untold hardships, not only for the combatants on the theatre of operations, but also for diplomatic corps, humanitarian workers and the defenceless civilians who are caught up in the mayhem. This fact influenced ECOWAS Heads of States and Governments to intensify action after forming ECOMOG. Thus while the military were busy fighting the rebels the leaders mustered all their diplomatic acumen to ensure that the war prosecution was not prolonged more than necessary.

The armed offensive launched by ECOMOG which eventually helped to establish a neutral zone in Monrovia forced the NPFL to retreat to the eastern outskirts of the capital. Thereafter, AFL and INPFL signed a cease-fire agreement in Banjul, agreeing to work with ECOMOG.\textsuperscript{16} The no-nonsense and uncompromising leadership of Major-General Dongoyaro (the FC) sought to create a defence perimeter resulting in ECOMOG engaging the NPFL. Coupled with the ECOMOG military masterstroke was the diplomatic initiative to re-organize the government reached at Banjul I. Between November 27-28, 1990, the reorganization of the Liberian government was reached at the First Extra-Ordinary Session of the Authority of Heads of State and Government held in Bamako, Mali under the chairmanship of Sir Dauda Jawara, then ECOWAS Chairman and President of The Gambia. The session again called for a complete cease-fire in Liberia, ECOWAS monitoring the process, the holding of presidential and general

\textsuperscript{15} E. G. Berman and K.E. Sams, \textit{op. cit.}, pp. 88-89.
\textsuperscript{16} S.K. Oni, \textit{op. cit.}, p. 78.
elections within 12 months, and the observation of elections by ECOWAS and international bodies. In effect, it reiterated and endorsed the ECOWAS Peace Plan (EPP)\textsuperscript{17}. The military and diplomatic moves compelled Charles Taylor to sue for peace so that he would not be schemed out of things. He then signed the agreement which became effective a few days later and it was the only agreement he negotiated in good faith\textsuperscript{18}. To integrate the warring factions, the NPFL, INPFL and AFL signed another agreement in Banjul, the Gambia, on December 21, 1990 where it was proposed that a National Conference be convened within 60 days to discuss the establishment of a new interim administration. In consonance with this, Professor Amos Sawyer who was installed on November 22, 1990, as interim President of Liberia by ECOWAS nominated 6 ministers in January 1991 and announced that general elections would be held within a year\textsuperscript{19}.

It was rather sad to note that Charles Taylor was erratic and was not ready to abide by the terms of the agreement. The formation of his own government named National Patriotic Reconstruction Assembly Government (NPRAG) of Greater Liberia with its headquarters in Gbarnga in late October 1990 partitioned Liberia between his government and Sawyer’s Monrovia based government. Besides, Taylor was spitting fire, vowing in his broadcast on the BBC African service to attack and destroy Freetown’s international airport (Sierra Leone). This annoyed President Momoh who described Taylor as ‘ungrateful’\textsuperscript{20}.

In March 1991, Charles Taylor made known his intention to contest for the presidential election contrary to the provision of the terms of the agreement prohibiting factional leaders from contesting the interim presidency. Yet peace initiatives continued and there was the All-Liberia National Conference held at the Unity Conference centre in Virginia, Liberia. It was attended by 151 delegates from major political parties, warring factions, interest groups and county representatives as well as the ECOWAS Standing Mediation Committee (SMC). The NPFL walked out when its call for a week break was not accepted. The Assembly endorsed Amos Sawyer as president of the IGNU, established a

