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ROLE OF REGIONAL ORGANIZATIONS IN PEACE INTERVENTIONS

ECOWAS interventions in West Africa and macro-level leadership

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Introduction

Intervention into violent conflicts has increasingly been discussed within academia and has been practiced in international affairs. The evolution of sovereignty from absolute to a responsible version irreversibly introduced the question of how and when to intervene in conflicts for easing the sufferings of civilians (Watson, 1992; Sorensen, 2002; Jackson, 2007). For over more than three centuries since the Peace of Westphalia, absolute sovereignty was set as the main ordering principle of the international system that renders the relationship between the governments and its subjects immune to foreign intervention. However, the notion of “sovereignty as responsibility” transformed the nature of sovereignty by attaching a set of responsibilities to this ordering principle and assuming that preserving it depends on fulfilling these responsibilities (Glanville, 2011). The practice of international affairs also evolved to enable certain international bodies to intervene in conflicts in which domestic actors and sovereign governments remain ineffective to prevent the sufferings of civilians and protect regional, sub-systemic, or systemic peace. As intervention practices became more central in international politics, it also emerged as the primary conflict response tool. Concurrently, relevant questions regarding how to operate better and more efficient interventions were raised. Debates focused on but were not limited to “who” was to intervene. When, how, and through which tools to intervene were also discussed intensely (Wheeler, 2000). Yet the answer to the former question of “who” played a significant role in determining answers to the latter three because the intervening body and its capacity to mobilize appropriate tools in a timely and efficient style shaped the course of operation its success. Accordingly, it is possible to argue that efficient conflict response requires efficient leadership skills by the unit that initiates and executes the process.

In Africa’s context, the nexus between leadership and the intervention’s success is even more crucial. Though Africa is a diverse continent in terms of political systems, demographic and socio-cultural dynamics, almost every country of contemporary Africa had the experience of colonial rule in common in their past. Hence, intervention into the sphere of a sovereign

African government inevitably triggers concern among African political actors and peoples regarding being imposed on a new form of colonialism. There is already a harsh critique of peace interventions emphasizing that the contemporary intervention framework represents a new form of imperialism. It is instrumentalized by the global north to establish its political and economic dominance over the global south (Nardin, 2005). In such a sensitive context, the intervening body's ability to lead the operation and convince the local actors, including peoples, to embark on and own the process is of utmost significance for its success.

In the early 1990s, the Economic Community of West African States (ECOWAS) appeared as a regional sub-systemic actor that filled the need of a local actor with leadership skills in conflict response. As previously mentioned, these skills include not only an operational capacity but also the capacity to mobilize the relevant actors effectively without hampering stability at the regional level. Interventions of ECOWAS for the settlement of the civil war in Liberia and Sierra Leone established its role as such a sub-systemic champion for conflict response in West Africa. The organization also consolidated this role with amendments to its Charter and redefinition of its role as a regional order provider. This chapter analyses the leadership role of ECOWAS in the regional/sub-systemic scale and its impact on the construction of a stable and sustainable sub-systemic order in the region. The role of regional organizations in conflict response is not a newly discovered topic in the international relations (IR) discipline. Yet, diverging from the literature, the chapter examines the role of regional organizations within the context of macro-level leadership through the following three discussions. First, ECOWAS's role as an efficient intervener is discussed as supporting evidence to the hypothesis that "identity of the intervener matters". Second, ECOWAS interventions are analysed as a ground for collaboration between systemic and sub-systemic actors. Third, by focusing on the contemporary practices such as intervention in the post-election conflict in the Gambia, it is suggested that there is much to learn for the international community in ECOWAS's interventions for good governance as a novel type of conflict response.

Conflict response, macro-level leadership, and regional organizations

Responding to conflicts is not an easy task. Especially when the conflict is domestic, the controversy on the intervention is even more intense. Sovereignty and non-intervention principles constitute a shield against the external interference in states' domestic affairs by other states and international actors. Sovereignty is considered as the main principle that keeps the society of states as a functioning international order (Krasner, 1993). In other words, the international community deepens through different institutions, mainly to provide its members with the guarantee of being protected against external intervention (Malmvig, 2006).

