

ECOWAS Mission in Bissau (ECOMIB) and Peace Operations in Guinea-Bissau, 1998-2015

Suleiman Suleimanm Muhammad
Nigerian Army Headquarters,
Abuja, Nigeria

James T.Gwar
Department of History,
Benue State University, Makurdi
Benue State Nigeria

Abstract

This paper analyses ECOMIB's contribution to international peacekeeping operations in Guinea-Bissau during the period 1998-2015. It is an important paper that has examined the contribution to peace, security and development of Guinea-Bissau by a specific international military organisation. Contributions to peace and security has engaged the attention of scholars, commentators and public policy makers in Nigeria and globally, and is also the subject-matter of this paper. The study's findings have shown that socio-economic and political development eluded Guinea-Bissau as a result of issues which militated against the country in the post-colonial period. It has advanced the argument that Nigeria and other countries made significant contribution to peace and stability in Guinea-Bissau through the mobilisation, training and deployment of ECOMIB forces for peace operations. The paper has argued that the role of leadership and governance remains imperative for the long-term consolidation and sustainability of the peace process in Guinea-Bissau. The methodology adopted for the paper is the historical research method, the multi-disciplinary approach, conflict, war and peace scholarly perspectives, positivist and critical social science methods, using primary and secondary source materials. In conclusion, the paper has added to the body of knowledge by expanding debate on Guinea-Bissau's post-colonial predicament and the intervention of ECOMIB forces from Nigeria and others within the West African community.

Key Words: ECOMIB Forces, Conflict, Peace Operations, Security, Guinea-Bissau

Introduction

Guinea-Bissau has experienced myriad of socio-economic and political problems which threatened the peace and security of the country in the post-colonial period. The threat to national security, national existence and development of the country posed a challenge not only to its people but also to its neighbours and other countries of the West African sub-region, as well as the various interactions within the international community. This formed the background for peace interventions in Guinea-Bissau which was troubled from



the years of her revolutionary struggle up to the contemporary period.¹Peace interventions have hitherto been deployed to the country under various international organisations and missions. This development culminated in the deployment of the ECOWAS Mission in Bissau, (ECOMIB) peace intervention and operations from the foundational period of 1998-2015. For the country was been challenged by security threats in many parts of its regions. This led to certain special operations embarked upon by the Nigerian armed forces and others within the West African sub-region especially under the banner of ECOWAS. One of the major operations however, had been under ECOMOG and ECOMIB.²There is the need to examine the nature and character of these peace operations and the role played by ECOMIB in the operations and efforts of the ECOWAS countries against the forces of chaos and instability in Guinea-Bissau.

The paper will clarify some basic concepts that are relevant to the study and present the major scholarly perspectives of the study. Efforts will also be made to present an account of the course of the operations which will include the peace operations and encounters; the intelligence, strategy and tactics of ECOMIB, operations for the reclamation of territory, and; the various covert and overt operations for the enforcement of peace and security in Guinea-Bissau within the period under review.

Guinea-Bissau: Geography and Location

Guinea-Bissau is a country located in West Africa. It is bounded to the North by Senegal, to the East and South by Guinea-Conakry and to the West by the shores of the Atlantic Ocean. To the West of the country are other numerous islands, which forms part of its territory and lies within the Bijagos Archipelago.³Majority of these islands are uninhabited. The country lies between latitudes 11 and 13 degrees N and it has an area of 36,125 square kilometres. Its predominantly low-lying terrain is sometimes completely covered during high tides. Rene Pelissier notes that a variation of this kind of terrain can be found close to its common border with Guinea-Conakry, just at the foot of the Fouta Djallon highlands where the land rises up to about 300 feet. The country has so many rivers which empty into estuaries. The most important rivers are the Cashew which flows towards the northern part of the country, the Geba and Corubal and the Cacine which runs in the south. The country has a tropical climate and it is generally hot and humid throughout the year.⁴

¹See Patrick Chabal, "Revolutionary Democracy in Africa: The Case of Guinea-Bissau," in *Political Domination in Africa: Reflections on the Limits of Power*, Edited by Patrick Chabal, (Cambridge: University Press, 1986), 66-75; see also Joshua Forrest, *Guinea-Bissau: Power, Conflict and Renewal in a West African Nation*, (Boulder, Colorado: Westview Press, 1992), 87-94

²Chukwuma C.C. Osakwe, "Countering Boko Haram Terrorism: Initial Response," in *Global Terrorism: The Nigerian Experience in Taming Boko Haram*. Edited by M. Mohammed and LF Abdullahi, (Lagos: Army Headquarters Publication 2017), 150-156

³Peter Karibe Mendy and Richard A. Lobban Jr., (eds). *Historical Dictionary of the Republic of Guinea-Bissau, Fourth Edition*, (Lanham, Maryland: The Scarecrow Press, 2013), 16.