\textsuperscript{17} Chike Akabogu, op.cit., p. 387.
\textsuperscript{18} Ibidem, 387-388. Other countries whose leaders were at the session were: Benin Republic, Burkina Faso, Cape Verde, Cote d’Ivoire, Ghana, Guinea Bissau, Mali, Niger, Nigeria, Senegal, Sierra Leone, Togo, Guinea and Mauritania: Yoweri Museveni, the Ugandan President and then Chairman of the OAU was a special guest.
\textsuperscript{19} S.B. Tarr, op.cit., p. 80.
\textsuperscript{20} Chike Akabogu, op.cit., p. 388.
unicameral interim legislative assembly, composed of 51 members. It also agreed on amnesty for all combatants\textsuperscript{21}. However, the Interim Legislative Assembly lacked furniture items and stationeries and it could not finance the salaries of the lawmakers. According to S.B. Tarr the IGNU functioned as if it were a government in a normal political environment; it was bowled by the weight of Liberian political culture’. Though not limited by Banju II nor Monrovia, ‘it failed to evolve positions as to how it as the neutral body defined the contending claims, nor offer proposals for their fair resolution’\textsuperscript{22}.

On July 29, 1991, the Committee of Five on Liberia held its first session in Yamoussoukro, Republic of Cote d’Ivoire under the chairmanship of President Felix Houphouet Boigny. Other heads of state and government present as members of the committee were: His Excellency Alhaji Sir Dauda Kairaba Jawara (The Gambia); His Excellency General Joao Bernado Vieira (Guinea Bissau); Abdou Diouf (Senegal) and Boutokotipo Yagninim, the Attorney-General and Minister of Justice, representing the Togolese President\textsuperscript{23}. The president of the IGNU, Amos Sawyer was there while Taylor who turned down the invitation was represented by his foreign affairs advisers ‘who demanded full diplomatic recognition for their delegation including a flag-bearing vehicle and the reception ceremonies appropriate to a head of state’\textsuperscript{24}.

The Ivorian President Boigny was forced to intervene in the dispute openly now because the spill over of residual arms from Taylor’s enclave on his borders was generating an increase in crime and instability in his own country. The NPFL insisted that it could not disarm its troops in a situation where Nigeria held the upper hand in ECOMOG. Charles Taylor indicated his willingness to encamp his soldiers and open the roads to the interior for free movement of civilians if the ECOMOG force could be modified to include troops from countries which he felt were likely to be more sympathetic to him than Nigeria. He preferred receiving supervisory troops from the other countries attending the session than from


\textsuperscript{23} S.B. Tarr, \emph{op.cit.}, p. 82.

\textsuperscript{24} \textit{Daily Times}, Saturday, 3 August, 1991, p. 34.
The meeting was deadlocked. The situation was worsened further by Yormie Johnson who pulled out of the Amos Sawyer-led IGNU. He accused Sawyer of failing ‘to unify Liberia and create an atmosphere for free and fair elections’ and said further that the IGNU was characterized by economic mismanagement. Report had it that Amos Sawyer and the ECOMOG criticized the INPFL for executing members of his army including the Deputy Commander Colonel Moses Vanni. This Johnson refuted by accusing Vanni of disarming INPFL fighters to hand over their weapons to ECOMOG.

The ECOWAS leaders were not deterred by the events taking place in Liberia and the intensification of warfare. Thus, between September 16-17, 1991, the Committee of Five in the Liberian crisis held its third meeting in Yamoussoukro, Cote D’Ivoire which was chaired by the host President. Heads of State of Burkina Faso, The Gambia, Guinea Bissau, Mali, Senegal, Togo, Nigeria and Ghana also attended. Charles Taylor, Amos Sawyer and a representative of the International Negotiation Network (INN) were also present. The resolution was that encampment and disarmament processes were finalized. It was agreed that for warring factions to encamp troops, disarm them and deposit their arms in armouries to be guarded by ECOMOG. Taylor’s intransigency however stifled the implementation of this Peace Accord because his forces and the United Liberation Movement for Democracy in Liberia (ULIMO) continued fighting. In October 1992, Taylor launched the highly destructive ‘Operation Octopus’ on Monrovia. The heavy fighting led to destruction of lives and property, forcing the UN Security Council (SC) to impose an armed embargo on Taylor and the other factions. Another fallout of the deadly operation was the SC’s appointment of Trevor Gordon-Somers, a Jamaican diplomat to wade into the crisis. The UN-man relationship with ECOMOG and the IGNU was far from being cordial.

