

Adekeye Adebajo, *Building Peace in West Africa: Liberia, Sierra Leone, and Guinea Bissau*. Boulder: Lynne Rienner, 2002. 192 pp. ISBN 1-58826-077-1

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The post independence period in Africa has witnessed, in unprecedented scale, the escalation of wars and violence in many countries both in terms of magnitude and intensity. Some of these conflicts have reached genocidal dimension. As such, it should not come as a surprise that the African continent is in need of conflict resolution mechanisms. It is based on the above observations that a diplomacy Adekeye Adebajo undertakes a deeper analysis of conflict prone West African region. He acknowledges that in this region Liberia, Sierra Leone and Guinea Bissau represent the most volatile countries, and that in terms of promoting peace keeping, peace making and peace building they serve as an example to the rest of the continent. The author examines the origins and actors in the management of conflict in the three countries. He also attempts to provide a viable mechanism for building a political, economic and secure community in West Africa. Throughout the text the author blames personalised autocratic and kleptocratic political leadership for the endemic conflicts in the three countries.

Adebajo identifies the involvement of a variety of actors and interested parties in conflict ridden West African states. He then argues that a nuance understanding of these actors and parties is critical when it comes to building stable and viable conflict management initiatives. The main actors according the author are in Liberia, are the political leaders in Burkina Faso, Côte d'Ivoire and Libya; in Sierra Leone, Liberia (particularly Taylor), Nigeria, Guinea-Bissau and Burkina Faso, and in Guinea-Bissau, Senegal, Guinea and Gambia. Apart from these warlords France (in Francophone Africa), Britain (in Sierra Leone) and Portugal, (in Guinea Bissau). Other actors include the United States, the United Nations, the World Bank and the European Union. These actors, Adebajo argues have not provided the adequate economic support necessary for peacekeeping, peacemaking and peace building efforts. The author also discusses the controversial external actors, such as International Alert, Executive Outcomes, and Sand Line International, whose involvement, in the author's opinion, has led to huge public debate and outcry. The author then underscores the critical role

played by the civil society in promoting peace and respect for human rights.

It must however be appreciated that the author relates in detail the conflict management initiatives in West Africa, taking into account internal and external conflict resolution initiatives and acknowledging Nigeria's key role.

The last part of this book, which is the main focus of the book, examines the role of the Economic Community of West African States (ECOWAS) particularly the role of Economic Community of West African Cease-fire Monitoring Group (ECOMOG) in the management of these conflicts. ECOMOG experienced inadequate financial and technical support in Liberia and Sierra Leone, but much more in Guinea Bissau where Nigeria, the regional economic giant, was absent. Adebajo, locates the problems facing ECOMOG at three levels: 1) lack of economic and political trust among individual ECOMOG member states; 2) the pursuing of the unstable deals or 'feast of warlords' or the policy of appeasing warlords and rebels adopted by ECOWAS; and 3) the inability of the emerging regimes after coup and conflicts to come up with alternatives for the implementation of the democratic reforms including social and economic reforms that would benefit the vast majority of the people.

Adebajo proposes several solutions. Apart from a sound financial base, ECOMOG also needs to solicit for adequate resources before embarking on a military intervention. It also requires the participation of non-ECOMOG states to avoid the dominance of Nigeria and/or Anglophone states in peacemaking, peace building and peace-keeping operatives in West Africa. However, he makes it clear that peacekeeping and peace building initiatives in West Africa have been complicated because of several things: the complex relationships based on military agreements (Nigeria and Kabbah), political threats (Guinean leader Lansana Conté's threat to invade Liberia) and economic advantages (Taylor's interest in Sierra Leone to access diamonds). In addition to this friendship (Abdou Diouf's personal friendship with Vieira and Conté), ancestry (General Mane's family roots in The Gambia) and others based on colonialism particularly French unwillingness to loose the grip on her former colonies. The author ought to have attempted to suggest a mechanism for using these relationships in peace building initiatives in this region.

The author alluded to a proposal at one time espoused by Ali Mazrui in 1994 while writing for the *International Herald Tribune*. Even though the proposal was flawed by emotive words such as re-colonisation, auto-colonisation, tutelage and benign annexing, Mazrui's proposal on the

establishment of an African Security Council as a long term solution to African problems needs thorough re-examination today. This may at least lessen the problem of mistrust among ECOMOG member states. Furthermore, ECOMOG's failure to yield the desired results in managing the conflicts in Sierra Leone, Liberia and Guinea Bissau has lessons it can utilise for future regional interventions in the many conflicts in the continent. In other words, the book provides a watershed upon which the ECOMOG can evaluate itself. It can also serve as a reference tool for the newly formed African Union and NEPAD, for the management of conflict in Africa. Similarly, institutions such as CODESRIA and OSSREA should mount scholarly reflections of peace initiatives in Africa with a mission to drafting peacekeeping policy papers that Africa dearly needs at this time.

On the whole, this book is very insightful particularly considering the grafting of peace initiatives in West Africa. Graduate students, regional policy makers, regional political and economic agencies, Africa's development partners and military strategists will definitely find the book useful.