⁴Rene Pelissier, *Africa South of the Sahara*, (London: Europa Publications 1991), 558.

Guinea-Bissau has been described as one of the least developed and poorest countries in the world with a GDP of \$2.502 billion and GDP per capita of \$1,439 according to a 2014 estimate.⁵Fishing and farming remains the mainstay of the economy and the country ranks sixth in world cashew production. Rice cultivation is common along the coastal plains and millet is staple at the interior. Cattle's rearing is mainly in the hinterland especially among the Fula (Fulani). The country's main export commodities are fish, cashew nuts, ground nuts, logs, peanuts, palm kernel, cotton and shrimps.⁶Its main export partners are India accounting for 56 per cent of total exports while Nigeria and Togo account for 28.4 and 6.6 per cent respectively. The ECOWAS Commission Report shows that the country generates a net profit of \$139.8 million from export earnings.⁷The country also imports commodities such as petroleum products, transportation equipment, and machinery and food stuffs. The main import partners are Portugal accounting for 27.8 per cent of total imports while Senegal accounts for 16.8 per cent. The United States accounts for 7.1 per cent and China and Cuba account for 4.8 and 4.2 percent respectively.⁸The country has numerous unexplored mineral resources such as bauxite and phosphates although the latter is currently being exploited.⁹Elsewhere, there have been reports of some proven oil reserves which was a major source of conflict with Senegal and Guinea Conakry but was later resolved in favour of Guinea-Bissau.¹⁰

In September 2014, the country signed an oil exploration contract with Nigeria but this was yet to fully take effect as late as 2017.¹¹In the 1980s, Guinea-Bissau was a target of toxic waste dumping as a major source of income.¹²Due to abject poverty and the quest to get easy money, Guinea-Bissau signed a 15-year contract to dispose 15 million tons of toxic waste in her territory. However, the government was forced to shelve this idea with pressure from other stakeholders in the African continent. In recent times, Guinea-Bissau has come to be a transit hub from where drugs are being transported to Europe and Colombia.¹³There are also reports of illegal logging and fishing which continues to affect the economy amidst persistent political unrest. Unemployment has been high as instability and disorder made it hard to achieve any meaningful levels of overall national development.¹⁴

Guinea-Bissau has an estimated population of 1,693,398 according to a 2014 census and an annual growth rate of 2.2 per cent. There are five main ethnic

⁵ Guinea-Bissau Situational Briefing, (ECOWAS Commission Report, 2017), 9-12.

⁶Guinea-Bissau Situational Briefing, (ECOWAS Commission Report, 2017), 13-15

⁷ECOWAS Commission Report, 2017, 16

⁸ECOWAS Commission Report, 2017, 17-18

⁹Mendy and Lobban Jr., *Historical Dictionary of the Republic of Guinea-Bissau*, 16-17.

¹⁰Mendy and Lobban Jr., *Historical Dictionary of the Republic of Guinea-Bissau*, 15, 18

¹¹Peace Operations Briefing, ECOMIB Headquarters, Bissau, 2017

¹² ECOWAS Commission Report, 2017, 19

¹³UNDOC Report (December 2007), "Cocaine Trafficking in West Africa: The Threat to Stability and Development with Specific Reference to Guinea-Bissau," (New York: UN House Publication, 2007), 15-27

¹⁴Pelissier, *Africa South of the Sahara*, 47-48; see also Carlos Lopes, *Guinea-Bissau: From Liberation Struggle to Independent Statehood*, (London: Zed Books and Boulder, Colorado: West-view Press, 1987), 83-97

groups in the country, namely, the Balanta (30 per cent), Fula or Fulanis (20 per cent), Manjaca (14 per cent), Mandinka (13 per cent) and Papel (7 per cent). Other smaller ethnic groups are the Mancanha, Mestico or Mullatos (of mixed Portuguese and African descent) and a few Cape Verdeans (about 1 per cent) of the population. About 50 per cent of the people in Guinea-Bissau are Muslims and Traditional African religion accounts for 40 per cent. Christians (mainly Roman Catholics) are 10 per cent of the population. The official language of communication is Portuguese which is spoken by only 14 per cent of the population. However, 94 per cent of the population speaks Creole; a Portuguese related language but corrupted with other languages such as French. The French language is also widely spoken by many people in the country owing to its common border with Senegal and Guinea Conakry, which are both francophone countries. The literacy rate in the country is 55.3 per cent and life expectancy at birth is 54.1 years.¹⁵