The next diplomatic stage was set for the mediation efforts of the UN and ECOWAS. Another accord was signed in Cotonou, Benin Republic, on 25 July, 1993. The Peace Accord called for the replacement of Sawyer’s interim government with a Liberian national transitional government (LNTG), which

26 Ibidem.
29 Lansana Gberie, op. cit., p. 59.
would have three branches – legislative, executive and judiciary. In addition a five-member council of state embracing all the factions in the conflict was to be set up. Furthermore, it made proposal for the expansion of ECOMOG to include troops from other West African states – particularly ‘francophone countries, some of which were openly supportive of Taylor – as well as from states outside West Africa’  

The Accord also covered cease-fire, disarmament, demobilization, election modalities, repatriation of refugees, supervisory and monitoring authority, acts of violation, terms and conditions, encampment, peace enforcement powers, prisoners of war submission implementation, humanitarian assistance and General Amnesty. The Accord was the most comprehensive of all the accords and agreements ever drafted and signed in the Liberian crisis. IGNU and NPFL signed it while it received the blessing of ECOWAS, OAU and the UN. Indeed, it was a major victory for ECOWAS and a major breakthrough in its diplomatic offensive.

As good as the Cotonou Accord was, peace did not return to Liberia due to Charles Taylor’s hard-line posture and this accounted for his being attacked by ULIMO-J for ‘sabotaging all peace efforts. Peace talks on the Liberian question have been held so far in five West African countries without any resolution simply because Taylor has vowed to rule by all means. The political situation was almost compounded by an attempted coup by an AFL splinter which if not foiled, the mutineers would have installed one General Charles Julu as the Liberian Head of State.

In October 1994, another peace talk was held in Accra, Ghana, under the chairmanship of President Jerry Rawlings. The seven groups at the Accra Debate included the NPFL; General Hezekiah Bowen’s AFL; Lt-General Alhaji Kromah’s ULIMO; the Lofa Defence Force (LDF) led by Mr. Francois Massaquoi and Dr. George Boley’s Liberia Peace Council (LPC). Others were the mainly civilian Liberian National Conference (LNC) led by NPFL – Central Revolutionary Council (NPFL-CRC), a break-away faction of Taylor’s NPFL, led

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30 *Daily Times*, Saturday, 3 August, 1991, p. 34.
31 S.K. Oni, *op. cit.*, pp 50-51
32 *Daily Times*, Saturday, 3 August, 1991, p. 34.
34 *Daily Times*, Friday, 16 September, 1994.
by Tom Woewiyu and ULIMO-J of Major-General Roosevelt Johnson\textsuperscript{35}. Foreign Ministers from Ghana, Sierra Leone, Guinea and Benin while Nigeria was represented by the Minister of State for Foreign Affairs, Mr. Anthony Ani while Togo, Mali, Gambia and Côte d’Ivoire sent representatives\textsuperscript{36}. Prior to this, one was held in September 1994 in the same country ‘for the dissolution of the government jointly set up in March under a peace agreement and its replacement by a new State Council of five members’\textsuperscript{37}.

Towards ensuring peace restoration in Liberia, the late Nigerian maximum ruler, General Sani Abacha, invited the factional leaders to the Aso Rock Villa, Abuja in 1995. Here, an agreement emphasis was placed on ceasefire and in September the council of state including leaders of the three major factions, was established, with Wilson Sankawulo, an ageing academic, as Chairman. The Abuja Accord fixed elections for August 1996 and made provision for the comprehensive deployment of ECOMOG troops throughout Liberia to supervise a planned disarmament and reintegration process\textsuperscript{38}. But heavy fighting which broke out between NPFL and ULIMO-J aborted the implementation of the Abuja Accord barely four months to the elections.