Intervention, however, remains one of the most contested issues of world politics. Although the international community preserves its state members' sovereignty, intervention is still used as a tool of international society to respond to civilian sufferings in violent conflicts. In its most general sense, intervention in world politics can be defined as the penetration into a state's sphere of sovereignty by other actors, be it state actors, international organizations, or non-state actors. Generally, this penetration is framed as an intervention as it uses military force (Bull and Watson, 1984). Military intervention by a state into another state's territory is an obvious violation of the international state system's norms and non-intervention principle. Article 2 of the United Nations' Charter underlines that "[t]he Organisation is based on the principle of the sovereign equality of all its Members" and that it forbids its members to act in any manner that endangers the sovereign rights of other members. In other words, a state's unilateral intervention is framed as an invasion, an illegal act according to current international society.

The intervention discussion in international relations today reaches beyond these classical and limited conceptualization of intervention. World politics has witnessed intervention incidents in the post–Second World War era with various pretexts and normative agendas. Today, intervention is considered a legitimate response to severe civil wars in which dramatic civilian losses cannot be prevented. Stedman (1996) notes that the post–Cold War world’s civil wars are unlikely to end without the outer world’s intervention, especially in ethnically disputed and deeply divided regions. Even if conflicting parties achieve a ceasefire through negotiations, in most cases, conflicts recur even in a harsher manner (Call, 2012). Under these circumstances, the most commonly used pretext for intervention in post–Second World War international politics has been that interveners aim to restore the peaceful environment in conflictual regions (Chandler, 2001). As a result, current literature on legitimate intervention as a tool of international politics takes the concept of peace and humanitarian agenda as the reference point for defining intervention. Yet the concept of peace itself is contested. Accordingly, the intervention in the name of peace is also debated, challenged, and criticized.

The first line of the debate problematizes the challenge posed by intervention against the current international system’s central ordering principle, namely sovereignty and non-intervention (Reilly and Gill, 2000; Thakur, 2002; Hehir, 2008). As just briefly introduced, an outer actor’s intervention into the sphere of authority of a national government is the antithesis of the classical notion of sovereignty after all. Modern sovereignty that was burgeoned with the Peace of Westphalia and consolidated later as the founding principle of society of states (Buzan, 2006) is built upon the assumption that all sovereign state authorities are immune to interferences from outside authority. The United Nations (UN) system has further institutionalized this principle and preserved it into the heart of its collective security understanding. Several domestic conflicts that could potentially bring two superpowers into direct conflict forced the international community to think about an intervention framework that could be utilized when needed (Bellamy et al., 2004). Traditional peacekeeping interventions were born into such a political context.

Still, traditional peacekeeping interventions did not represent a decisive departure from absolute sovereignty. Traditional peacekeeping was a relatively limited framework for conflict response, simply because it was built upon three principles, the so-called holy trinity of peacekeeping: consent, impartiality, and non-use of force (Bellamy et al., 2004, p. 96). This holy trinity is, in fact, a demonstration of how the understanding of absolute sovereignty represented a barrier for intervention. Wider peacekeeping and peacebuilding interventions were designated as reconsidered tools that aim to reach beyond traditional intervention frameworks’ limited nature. Reconsideration and reshaping of intervention tools also signalize a change in the definition of sovereignty. Especially in the late 1980s, the distinct absolute sovereignty understanding of the international community was gradually replaced by a new normative context that redefined sovereignty as a right and responsibility (Deng, 2010). In this context, sovereignty grants a right to rule and brings responsibilities to a government, such as providing basic services and security to peoples (Glanville, 2013, p. 204). Accordingly, a political authority failing to fulfil its responsibilities becomes subject to legitimate intervention by rightful authorities.

This is where the second line of the debate emerges. Which is the rightful authority to execute legitimate intervention? At first glance, the natural answer to this critical question seems to be the UN (Pattison, 2008). As the closest thing to a world government, the UN is established to address the problems threatening states and peoples’ security. However, the UN’s moral, operational, and leadership qualities for timely, ethical, and efficient intervention are subject to critique. Especially throughout the 1990s, the UN’s non-responsiveness or inadequate responses to major civilian sufferings caused harsh criticism against the organization and its role as the ultimate intervention body for conflict response (Carati, 2017). In addition, the UN’s pickiness

in its intervention decisions raised questions regarding whether the UN conflict responses are genuinely motivated for relieving civilian sufferings or are implemented by powerful member states for other material gains. These critiques started a debate on whether the intervening body's identity impacts the success of the operation.