Clarification of Concepts

Certain concepts that need clarification are bound to come up from time to time as central themes in the course of the writing and reconstruction of this paper. These concepts and phrases are: 'ECOMIB forces, 'peace operations,' and 'counter-insurgency operations. 'One of the phrases such as the latter do not necessarily form part of the title of the paper, but the need arises for its clarification as it also forms the central and indispensable theme of discussion throughout the analysis of the paper from 1998-2015.

ECOMIB Forces

ECOMIB Forces were the military units of ECOWAS' countries and their armed forces that undertook covert counter-insurgency and counter-terrorist and other specialised operations of war and peace, national security and defence policy significance in Guinea-Bissau during the period of study.¹⁶In this paper, Nigeria's military forces will also be examined in their contribution to peace operations in Guinea-Bissau under the ECOMOG and ECOMIB missions during the period under review.

Peace Operations

Peace operations include but are not related to 'peace building' and 'peace enforcement.' The former primarily has to do with monitoring a negotiated settlement between hostile groups.¹⁷It has to do with monitoring a ceasefire, disarming or demobilising hostile elements or parties to a conflict. It involves nation building and remaking of state institutions to function well again at the

¹⁵Pelissier, *Africa South of the Sahara*, 48-51; see also R.E. Galliard J. Jones, *Guinea-Bissau: Politics, Economics and Society*, (London: Frances Pinter Publishers & Boulder, Colorado: Lynne Rienner Publishers, 1987), 107-112

¹⁶J. F. Ferreira, "Political Instability and National Security in Guinea-Bissau," (Unpublished Fellowship of National Defence College Project, National Defence College, 2014), 154

¹⁷ Ferreira, "Political Instability and National Security in Guinea-Bissau," 11

end of hostilities. This is the thesis of the work of Diehl and Druckman¹⁸ who have emphasised the supervision of the peace building process by the United Nations Security Council (UNSC) at the world-wide level and other international organisations such as the AU and a host of others.¹⁹ Their presentation has also been in line with events in the African field of peace building as experienced by troops' contributing countries of this paper's region of interest, the West African sub-region generally and Guinea-Bissau in particular. Their work is applicable to the ultimate needs of this paper.

Uwazurike and others, have asserted in their works that peace enforcement is a third-party approach to conflict resolution usually carried out to bring peace by force when every effort to bring the warring factions to negotiate has failed. It could be differentiated from peacekeeping primarily due to the scale of force the mediating group is ready to apply to establish peace.²⁰ Other scholars such as Bradd C. Hayes and Kevin M. Cahill identified the concept "as part of preventive diplomacy in which limited scale of force is applied to prevent the escalation of conflict and war by two or more belligerents in a serious dispute".²¹ The above scholars' works have hugely influenced the expansion and development of this paper in the illumination of the nature and character of peacekeeping and conflict resolution in the practical field of operations.

Counter-insurgency Operations

According to the United States Department of State and Defence and its National Security Policy Document, "counter-insurgency is a comprehensive and sometimes joint military and civilian efforts undertaken to simultaneously contain and defeat insurgency and also to address its root causes."²² In Guinea-Bissau, this policy therefore meant that the protection of the territorial integrity of the nation against threats had been the exclusive focus, and part and parcel of the overall operations of the ECOMIB mission especially those from Nigeria and others in the West African Sub-region.

Theoretical and Analytical Considerations

Most of the concepts of peace and conflict studies are themselves theories developed to address the issues of the search for peace in periods of open and protracted conflicts in several flashpoints of the world. Scholars who have made

¹⁸Paul F Diehl and Daniel Druckman, "International Peacekeeping and Conflict Resolution," in *Journal of Conflict Resolution*, 42,(1),1998, 34, 43-47.

