

# **The Political Dimension of West African Diplomacy:**

*A Study of Charles Taylor's Exit as the Conflict Settlement in  
Liberia*

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Artanti Wardhani

# MAP OF WEST AFRICA



Map No. 1242 UNITED NATIONS  
January 2005

Department of Peacekeeping Operations  
Geographic Section

# I. INTRODUCTION

## Introduction

On 11 August 2003 Charles Taylor, then the president of Liberia, was transported to a safe haven in Nigeria. A ‘safe haven’ is a diplomatic arrangement aimed to give protection towards a leader in a country for the purpose of terminating a crisis.<sup>1</sup> In an attempt to bring peace to Liberia, a safe haven for Taylor was offered by Nigeria’s president, Olusegun Obasanjo and supported by other states in West Africa. This invitation was also endorsed by the international community, primarily the United States (US) and African Union (AU).

The reasons for this diplomatic arrangement date back to the Accra peace talks in June 2003 which were sponsored by the sub regional organization, the Economic Community of West African States (ECOWAS). At that time, the peace talks had reached a deadlock and the possibility of a complete breakdown of the peace process was high. Thus, it was within this context that the safe haven arrangement for Taylor was prepared as it was believed that his exit would break the deadlock and bring peace to Liberia.

The literature about the Liberian conflict shows that the personal roles of West African states’ leaders were very much present in the making of this diplomatic arrangement.<sup>2</sup> The decision to offer a safe haven to Taylor was not only a pragmatic solution to an emerging humanitarian crisis, it was also conducted and implemented in an *ad hoc* manner. In an attempt to explain this important event in West African diplomacy, I will look at both aspects of personal rule in African politics and the ideas about the distribution of power in the debate on regional security. I am thereby posing the question whether the involvement of West African leaders in the political process and the unipolarity of power in West African regional security may offer us insights into the political dimension of West African diplomacy.

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<sup>1</sup> The original term of safe haven is defined as “circumscribed areas where the displaced can seek protection and sustenance close to their homes, but not in them” (Posen, 1996:78). Here I employ the term of safe haven as a loosely-defined term, a diplomatic option and a political solution meant to give protection to the leader of a country for the purpose of terminating a crisis in the country in question.

<sup>2</sup> This literature is reviewed in Chapter IV.

I will start by offering an introduction to the Liberian crisis. Secondly, I will sketch out the fragments of the process of diplomacy in West Africa that would lead to Taylor's exit. This requires a demarcation in time, and I shall therefore limit the thesis to the period of Taylor's presidency from 1997 to 2003. Emphasis will be given to the most recent peace process in the Liberian conflict, namely the Accra Peace Process of June-August 2003. With regards to the methodology of this thesis, I have reviewed the chronological texts of the peace process on the Liberian conflict and tried to interpret them according to the theoretical framework that was established.

### **Research Questions and Hypothesis**

The main purpose in the thesis is to explore the political dimension of the diplomacy that generated the safe haven option. Thus, the research questions which will guide the study are as follows:

1. What were the factors behind the decision by West African heads of state and the international community in deciding that Charles Taylor's exit was a necessary measure for ending the Liberian civil war?
2. How was the diplomacy in West Africa conducted with regard to Taylor's exit?
3. What political factor(s) explain the character of diplomacy in West Africa towards the adoption of a 'safe haven' as a strategy of conflict settlement in Liberia?

The starting point is that Taylor's exit was necessary to end the conflict in Liberia. His departure was seen as the pre-requisite for transition and lasting peace. Second, the humanitarian rationale was a direct concern in the strategy which facilitated Taylor's exit. It was the sense of urgency to avoid more loss in the Liberian conflict that justified employing this strategy (Bøås, 2005:55). Third, the main feature of the strategy to facilitate Taylor's exit rests on its *ad hoc* nature (Grant-Thomas & Taw, 1999:71) which bypassed the ECOWAS bureaucratic channels that had been



facilitating the peace process in Liberia. The *ad hoc* character of the diplomacy implied the flexibility and pragmatism of West African political practices. Nevertheless, it marked the importance of the personal rule in African politics. Fourth, the distribution of power in West Africa shaped the unilateral dimension in the safe haven arrangement in West African diplomacy.