The studies support the argument that there is a correlation between the intervener's identity and the success of the operation. The record of mediation and conflict response operations in the last 25 years demonstrates a trend of a multiplicity of actors involved in these efforts (Wallenstein and Svensson, 2014, p. 318). International organizations take fewer roles as the significant intervention body, while the regional organizations are increasingly taking the lead in recent conflict response. The main reason for this is that regional organizations' regional identity facilitates their role as an intervention actor in the target society. The likelihood of getting a successful outcome from an intervention increases when a regional international organization leads the operation because it is perceived as less of a foreign intervention by the target society and local political actors (Levitt, 1998; Sarkin, 2009).

Finally, the literature intensely focuses on the scope of conflict responses. What is generalized as conflict response can mean a wide array of actions varying from hard use of force, fighting against the government or armed non-state forces to trauma healing and civil society building in a post-conflict society. The nature, content, and modus operandi of intervention have evolved and broadened, especially in the post-Cold War era. Early peace interventions were mainly limited to traditional peacekeeping operations aiming to create a violence-free space for conflict parties that could enable further dialogue for a peace accord. In the 1990s, Secretary-General of the UN Boutros Boutros-Ghali's *An Agenda for Peace* opened the door for broader intervention frameworks with its emphasis that conflict interventions should "deal with the full range of concerns involved in the transition from protracted violent conflict to stable peace" (Bellamy et al., 2004, p. 235). Accordingly, the scope of peace interventions broadened to a great extent in the late 1990s and early 2000s. These new and broader approaches are formulated under the general category of peacebuilding.

According to Chandler (2001, p. 5), "Peacebuilding is more civilian than military in content". It may continue to operate even after a political solution is reached. It is employed sometimes when there is no prior peacekeeping operation. Unlike traditional peacekeeping interventions, peacebuilding involves a wide variety of international actors such as national relief and development agencies, non-governmental organizations (NGOs), even international financial institutions (Paris, 1997, p. 55). Broader peacebuilding interventions are also criticized for representing an imposition of a particular political and economic setting, namely, the liberal peace (Chandler, 2004; Richmond, 2006; Mac Ginty, 2008; Richmond, 2009, 2010). Still, the content and scope of peace interventions keep broadening. Lately, the scope of conflict response frameworks has broadened in a manner reaching even to the restoration of a democratic regime in case of violations (Hartmann, 2017). The purposes of peace interventions varied from one operation to another. For instance, in Liberia, the post-conflict operations had to deal with rebuilding the judiciary system for an efficient transitional justice practice (Graef, 2015).

Similarly, in Sierra Leone, enhancing formal judiciary organs' capacity has held an important place within the operation's context. The operation's transitional justice pillar was mainly built upon the national judiciary organs (Friedman, 2016). The scope of recent peacebuilding operations is also shaped by the interactions between the actors representing the international community and local authorities. In the case of intervention in the Democratic Republic of Congo (DRC), the international actors mainly focused on the restoration of the state since they see its collapse as the primary source of the conflict. On the other hand, local actors emphasized more the need to ease the antagonistic relations between groups and communities (Hellmüller,

2013). The content and scope of interventions are determined by context-specific factors varying across different cases. Convincing, motivating, and mobilizing different sets of actors around the purposes and the tools to realize these purposes are not easy.

Consequently, problems that challenge peace interventions can be summarized. First, sovereignty, although going through an evolution that changed its definition in an absolute form, is still one of the ordering principles of current world politics. Hence intervention practices inevitably face the critiques of sceptics who defend a pluralist international community instead of a solidarity one (Suganami, 2002). Second, the question of who should intervene remains a significant challenge. Third, the scope of conflict response has always been subject to controversy. As what constitutes conflict response broadened and diversified, the debate also intensified around what makes a real case that needs to be intervened. These challenges are even more intense when intervening in African conflicts (Joseph, 1997, p. 10). The common colonial history of the continent rendered outside intervention a more sensitive issue in the African context. Apart from concerns on these interventions representing a new form of colonial/imperialist policies, intra-continent disputes also play a complicating factor. Interventions in which certain African countries assume a leading role are sometimes perceived as policies that those countries initiate to favour their own national interest agendas. For instance, in the case of intervention in the Liberian civil war in 1992, Nigeria's enthusiasm to take the lead of the operation was seen as the manifestation of its eagerness to set itself as a regional power in African politics (Ofuately-Kodjoe, 1994, p. 272).