The final post-ECOMOG formation diplomatic move leading to complete ceasefire agreement took place on September 30, 1996 at Abuja, Nigeria under the Chairmanship of General Sani Abacha. Present at the Peace Accord meeting were: Alhaji G.B. Khromah, Vice-Chairman of the Council of State of the Government of Liberia; Mr. Charles Taylor, Professor Wilson Sankawulo, Chairman; and Mr. Oscar Karyee-Quiah\textsuperscript{39}. In the communiqué issued at the end, the Council urged reduction in the redeployment of ECOMOG troops to enhance the disarmament process and they agreed not to threaten their individual and collective security and to provide a conducive environment to ensure the security of lives and property. While reacting to the Abuja Peace Accord, the fire-eating rebel leader Charles Taylor, declared: ‘I am part of the collective decision that had been taken a few

\textsuperscript{35} Daily Times, 12 October, 1994.
\textsuperscript{36} Ibidem.
\textsuperscript{37} Daily times, Friday, 16 September, 1994.
\textsuperscript{38} Lansana Gberie, \textit{op.cit.}, pp. 60-61.
\textsuperscript{39} The Punch, Thursday, 1 August, 1996.
months ago. I do not know how many guns I have or how many soldiers I have.’40. By then Yormie Johnson had fizzled out of the power contest.

From the foregoing, it has been established how Nigeria demonstrated its leadership qualities in quelling the political uprisings in Liberia with its leadership qualities with the assistance of some other well meaning ECOWAS member states. She harnessed fully both military and diplomatic overtures, costing her officers and men as well as the hard-earned tax payers’ money. In spite of diplomatic bottlenecks capitalized upon by its antagonistic francophone neighbours it succeeded in taking the lead towards the formation of the ECOMOG Force when ECOWAS initial diplomatic peace initiatives failed. She did not relent even when she was losing valuable resources in the war theatre to initiate the post-ECOMOG peace talks.

In the various peace talks, Nigeria always made itself available wherever such talks were held, even when not invited. It is interesting to note that it was only when Nigeria hosted the belligerents that the peace talks were adhered to. That the late General Sani Abacha, the most draconian maximum ruler Nigeria has ever produced initiated the successful peace talks added to Nigeria’s catalogue of diplomatic laurels. To have an eccentric and political hard nut like Charles Taylor41 soft pedaling attested to the respect the nation has accorded itself in the comity of nations.

**Conclusion**

The paper examined the interface between Nigeria and the Francophone countries in their efforts to find lasting solution to the crisis that practically converted the entire West Africa into a war theatre. Although the former French territories, led by Cote d’Ivoire, had shown aversion towards Nigeria before and

40 *Ibidem.*
41 Interview held with Professor Akinjide Osuntokun, age 65, at the Redeemer University, Redeem Camp, Lagos-Ibadan Express Road, on Tuesday 9th January, 2007. The scholar was an Adviser to the Minister of Foreign Affairs during General I.B. Babangida’s regime (1988-1991) and Ambassador to Germany (1991-1995). He was involved in most of the peace talks at the beginning of the war. He shared his experience with his M.A. students in the University of Ibadan in 2002 among whom was the researcher. The professor of History said Charles Taylor behaved in weird manners, shouting on top of his voice, and surrounded by trigger-happy ferociously looking girls of about 19. The girls were his body guards who were ready to shoot on slightest provocations.
during the Liberian civil disorder, they worked with Nigeria and other Anglophone countries in marshalling diplomatic overtures towards restoring peace in the war-torn country. The lesson to be drawn here is that nations should cooperate and work together in order to protect human lives and property as well as maintain international peace and security. Nigeria and the Francophone countries demonstrated a high level of maturity by swallowing their pride so as to save humanity from imminent annihilation and other countries should emulate their good example in their future dealings in world politics. It is therefore axiomatic to assert that in spite of unfavorable colonial legacy and indoctrination, socio-cultural and linguistic pluralism, the leaders of the West African States saw the sense and importance of cooperating and collaborating with one another in localizing in the first instance, and later putting an end to the mayhem that was taking place in Liberia.

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