¹⁹Diehl and Druckman, "International Peacekeeping and Conflict Resolution," 47-49

²⁰U.O. Uwazurike, *The Use of Force in International Law*, (Ibadan: Spectrum Books, 1993), 201-208

²¹Bradd C. Hayes and Kevin M. Cahill, (eds), *Preventive Diplomacy: Stopping Wars Before They Start*, (New York: Basic Books, 1996), 68-73

²² The Departments of State and Defence, *The National Military Strategy of the United States of America: The United States' Contribution to National Security*, (Washington, DC: The Departments of State and Defence, 2015), 5-7

great efforts towards this direction include John Burton, and Ronald Fisher and Loreleigh Keashly as cited in the work of Fetherston.²³ Their ideas have led to the development of the human needs approach, and the theory of contingency and complementarity. John Burton's human needs approach as presented by Fetherston understands the search for peace as the means of conflict resolution essential for humanity's desire for peace and tranquility in order to thrive, endure and prevail and for stability in the national security system. The approach also sees the humanitarian needs of nations and their communities as necessary and beneficial for the attainment of peace for the overall needs of human and socio-economic development.²⁴

Ronald Fisher and Loreleigh Keashly's contingency and complementarity theory sees the ultimate aim of the struggle for national peace as headed towards peace and the building of security and confidence in the communities. This shows that national security intervention should be utilised immediately after a conflict has become violent and protracted. Firstly, to act as a means of separation and breathing space for both sides to step back from the brink, and; secondly, peace and conflict resolution measures should then function as peaceful disarmament of violent factions for the improvement of communication on both sides, and for social, economic and political regeneration for the communities concerned.²⁵ These theories have been originally developed for peace, war and conflict resolution interventions at the global level but have also proved useful to national strategies such as the concerted efforts for the survival of Guinea-Bissau within the period under study.

However, scholars who have contributed to these theories urge for the need to balance up the problems of modernity with the contradictions and cultural complications inherent in the various societies of the world. This paper has taken this level of analysis in the contrivance of the discussion as it is contingent upon nations for the setting up of peace forces and missions in order to address the immediate needs of peacekeeping and conflict resolution wherever, and in any part of the globe that a breach has been observed.²⁶

Nigeria's Force Mobilisation for Peace Operations in Africa, 1960-1998

Nigeria has made enormous military and police contributions to international peacekeeping missions in Africa through the vast mobilisation of its military forces and even police units. Nigeria has practically committed over seven thousand (7,000) special troops excluding the police and civilians to each of the more than 40 UN, AU, and ECOMOG peacekeeping missions. Beginning with the Congo in 1960, the country has deployed over twelve thousand (12,000) police personnel to various UN, AU and ECOMOG Peace Support Operations, (PSOs).

²³A. Betts Fetherston, "Peacekeeping, Conflict Resolution and Peacebuilding: A Reconsideration of Theoretical Frameworks," in *Peacekeeping and Conflict Resolution*, Edited by Tom Woodhouse & Oliver Ramsbotham, (London: Frank Cass Publishers, 2000), 192

²⁴Fetherston, "Peacekeeping, Conflict Resolution and Peacebuilding," 192-195

²⁵Fetherston, "Peacekeeping, Conflict Resolution and Peacebuilding," 194-197

²⁶D.C.F Daniel, *Coercive Inducement and the Containment of International Crises*, Washington, DC: US Institute of Peace Press, 1999, 33-42

With this mobilisation and deployment, Nigeria has been ranked as the sixth highest Police Contributing Country, (PCC), and the first to contribute to the Formed Police Unit, (FPU), as well as the first female troops contributor. Studies have shown that one of the most important service branches of the armed forces deployed since 1970 after the civil war has been the Nigerian Army, (NA) units across the country. Writer Sunday Eno-Abasi has presented the fact that Nigeria mobilised and contributed the highest number of troops in the UN African Mission in Sierra Leone, (UNAMSIL), in Liberia, (UNMIL), and the UN Hybrid Operation in Darfur, (UNAMID) prior to contribution to the mission in Bissau.²⁷

The various forces' units mobilised since 1960 included the then 24 NA Battalion, Gboko, which comprised both armoured and infantry divisions, the 72 Airborne Battalion, Makurdi, the 72 Special Forces Battalion, Makurdi, the 303 Artillery Regiment, General Support of the Nigerian Army, (GSNA), Rukuba, Jos, the Field Artillery Brigade, Obinze, Owerri, the Imo State-based Artillery Amphibious Medical Corps, the 3 Special Forces Battalion, Molai, Maiduguri, the 123 Mechanised Battalion, Ikeja Cantonment, Lagos, the 26 Gaza Battalion, Bonny Camp, the 174 NA Battalion, Ojo Cantonment, the 244 RECCE Battalion, Ibadan, as well as the mobilisation of warships such as the NNS Ohue and NNS Barama. Thus, Nigeria mobilised human and material resources enormously and contributed to the struggle to secure the African peace throughout the continent. With this mobilisation, various provisions were then made for training, logistics and operations, as well as the strategic planning stages of the peacekeeping, peace building, and peace support efforts of the mission and its operations.²⁸