In such fragile and sensitive environments, the leadership that is exhibited by the intervening actor plays a significant role in the success of the operation. Regardless of the challenges just discussed, the intervention requires a macro-level leadership that can deal with difficult conditions created by the actors with contradicted positions, traumatized societies, and dynamics affected by the systemic and sub-systemic political atmosphere. In a word, regionalism becomes more prominent (Hettne, 1999; Acharya, 2014); regional organizations' role is also heightened to meet the need for macro-level leadership in peace interventions.

Then it is crucial to define the features of macro-level leadership that would be performed by a regional organization. In its most general sense, leadership can be defined as the ability and capacity to set the purposes and direction of a group within which the leader performs practices. It is a skill of mobilizing all relevant actors to struggle for shared aspirations (Kouzes and Posner, 1995, p. 30). Within the context of conflict response and the leadership exhibited by regional organizations, the macro-level leadership features should be considered concerning the controversial issues previously mentioned. Accordingly, the macro-level leadership performance of ECOWAS is discussed in the following three aspects. Firstly, the leadership performed by the regional organization should have the capacity to overcome the dichotomy between sovereignty and intervention. As discussed earlier, the concept of sovereignty has been evolving over the last decades, specifically regarding specific responsibilities such as providing security and civilians' well-being.

Yet, again, the tension between intervention as a conflict response tool and state sovereignty continues to be salient in the practice of intervention. A regional organization's leadership skills should include a dexterous strategy to deal with this delicate relationship between sovereignty and intervention, especially in the African context, where state actors are even more alarmed and sensitive about sovereignty due to the common colonial past. Secondly, the organization's appearance as the answer to the "who intervenes" question can be considered a significant macro-level leadership indicator. Leadership is not just a self-proclaimed phenomenon; instead, the leadership claim should be accepted within the target group (Choi and Mai-Dalton, 1998). The controversy over who is the rightful authority to intervene is soothed in contexts where

stakeholders, including state actors and peoples, agree on authority as the appropriate leading unit. The regional organization should also function as a bridge between the global systemic actors such as the UN and local actors, including state actors, peoples, and non-state actors. The *third* feature of the macro-level leadership skills that regional organizations active in conflict response need to acquire is deciding on tools and techniques of intervention and mobilizing the relevant actors to act via these tools.

In what follows, the role of ECOWAS, as a regional sub-systemic organization, in responding to conflicts emerging in West Africa is examined with specific reference to the macro-level leadership that it performed to convince and mobilize the local actors efficiently, interact with systemic actors, and revise and reform the scope of its interventions to provide directions for overall conflict response frameworks.

ECOWAS as an order-building regional actor: three cases and macro-level leadership

The Economic Community of West African States (ECOWAS) was established in 1975 as a regional organization to promote the West African states' economic integration. The initial aim of ECOWAS's establishment was to foster the collective self-sufficiency of its founding members.¹ In accordance with its agenda, ECOWAS's first two decades focused primarily on economic integration regulations such as building a customs union and common visa regime. In the bitter political context of the late 1980s and early 1990s, the organization repositioned itself in its region by broadening its role from being merely an economic integration actor to a sub-systemic order-building regional actor. ECOWAS took the lead in interventions to the civil wars in Liberia and Sierra Leone, even before interventions were not authorized by the United Nations (Levitt, 1998, p. 334). These roles assumed and practiced by ECOWAS can be considered a manifestation of its successful macro-level leadership that worked through challenging international dynamics and conflicted regional actors.

ECOWAS's leadership was not just a facilitating factor in the intervention practices that it was involved in. Still, its leadership also had substantial impacts on the overall conflict response framework worldwide. ECOWAS acted well before other international systemic actors such as the UN in overcoming the limits of traditional sovereignty understanding, which prioritizes the state sovereignty over any other insecurities. "The ECOWAS interventions in Liberia and Sierra Leone in the 1990s were initially undertaken without UN approval but were later sanctioned by the world body" (Sarkin, 2010, p. 371). These practices posed a challenge to the idea of state sovereignty as absolute protection against external intervention regardless of the scale of civilian suffering, which constrained the space for humanitarian action. ECOWAS's pioneering role in challenging the strict sovereignty understanding also influenced the African Union's (AU) reconsideration and reshaping its intervention framework. "The adoption of the AU's Constitutive Act, Article 4 (h) in 2000, has transformed its old-fashioned principle of non-interference to one of non-indifference" (Aning and Edu-Afful, 2016, p. 120). This amendment enabled the AU to intervene in member states when they fail to provide security and prevent war crimes, genocide, and ethnic cleansing. From this aspect, ECOWAS and AU acted ahead of other systemic actors such as the UN to adopt a new sovereignty understanding that defines it as a right and a responsibility. ECOWAS's lead in these interventions also had implications on the international law that regulates intervention. Levitt (1998, p. 334) argues that ECOWAS's acts paved the way for a reconsideration of the international community's stance on intervention, and it triggered the revival of customary law doctrine in intervention: "for the first time the ECOWAS Cease-Fire Monitoring Group (ECOMOG) missions in Liberia and Sierra Leone provide two