### **Introduction to the Liberian Conflict**

The literature about the Liberian conflict can be divided into three main parts. First, some literature focuses on the cause of the conflict. The cause of conflict in Liberia could be found in the patron-client relationship within the extreme version of neo-patrimonial politics (Bøås, 2001:717). For decades, the legitimacy of the state of Liberia laid in a patronage-based system where the elite nurtured the support from its client by providing politico-economic benefits for them (Ellis, 1989:160).

During the administration of Doe, the patronage-based system was maintained through the combination of violence and plunder (Ellis, 1989:157). During the Cold War, the government of Liberia counted on support from the US to provide resources. When Cold War ended, Liberia lost its strategic position to the US. Thereby, the privileges and supports lent during the period were no longer available. The state-machinery of the neo-patrimonial state of Liberia ran out resource to maintain the system. When the system could no longer work, this led to the state collapse in Liberia. (Huband, 1998).

The second aspect most of the literature produced is about the dimension of the external intervention in the Liberian conflict. In the light of the absence from the international community, ECOWAS organized a military intervention force, the ECOWAS Monitoring Group (ECOMOG). ECOMOG was seen as a new form of regional peacekeeping. It posed the prospect of serving as an effective conflict management framework in the post Cold War era (Francis *et.al.*, 2005). With regards to the partnership between the UN and ECOWAS, the partnership will have to consider the complexity of the geopolitical environment in the region, namely the Anglophone-Francophone rivalries in West Africa (Adibe, 1997).

Ellis (1989) added another dimension to the ECOMOG deployment in Liberia. He argued that ECOMOG intervention internationalized the Liberian conflict without putting a stop to the war. The conflict created new economic party to the war itself. The Liberian conflict stimulated the growth of a regional economic based on plunder and operated by network of armed merchant or of warlords with commercial allies. Within the underground economy in the country, the conflict became a form of business and a way of life, rather than an instrument for furthering any coherent ideological or even ethnic interests (p.156)

The third main concern of the literature touches upon the discussion of the post-conflict Liberia. Sawyer (2005) emphasized the importance of establishing a stable political order in Liberia in the aftermath of the collapse of governance and a horrendous period of pillaging and carnage. Sawyer's argument was that the task could be accomplished only in the context of the new constitutional arrangements and the governing institutions that differed markedly from those of the past (p.199). It is a new way of establishing constitutional foundations for democratic governance where the rights of the Liberian citizens will be warranted.

### **Safe Haven and Conflict Management**

In order to discuss on the focus of the thesis, it is necessary to locate a diplomatic arrangement such as the safe haven arrangement into the setting of the conflict management. The term 'conflict management' is used as a generic term to cover the whole gamut of positive conflict handling, but it particularly refers to efforts which attempt to resolve any violent conflict (Miall, *et.al.*, 1999:21). The overall process of conflict management would draw upon systematic steps to: prevent the conflict; mitigate or alleviate violent conflict once it has broken out; find ways to end the conflict; and transform the conflict into a peaceful process of political and social change (*Ibid.* p.38). The pathway towards peace could also be formulated as follows: peacemaking, negotiation, agreement, implementation of the agreement, enforcement, the establishment of transitional government, election and post-conflict peace building at the end (see also Ofuatey-Kodjoe, 2002; Olonisakin, 2003; Miall, *et.al.*, 1999).

A more specific term within such conflict management is ‘conflict settlement.’ It is defined as “the reaching of an agreement between the parties which enables them to end an armed conflict” (Miall, *et.al.*, 1999:21). Conflict settlement brings an end to the violent stage of conflict thus suggesting a finality. In practice, conflicts that have reached settlements are often reopened later (*Ibid.*).