ECOWAS' Mandates, ECOMOG and ECOMIB Interventions in Guinea-Bissau

To ensure an effective prosecution of the peace process, ECOWAS secured mandates for its peace operations in line with international best practices and especially the standards set by the UN Security Council on global peace and security. These included the ECOMOG and ECOMIB mandates which were adopted and continuously reviewed according to the changing socio-political circumstances in Guinea-Bissau. According to the mandate provided for ECOMOG in the Guinea-Bissau conflict, the force was to monitor the ceasefire and put in place the conditions for a return to normal life, thus facilitating the holding of elections in the country. Specifically, the force was to ensure some of the following:

Supervise observance of the ceasefire and, when necessary, report any violations observed; Promote development of a climate of trust between the

²⁷Sunday Eno-Abasi, "Rethinking Nigeria's Role in Peacekeeping Missions," in *The Guardian*, (June 2, 2011), 9-11

²⁸ See James T. Gwar, "A History of Nigeria's Contribution to International Peacekeeping Missions in Africa, 1960-2012: An Aspect of Study in its Foreign Policy." (Unpublished M.A. History Thesis, Ahmadu Bello University, Zaria, 2015), 140-141

opposition parties; Play the role of immediate conciliator between the parties in conflict; Provide security along the frontier between Guinea-Bissau and Senegal; In collaboration with the authorities, guarantee humanitarian organisations and agencies unfettered access to the affected civilian populations in the delivery of needed assistance; Provide security for the Authorities and for diplomatic staff and, if so requested, for their families, and ensure safety of all public buildings, and; Organise elections, in collaboration with the government and the national elections commission, and if necessary, assure the safety of international observers, elections materials, polling areas, and the peaceful conduct of the elections.²⁹

Crises and Early Developments in the Guinea-Bissau Peace Process, 1999-2012

General elections scheduled for November 1999 were conducted as planned.³⁰Mallam Bacai Sanha, who was then the leader of the national assembly, was also sworn in as interim President.³¹At the time of the elections, thirteen parties took part in total. Prominent among these parties were the PAIGC with Bacai Sanha as flag bearer, the Partido para a Renovacao Social (PRS) with KumbaYala as leader, the Partido Social Democracia (PSD) headed by Joaquim Balde and Uniao Nacional para a Democratico headed by Abubacan Balde. At the end of the voting, no party won an outright majority and for the first time in its history, the PAIGC suffered a humiliating defeat from its opponents. By January 2000, a runoff presidential election was held between the PAIGC and the PRS in which Kumba Yala emerged winner with 72 per cent of the total votes. The inauguration of the newly elected government took place in February with the PRS and RGB forming a coalition government.³²

The results of the election were taken with reservations by the Mane's military junta because they wanted Sanha to win at all costs. Within a few months, the military started fomenting trouble again as General Mane declined to accept an appointment as the military adviser. He also opposed every move by the new President to reorganise the military.³³The regime's problems were further compounded by the constant unrest along their common border with Senegal and the persistent refugee problems. The government was also accused of being one sided as the balantes (Yala's ethnic group) had a better share of all good appointments. In November 2000, Yala promoted 30 army officers from the Balante group, but General Mane rejected this development and later announced that he had promoted himself to Commander-in-Chief. Later in the same month, Mane along with other opposition leaders tried to stage a coup against the government but was unsuccessful.³⁴

²⁹Agreement between ECOMOG, Republic of Guinea-Bissau and ECOWAS, 22ndMarch, 1999

³⁰ Mendy and Lobban Jr., *Historical Dictionary of the Republic of Guinea-Bissau*, 20

³¹ Personal interview with the President of the Transitional Period, Mr Manuel Serifo Nhamadjo, between May 2012-June 2014

³²Mendy and Lobban Jr, 20

³³Derived from Personal Conversation with Brigadier General Lai, Retired, Bissau, June-July, 2012

³⁴ F.G. Adman, *Instability and Development of Guinea Bissau*, (Bissau: ICDR, 2012), 130

Heavy fighting broke out again in Bissau and forces loyal to President Yala killed General Mane in the process, bringing to an end the era of a military dictator that was deemed to have significantly slowed down the democratic process in the country. Apart from the challenges emanating from the military, Yala also had numerous problems with the opposition especially the RGB which withdrew their party support from him, making his tenure very difficult. This state of instability was further heightened by the deteriorating state of the economy and increased corruption by government officials. For example, in June 2001, an independent inquiry was convened to investigate allegations into missing World Bank funds amounting to US\$17 million from the national treasury. By August, President Yala was accused of constitutional breaches for dismissing four judges from the Supremo Tribunal de Justica (STF). The Judges stood against President's Yala's banning of the Ahmadiyya Muslim Association.³⁵ By the end of 2001, President Yala had survived two coup attempts. This probably made him reshuffle his cabinet at least twice in the year 2002.