clear examples of unilateral humanitarian intervention by a regional actor that enjoyed support from the whole of the international community. Likewise, for the first time, contemporary examples of popular humanitarian interventions have derived their legal basis from customary international law, rather than the UN Charter. As a result, the customary international law doctrine of humanitarian intervention seems to have been ‘revived’.

The following section takes a closer look into the intervention practices led by ECOWAS respectively in Liberia, Sierra Leone, and recently in The Gambia. In the case of intervention due to the bloodshed in Liberia, ECOWAS emphasized its regional identity to convince the local actors, including state actors and societies, regarding the intervention’s necessity and sincerity. In the case of Sierra Leone, the organization functioned as a good citizen of the international community. It bridged itself as a sub-systemic actor to the systemic actors in such a manner as to shape their agenda. The recent case of the intervention to the Gambian post-election crisis represents a whole brand-new type of intervention that no other international actor has ever practiced.

Three cases of conflict response by ECOWAS: interventions in Liberia, Sierra Leone, and The Gambia

Liberian civil war has been a significant experience for ECOWAS in revising its aims and *raison d’être*. Liberia’s civil war broke out due to a volatile term that the country passed through in the 1980s. As a relatively stable country, Liberia cultivated close relationships with the West, specifically with the US, and prosperous ones compared to other African countries since it was established as an independent republic in 1847 until the troublesome coup d’état in 1980.

What is called modern Liberia today is a country that emerged as an outcome of the reverse-colonization story. In 1822, the country was established by the returning freed slaves from the United States (McPherson, 2008, p. 7). After independence, Liberia enjoyed relative stability and transitioned to a multiparty democracy well ahead of its African counterpart countries. Americo-Liberians, a term used to separate the population originating from the US and indigenous Liberians, constituted a small minority of 5–7% of the country. In contrast, their political power was much bigger than their size. Until the coup d’état by Samuel Doe in 1980, Americo-Liberians controlled the country politically and economically. The unfair sharing of the country’s wealth and political power had caused severe resentment in the incapacitated indigenous majority, which manifested itself as broad support to Doe’s coup. Doe’s junta started a quick trial process, which decided to sentence almost the whole overthrown cabinet to death.² Although Samuel Doe’s regime enforced specific reforms in its first two years and gained support from the West (Sherman, 2010, p. 52), it also quickly turned into a paranoid and authoritarian rule, which eroded the multiparty election system and oppressed the opposition and certain ethnic minorities. The civil war broke out in 1989 when Charles Taylor, a former member of Doe’s junta cabinet, started an armed campaign against Doe’s regime and marched his National Patriotic Forces of Liberia (NPFL) into the country from the northern borders with Côté d’Ivoire.

The situation in Liberia was a puzzling one for both the international community and regional actors. ECOWAS intervention to the intensely complex and brutal civil war had to work through two main problems. *First*, Liberia’s civil war was a multi-layer and multi-actor conflict that caused complete chaos in the country. Although it was triggered by NPFL’s campaign against Doe’s regime, NPFL was fragmented into different factions. A faction led by Prince Johnson separated under the name Independent NPFL (INPFL) commenced another major armed campaign against the government forces and NPFL at the same time. Within the process, some factions within the Armed Forces of Liberia, such as the United Liberation Movement of