Miall, *et.al.* (*Ibid.*) implied that the conflict settlement could be conducted by any means, as long as such served the purpose of ending armed conflict. The stagnation of the peace negotiations in Liberia failed to produce any agreement, thus it could not end the armed conflict.<sup>3</sup> As a result, one needed to create a breakthrough in the peace process in Liberia.

What I tried to suggest in the thesis is that Taylor’s exit could be considered as a conflict settlement to end the Liberian conflict. The safe haven arrangement became the political solution to safeguard the peace process in Liberia (Hoffman, 2006:321). I claim that Taylor’s safe haven in Nigeria served as a conflict settlement in Liberia. It brought an end to the conflict. It was also a precondition needed by the conflicting factions in Liberia to continue further to the direction of peace.

### **Theoretical Approach**

In this thesis, I have chosen to focus on the political dimension of the diplomacy in West Africa. Diplomacy is conducted by sovereign entities (Bull, 1977). The aspect that has come to my interest concerns the factors that influenced and shaped the conduct of diplomacy in the sub-region. As such, I would regard these factors as the political dimension to the diplomacy in West Africa. To this end I shall concentrate my discussion within the theoretical framework from Buzan’s *People, States, and Fear* (1991), as well as Buzan and Wæver’s work in *Region and Power* (2003) for the basic conceptualization on the regional security system.

### ***Security***

Security is traditionally defined in military terms, where threats are of a military character and emanate from other states. Buzan (1991:19) however, noted that it is

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<sup>3</sup> Discussion on the peace process in the second phase of the Liberian conflict will be elaborated on in the Chapter IV.

neither possible nor necessary for analytical purposes to find a generally agreed upon definition. In broad security studies, one has to face many levels in categorizing the objects of security analysis; whether the level is individual, national, regional, or international. Each of these levels must identify durable and significant features of the security problem. As such, the thesis will look at the security analysis at the regional level.

### ***Region***

In security terms, 'region' is a set of states which have been locked into geographical proximity with each other, with distinct and significant security relations (Buzan, 1991: 188). This view is also asserted by Lake and Morgan (1997). Region is defined as patterns of relations and interactions within a geographic area. It consists of at least two and quite probably more actors and is generally located within close geographical distance (p.47). The pattern of relations or interactions of the actors exhibit a particular degree of regularity and intensity to the extent that a change at one point in the system will affect the other points (p.11).

### ***Regional Security Complex***

Buzan uses the term 'regional security complex' to label the resulting formations of states' interaction in one particular geographical unit. Regional security complex is defined as "a group of states whose primary security concerns link together sufficiently closely that their national securities cannot realistically be considered apart from one another" (Buzan, 1991:190). The idea of security complexes is simply an analytical device that helps understand the regional security. In one geographical unit, military or security threats are most strongly felt when they are at close range (p.188). Buzan's work offers a basic framework for the case analysis. However, it has certain limitations regarding its state-centric approach.

This approach tends to view states as the rational, legalistic states. Buzan's work also prevents him to understand the importance of personal roles in states such as the ones in West Africa. States in Africa could be seen as the patrimonial states. In such patrimonial states, the prevalence of a patronage network is an important feature (Médard, 1996).

With regards to the patronage network, Chabal and Daloz in *Africa Works* (1999) attempted to assess the international affairs in Africa. Their interpretation suggests that politics in Africa is not institutionalized, as one might expect in the notion of modern state formation. As a result of the ‘non-institutionalized’ in African states, political practices remain informal, thus patrimonial. However, they do take place within a skeleton of a modern state. Chabal and Daloz’s argument would help us explain the significance of personal rule in African politics. As will be elaborated on, their arguments provide the complementary concept to Buzan’s contribution on the regional security complex. Such conception will be needed to explain the political dimension of West African diplomacy. Therefore we will adopt an eclectic approach to analyze the case, as will be presented in the chapter two.