This instability amidst his growing unpopularity in the country gave the army the impetus to easily take over power in a bloodless coup on 14 September, 2003. Thereafter, President Yala was kept under house arrest. The military (headed by General Verissimo Correia Seabra as Chief of Defence Staff) immediately appointed an interim President, Henrique Pereira Rosa who was the former chairman of the country's electoral body.³⁶ In March 2004, legislative elections were held with the aim of forming a transitional government before the main elections. Thus, Carlos Gomes Junior of the PAIGC emerged leader of the transitional council. Kumba Yala, who had been in custody, was released thereafter. General Seabra was also allegedly killed by soldiers amidst sustained tensions.³⁷

By March 2005, Ex-President Kumba Yala was nominated again as flag bearer of the PRS for the presidential elections scheduled later in the year. Interestingly, the former President Vieira who had been in exile in Portugal also returned to Guinea-Bissau and picked the ticket for the presidential elections under the platform of the Independence Party.³⁸ In July 2005, Vieira was again re-elected President in seriously disputed elections. Owing to his past antecedents for corruption and gross mismanagement, Vieira decided to quickly settle down to business and amend broken fences. He also got the support of the military under the leadership of the CDS, General Baptista Tagme Na Wai. In November however, Vieira dismissed the government of Prime Minister Carlos Gomes Junior and appointed Aristede Gomes to lead a 5-party coalition government.³⁹

On 1st March, 2009, General Tagme Na Wai was killed in a bomb explosion at the Peoples' Revolutionary Armed Forces (FARP) Headquarters. The following day, President Vieira was also attacked and assassinated at his residence by

³⁵ Oral Interview with Dr (Mrs) Cadi Seidi, former Minister of Defence, Bissau, 5th June, 2012

³⁶ Henrique Pereira Rosa, Report of the Comissao Nacional de Eleicoes (CNE, 1994), 23-35

³⁷ Information from Yearly Briefing from Deputy Force Commander, ECOMIB, Colonel GO Onubogu on the Situation in Guinea-Bissau, 2012-2014

³⁸ Personal Conversation with Brigadier General Lai, Retired, Bissau, June-July, 2012

³⁹ Personal Conversation with Brigadier General Lai, Retired, Bissau, June-July, 2012

unknown soldiers. An inquiry was set up immediately to get the perpetrators of these twin assassinations. Meanwhile, another round of elections held in the same year saw Malam Bacai Sanha to the seat of the President. Within two years in power, Sanha visited several countries in order to get their support on the fragile crisis situation in Guinea-Bissau. It was as a result of these visits that Angola agreed to deploy the Angolan Military Mission in Guinea-Bissau (MISSANG) on 21st March, 2011. Some of the stakeholders in the country welcomed this deployment while many others rejected it. On 9th January, 2012, Sanha died of ill-health while in a hospital in Paris. Thus, Raimundo Pereira was appointed interim President while preparations were made to conduct elections again within ninety days.⁴⁰

Another military coup in April overthrew the interim government and took back everything to the drawing board. This attracted serious condemnation from the international community and led to the imposition of sanctions on the country. On 19th April, 2012, Manuel Serifo Nhamadjo was named Interim President of the newly established National Transitional Council. ECOWAS leaders also authorised the deployment of a 680-man force known as the ECOWAS Mission in Guinea-Bissau (ECOMIB) to provide security for the transitional government and the entire Bissau-Guinean populace. The Force comprised of both army and police personnel from five countries namely Burkina Faso, Cote D'Ivoire, Nigeria, Senegal and Togo.⁴¹