Liberia for Democracy (ULIMO) and ULIMO-J, also separated and fought against other warring parties. Apart from the number of warring factions, the conflict also was shaped by different factors. Doe's favouring of the Krahn ethnic group during his rule caused them to be a natural target of anti-Doe rebel factions. Therefore, ECOWAS had to deal with multiple actors with different motivations and political agendas in a wholly chaotic and brutal civil war environment. *Second*, although it is not peculiar to this particular case, a decision to intervene in the civil war in Liberia had to overcome the barrier of the sovereignty shield. Considering that Liberia was a founding member of ECOWAS and Doe himself was a member of the Council of heads of state in the organization, taking a stance against his regime by undermining its sovereignty required quite a complicated set of decision-making procedures. In addition, an intervention by ECOWAS to the conflict could also jeopardize sensitive regional stability. A potential ECOWAS operation was seen by some regional actors such as Ghana as a tool for Nigerian aspirations to consolidate its dominance over the region (Adebajo, 2003).

In such a complex and sensitive political context, ECOWAS took the lead in organizing an intervention to stop the bloodshed in Liberia and established the Economic Community of West African States Monitoring Group (ECOMOG) as an armed branch to intervene in the conflict and oversee the parties after a possible ceasefire. The majority of ECOMOG forces were indeed troops from Nigeria. ECOWAS's strategy was built upon not antagonizing all the warring factions at the same time. When ECOMOG forces crossed the border to Liberia from Côte d'Ivoire and marched towards the capital of Monrovia, it strategically avoided multiple-fronted fights with different warring factions. In addition, it kept the dialogue channels with warring factions active and open throughout its march to the capital. By doing so, ECOWAS successfully instrumentalized the factions' aspirations to hold a seat in the political power sharing in the post-conflict term. To overcome the barrier of sovereignty, ECOWAS immediately declared that it sees Doe's regime as the legitimate political authority in Liberia. However, ECOMOG forces sometimes fought against the regime forces during its march into the capital and its struggle to control Monrovia.

The intervention succeeded in confining the regime forces into their barracks and kept several warring factions out of conflict for a limited time. The control of the ECOMOG forces was yet to be challenged by Taylor's NPFL, especially after Doe's capture and execution by INPFL forces. Taylor's NPFL defined peacekeeping forces as foreign invaders. At this point, the argument that the identity of the intervening body has an impact on the success of the operation proves to be right as it was at the heart of the controversy in Liberia. Although ECOWAS was declared a foreign invader by Taylor's NPFL, most of the warring parties, including the Armed Forces of Liberia (AFL), recognized the legitimacy of ECOWAS presence in the country (Arthur, 2010, p. 19). The societal perception of the ECOWAS intervention was also quite positive and embracing. 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.' Many Monrovia residents' sentiments were summarized by a Liberian medical worker who said: 'ECOMOG was our saviour; 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'.

In the recurred civil war, ECOWAS acted as a global system collaborator. Following the Accra Comprehensive Peace Agreement, ECOWAS forces started to wear blue berets and became part of UN peacekeeping forces within the United Nations Mission in Liberia (UNMIL) (UNMIL

Webpage, 2015). Although the intervention process to the Liberian Civil War was affected by setbacks and failures just as much as successful moves, ECOWAS exhibited successful leadership in setting the agenda, overcoming the sovereignty barrier, coordinating the operations, and collaborating with the UN, eventually handing control over to the UN peacekeepers.

The intervention in the Sierra Leone civil war can be considered as an extension of the operation in Liberia. The conflict significantly shaped the remaking of ECOWAS, which is an evolution from a simple economic cooperation organization to a security-maintaining regional organization. The civil war in Sierra Leone is a spilled-over conflict highly related to the power struggle in the neighbouring country, Liberia. As the Taylor's NPFL advanced in Liberia's struggle, it initiated related armed militia groups in neighbouring Sierra Leone. It supported them to overthrow the government of Joseph Momoh. Taylor saw the rich diamond and gold resources of Sierra Leone as an opportunity to fund his campaign against the Liberian government (Zack-Williams, 1999, p. 147, 150). The Revolutionary United Front (RUF), the NPFL-backed militia group, took control of eastern provinces in 1992, which harbours vast diamond resources. Momoh's government was fragile and weak in responding to the armed militias. It also took a hostile stance towards the deployment of ECOMOG forces in the country as a peacekeeping mission because it considered ECOWAS intervention as a factor that would further weaken the government and prepare the ground for a power transition (Gershoni, 1997). ECOWAS quickly mobilized ECOMOG forces, primarily through the efforts of the Nigerian Government to intervene. Yet the government's inadequate response to the assaults of the RUF prompted a coup against the Momoh, which resulted in the overthrow of the government, and a military junta cabinet, National Provisional Ruling Council (NPRC), assumed power. NPRC found broad public support in Sierra Leone since the Momoh government was notoriously corrupt and inept (Kandeh, 1996, p. 393). It initiated specific measures for a more efficient struggle with armed militias and aimed at a quick ceasefire. They normalized the relations with ECOWAS to find regional support. The ceasefire was partially achieved, and the country went to elections in 1996, which marked the victory of Ahmed Tejan Kabbah. Yet elections did not succeed in stabilizing the country. A junta backed by RUF overthrew the Kabbah government. The junta was named the Armed Forces Revolutionary Council (AFRC) and was supported by Charles Taylor's NPFL.

The international community quickly condemned the coup against Kabbah's government. The UN declared that they recognize Kabbah's government as the legitimate authority in Sierra Leone. In addition, many countries withdrew their diplomatic missions from the country. Amongst others, the UK's condemnation of the coup and withdrawal of the diplomatic mission signalled the prospect of intervention. The UK's attitude towards Sierra Leone, a member of the Commonwealth of Nations, was significant for domestic legitimacy and the testimony of a government's power. At this stage, ECOWAS acted successfully as an active member of international society (Halistoprak, 2015). The organization declared that they do not recognize the AFRC junta's rule and that the overthrown civilian government should be restored in the country. Besides, the organization underlined that ECOMOG forces would intervene against junta forces to restore the country's legitimate government. As the ECOMOG forces started the assault on junta forces, AFRC agreed to start peace talks again. ECOWAS and ECOMOG worked on a new peace framework and presented the Conakry Peace Plan in October 1997 (Francis, 2000, p. 359). Although the peace process was interrupted and challenged by constant violence in the country, ECOWAS's intervention brought the overlooked bloodshed in Sierra Leone to the agenda of the international community, set their agenda, and prompted them to respond to the conflict. The United Nations Mission to Sierra Leone (UNAMSIL) was established in 1999 and took over the mandate in Sierra Leone from ECOWAS in 2000 (UNAMSIL Webpage, 2009).

Finally, a recent intervention by ECOWAS to the post-election crisis in The Gambia represents a brand-new approach to conflict response, and ECOWAS appears as the pioneer of this new approach. ECOWAS intervention aimed at enforcement of election results, which were refused by the incumbent president at the time, Yahya Jammeh. In December 2016, the elections marked the victory of the opposition's candidate, Adama Barrow, against the long-standing authoritarian president of The Gambia, Yahya Jammeh. Although President Jammeh stated that "he has no ill will" and that he would respect the results in the aftermath of the election, he backed down from this hastily set position. His 'respect' did not last long as he decided to contest the results and refused to step down (Hultin et al., 2017). Jammeh claimed that the overall election process was corrupt, and its objective was the opposition's victory (Hartman, 2017, p. 87). In the following two-month process, Jammeh was condemned by many international actors and invited to respect the election results and transition to power peacefully.

Senegal's reaction to Jammeh's refusal to step down was concise and decisive. It urged the incumbent president to acknowledge the election results before it triggered a concerted intervention by regional actors. The tension was addressed in the 644th meeting of AU's Peace and Security Council. It was stated that the AU acts in full collaboration with ECOWAS for the enforcement of its Protocol on Democracy and Good Governance. ECOWAS troops, led by Senegal, surrounded the country. It was stated that the organization recognizes Adama Barrow as the legitimately elected president of The Gambia and will march towards the capital, Banjul, if Jammeh continues to refuse to step down. The march of Senegalese troops under ECOWAS command started on 17 January 2017, which resulted in Jammeh's acceptance to step down and go into exile in Equatorial Guinea. The intervention's novelty is also manifested in its name, Operation Restore Democracy (ECOWAS Web Page, 2017). An intervention aiming to enforce election results represents a new level of intervention beyond intervening in ongoing conflicts. Instead, it demonstrates a regional organization's will to maintain good governance and consolidated democratic practices in its region. The intervention also pioneers a moral interpretation of international law, which justifies pro-democratic intervention (Babatunde, 2017). ECOWAS improved its macro-level leadership in its region with the intervention in the Gambian post-election crisis by coordinating and convincing all relevant parties of the legitimacy of the intervention, running the operation and obviating further destabilization in the region, and collaborating effectively with other international bodies such as the AU and the UN. Finally, ECOWAS's consolidated the evolution of its role from a regional economic organization to a regional order builder in this recent intervention.