Peace Operations under the ECOMIB Mandate, 2012-2015

On 16th April, 2012, ECOWAS Heads of State and Government and the ECOWAS Mediation and Security Council held a meeting in Abidjan and outlined a mandate for the newly formed ECOMIB. In line with the demands of various factions in the negotiations, the ECOMIB forces relieved the Angolan Military Force from Guinea-Bissau. Since the armed forces of the country had immeasurable challenges as a result of the coup d'état and its attendant instability, ECOMIB provided the basis for national security during the withdrawal of Angolan Military Forces from Guinea-Bissau. The Force also supported the restoration of constitutional order in Guinea-Bissau and served as security aides to the designated personnel that were involved in the Disarmament and Security Sector Reform, (DSSR) Programme.⁴²

On 17th May, 2012, the first contingent of the ECOMIB forces consisting of troops from Burkina Faso arrived in the mission area. Expectedly, by 9th June, 2012, the last batch of the Angolan Mission, MISSANG troops had completed their withdrawal from Guinea-Bissau as agreed in the mandate assigned to ECOMIB for the stabilisation of the country. Following the successful withdrawal of the Angolan MISSANG troops, the initial mandate was further reviewed for ECOMIB to achieve certain objectives for the rejuvenation of the country. The reviewed

⁴⁰ Personal Interview with President of the Transitional Period, Mr Manuel Serifo Nhamadjo, May 2012-June, 2014

⁴¹ Personal Interview with Force Commander, ECOMIB, Colonel Major Gnibanga Barro, 13th May, 2014

⁴² Information from ECOMIB Weekly Briefing, 2012-2014

mandate enjoined ECOMIB forces to among other issues to be tackled, provide security for the transitional process which would be driven by a consensual arrangement based on the provisions of the Guinea-Bissau constitution. The mission was called upon to render support to the Guinea-Bissau electoral process through the provision of security for all stakeholders and institutions involved in the electoral process, and for all VIPs, voters and all other vulnerable persons. Another key provision in the review was for the mission to ensure the security of witnesses and institutions involved in the investigation and the criminal prosecution of assassinations and other acts of impunity committed within the period.⁴³

In serving as the guarantor of peace in international security matters as regards Guinea- Bissau, ECOMIB forces provided security for the entire transition process which involved the period of electioneering campaign, elections monitoring and the period of the transition of political power proper. This implied the support to Guinea-Bissau's electoral process through the general provision of security to ensure an enabling environment of peace and harmony during and after the elections. With the breakdown of law and order and the country's incapacity to implement a transition programme, ECOMIB forces provided security for designated institutions, VIPs, vulnerable points and key points in the peace building efforts. In addition to the above, the mission became the platform for the assurance of security of witnesses and institutions involved in the prosecution of criminals and violators of the rule of law. Wherever available, the ECOMIB forces protected humanitarian agencies with the goal of providing succour to the displaced, the invalids and those that experienced various hardships as a result of instability and chaos in the country within the period. Their peace operations necessarily had to provide security for the entire population of Guinea-Bissau in all the key volatile areas and flash points of destabilisation in the country. Assistance was rendered to the officials of the international community that were involved in the implementation of the DSSR Programme.⁴⁴

In April 2014, Guinea-Bissau went to the polls again and elected Mr Jose Mario Vaz as President of the Republic of Guinea-Bissau under the PAIGC. The successful conduct of the elections marked the climax of the ECOMIB forces' peace operations and was widely applauded by members of the international community. It could be mentioned here that for the first time in her history, Guinea-Bissau had a relatively stable government since the post-independence era. This credit was partly attributed to the presence of the ECOMIB mission whose main responsibility was that of ensuring security and social orderliness throughout the country.⁴⁵

⁴³Information from ECOMIB Weekly Briefing, 2012-2014

⁴⁴ ECOMIB Weekly Briefing, 2012-2014

⁴⁵Mohamed S. Camara, *Political Instability: Implications for the Security Sector in Guinea-Bissau*, (Bissau: Blue White Press, 2013), 47-53

The Post-Peace Operations Situation: ECOMIB Mandate Post-April and May 2014 Elections

Thus, with the relative peace witnessed in the country, ECOWAS leaders met in December 2014 and further reviewed the mandate to meet the extant realities. It was decided that a 6-month extension from 1st January-30th June, 2015 be given for ECOMIB and its troops to achieve the mandate of post-elections peace building and peace support operations. These included support to the Government of the Republic of Guinea-Bissau in consolidating its authority in order to address the various security challenges; Support for the security of institutions and citizens; the provision of humanitarian assistance where necessary; Support for the DSSR programme in the area of security, training and restructuring of designated security agencies; Support for the post-election reform programme of Guinea-Bissau, and; To perform any other security task as the case may be. These further peace and security operations were carried out with distinction by the forces under the ECOMIB Mission.⁴⁶