Conclusion: much to learn from ECOWAS's conflict responses about macro-level leadership?

Although the shape, tools, and nature of conflict keep changing, it remains a phenomenon of world politics and even more so in Africa. Relatedly, questions of how, when, and through which tools to respond to conflict hold a central place in international affairs. At the macro level, intervening bodies have to work through a complex set of problems varying from overcoming sovereignty barriers to convincing, mobilizing, and including regional actors in the process. Conflicts that broke out in West Africa in the late 1980s and continued through the 1990s and early 2000s represent good examples of macro-level leadership traits that regional organizations should develop to provide relief to severe political and humanitarian conditions in conflicts. The way ECOWAS handled the conflicts and tense political crises that can potentially turn into a conflict demonstrates that regional organizations can play a significant role in responding to conflicts when they practice effective leadership.

Three intervention cases examined in this chapter present appropriate examples to understand the macro-level leadership traits that a regional organization practices in its response to conflicts and political crises. When each case is analysed, it is fair to suggest that ECOWAS reinforced its macro-level leadership traits in each intervention practice that it initiated or engaged in. In other words, each of these cases contributed to the organizational learning processes of ECOWAS, improved its intervention capacity, and established the organization as an order builder and protector. However, it does not necessarily mean that the particular leadership skill discussed under each case has been the only leadership element in that specific case. Rather, these traits were adjoined to ECOWAS's leadership portfolio through these intervention practices and contributed to its organizational learning.

Accordingly, ECOWAS exhibited its leadership skills successfully in overcoming the sovereignty barrier without destabilizing the region, convincing the local actors to legitimize the intervention, and including them in the process in its intervention in the civil war in Liberia. Given that the intervention in Liberia happened in the early aftermath of the end of the Cold War, it is better understood that the strict sovereignty notion formed a tough challenge for intervention. In addition, the fact that warring parties were over-factionalized and caused severe bloodshed in the country rendered it even more difficult to intervene and convince them to negotiate over a peace agenda. Accordingly, ECOWAS acted well before the UN to redefine sovereignty as a responsibility and put it into practice. ECOWAS not only engaged in diplomatic efforts but also sometimes practiced coercive power to convince the factions of its mandate's legitimacy.

The intervention in Sierra Leone's conflict represents a good case for how a regional organization should show its leadership skills to bridge the global level to its sub-system. The case of intervention to post-election crisis in The Gambia represents a whole new level of intervention. The novelty of the practice lies in the motivations for which it was initiated. President Jammeh's refusal to accept the results of the election, which marked a victory for the opposition, prompted ECOWAS to intervene to avoid the country's destabilization, which could potentially affect the region.

Three lessons could be drawn from this chapter. *First*, the intervening actor's identity is a significant factor in the operation's success, and the perception of regional organizations' identity by the local parties can play a facilitator role for local ownership. ECOWAS efficiently instrumentalized its identity as a facilitating factor and emphasized it strongly when it was necessary to convince the conflict parties and societies of the intervention's vitality. *Second*, conflict interventions give better results when efficient collaboration emerges between the sub-systemic regional actors and global actors. Regional organizations can act collaboratively with the global players and bridge them to the local context. ECOWAS's efforts in the intervention in Sierra Leone's conflict set an excellent example for such a case. *Finally*, it would be mistaken to present all these intervention practices as if they resulted in complete success. There have been setbacks and certain failures, especially in the cases of Liberia and Sierra Leone. Yet ECOWAS improved its intervention frameworks both legally and operationally by accumulating experience and organizational learning that it gained thanks to these practices. The leadership developed through these interventions established it as a stability-providing factor in its region and set good examples for global actors that are supposed to cope with the changing nature of conflict and develop novel and efficient responses to it.

Notes

- 1 The founding members of ECOWAS were Benin, Burkina Faso, Cape Verde, Cote d' Ivoire, The Gambia, Ghana, Guinea, Guinea Bissau, Liberia, Mali, Niger, Nigeria, Sierra Leone, Senegal, and Togo. Mauritania was also one of the founding members but withdrew from the Organisation in 2000.

- 2 Only four cabinet members survived the trial process, including 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.

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