ECOMIB's Exit Strategy and the Peace Situation up to 2015

Based on the prevailing situation and having considered the relative peace witnessed in Guinea-Bissau during the period, ECOWAS leaders met on 19th May, 2015 and gave a final deadline for the termination of the mission. The mission was set to terminate on 31st December, 2015 with a gradual exit strategy. This implied that troops from various contingents were to start withdrawal by at least two months to the deadline. With the expiration of the 6 months mandate, ECOWAS leaders met again and reviewed the situation in Guinea-Bissau. This review saw the extension of the mission for another 6 months.⁴⁷ Although the situation could be said to be relatively calm, a number of conflict drivers undermined the peace process. First, was the issue of political feud amongst various stakeholders especially members of the PAIGC. The President of the country, Mr Mario Vaz and his Prime Minister, Mr Domingos Periera had been at loggerheads over the running of state affairs. Both have allegedly accused each other of mismanagement of public funds. Mr Mario Vaz also had issues with the President of the National Assembly Mr Cipriano Cassama.⁴⁸

This political rift led to the PAIGC splitting into two main factions: one loyal to the President, and the other to the Prime Minister. On 13th August, 2015, Mr Mario Vaz in an effort to release the pressure coming from the other faction, suspended the Prime Minister and other senior members of the government. Mr Baciru Dja was the third Vice-President of the PAIGC but was suspended for allegedly diverting the party's funds. This development made President Muhammadu Buhari of Nigeria to dispatch former President Olusegun Obasanjo

⁴⁶For a general analysis of conflict settlement in Africa, see Georg Klute and Birgit Embalo, (eds.), *The Problem of Violence: Local Conflict Settlement in Africa*, (Cologne: Koepe-Verlag Publishers, 2011), 62-66

⁴⁷Information from ECOMIB Weekly Briefing, 2012-2014; Certain works have set standards for developments such as these, see Timothy A. Aguda, (ed.), *Introduction to International Law*. Ibadan: Spectrum Books, 1993, 57-63

⁴⁸Personal Interview with President of the Transitional Period, Mr Manuel Serifo Nhamadjo, May 2012-June, 2014

to Bissau for possible reconciliation talks. However, the mission was abruptly aborted given that President Mario Vaz announced a new Prime Minister, Mr BaciruDja while Obasanjo was still in transit from Dakar, Senegal.⁴⁹This change in government created serious uproar within the members of the PAIGC who faulted the President's decision as unconstitutional.

Another conflict driver in Guinea-Bissau was the Proliferation of Small Arms and Light Weapons (SALW). After the country's civil war in 1999, a lot of SALWs found their way into the country and no efforts were made by previous administrations to disarm or recover these weapons from ex-combatants who fought during the war.⁵⁰The porousness of the military barracks also aggravated this issue owing to the fact that most of the armouries were without perimeter fencing and other physical security measures. Unfortunately, some of these weapons were being stolen by certain unprofessional soldiers and sold at cheap rates to criminals and hoodlums who used them for nefarious activities. Thus, a culmination of the aforementioned events made the ECOMIB mission to extend its operations in the peace process and to continue beyond the mandated exit period.⁵¹

Conclusion

The central themes and subject-matter that this paper set out to address have been presented in the discussion. The need to expand knowledge on Nigeria's contribution under ECOMIB to peace operations in Guinea-Bissau formed the aim and objectives of the study. This paper has presented the developments in the role of the ECOMIB forces in peace operations in the West African country of Guinea-Bissau. The paper acknowledged the sacrificial role of the troops in the peace process of Guinea-Bissau from 1998-2015 and their contribution in the concerted efforts to rebuild and support the country's social, economic and political institutions. In spite of series of challenges, the paper has concluded that the ECOMIB troops worked hard to adhere to the various changing and shifting mandates of their mission and exited with valour and honour. The ECOMIB troops therefore, laid the foundation for future peacekeeping missions and peace initiatives to thrive especially with regards to Guinea-Bissau.

⁴⁹Information from ECOMIB Weekly Briefing, 2012-2014

⁵⁰Information from ECOMIB Weekly Briefing, 2012-2014; see also Patrick Chabal, *Amilcar Cabral: Revolutionary Leadership and Peoples' War*, (London: Hurst and Company Publishers, 2002), 122-126

⁵¹Lead author and researcher, a professional soldier, was part of the ECOMIB mission in Guinea-Bissau