## **Methodology**

Social research, in simplest terms, involves a dialogue between ideas and evidence (Ragin, 1994:55). Ideas help social researchers make sense of evidence, and researchers use evidence to extend, revise and test ideas. The end result of this dialogue is a representation of social life—evidence that has been shaped and reshaped by ideas—which is presented along with the thinking that guided the construction of the representation.

## ***Design***

Ideas and evidence interact through analytical frames and images. A social science scientific representation thus can be seen as a product of the interaction between images and analytical frames. Much social research work focuses on debating, clarifying and using analytic frames to represent social life (Ragin, 1994:58). On the other hand, there are ‘images’ built up from evidence. To construct images, researchers synthesize evidence. They connect different parts or elements of the things they study in order to create an analytical frame based on some idea of how these parts are or could be related (*Ibid.*).

In the design of the thesis I established the analytical frame as the political factors of the diplomacy. Hence it is built on the aspects of the personal rule and the

distribution of power. Meanwhile the images I seek to present here are the process of diplomacy that resulted in Taylor's exit from Liberia.

### ***Choice of Case***

Cases can be selected either because they are unusual and significant, or because they are atypical or undistinguished (Ragin, 1994:85). In such cases, a single-case study is inquired. I consider the case of Taylor's exit as significant because it is a conflict settlement that is induced by an *ad hoc* diplomatic arrangement. At the same time, pragmatism is not something atypical in Africa. Therefore this case is distinct because the forum where they conducted the diplomacy is assumed to be attended by a legalistic, rational state, thus institutionalized.<sup>4</sup> The pragmatism in the process of diplomacy shows distinctive characteristics in the West African politics.<sup>5</sup> The case of diplomacy in Taylor's exit will be the evidence utilized to assess the political dimension of the West African diplomacy. We will content ourselves with trying to gain a deeper understanding of the case at hand than is currently available in the literature.

### ***Data Collection***

In order to explain the political factors in the diplomacy, I would ideally investigate what the actors' rationales and intentions were. Since I have not had access to the main decision makers or diplomatic officers of ECOWAS, this conclusion will instead have to be drawn on the basis of deduction and theoretical assumptions. The optimal solution involving fieldwork in Ghana, Nigeria or Liberia was not financially feasible due to my situation as an international student. However, the best option for me to gather data was provided in March 2006 at the Nordic Africa Institute in Uppsala, Sweden, whose library collection is among the most comprehensive in the Nordic countries. The stay in Uppsala was therefore used to conduct archive studies of news and publications on process of diplomacy in the Liberian conflict. This archive enabled me to review the chronological events on the process of diplomacy that had been published in the database of the library.

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<sup>4</sup> The character of state in Africa will be elaborated on in the Chapter II.

<sup>5</sup> The personal rule in African politics will be elaborated on in the Chapter II.

The focus of the thesis is on the analysis of the actions of the inter-state relations in West Africa. The empirical sources needed for discussion are gathered mainly from secondary sources. To identify the political factors within the diplomacy facilitating Taylor's exit I have chosen to interpret a chronological process within the Accra negotiation rounds. Regarding Taylor's departure, it was important to get proper information about how the safe haven arrangement was made.

### ***Validity and Reliability***

#### **Validity**

Validity refers to the measuring of what we think we are measuring (Keohane, *et.al.*1994:25). Definitional validity is an expression of how well the theoretical research question corresponds to the operational one. In other words: do the data one has collected tell one anything significant about the theoretical research question? (Roald, 2004:14-15). The way I have formulated my research questions is based on the necessity of grasping the context which took place during the period of the diplomacy in the Liberian conflict. Thus, it is necessary to formulate operational questions to represent the inquiries based on the analytical frame. In my case, this could not be represented by one single research question.

#### **Reliability**

Reliability means that applying the same procedure to the operations of the study—for instance, the data collection procedures—can be repeated, producing the same measured results. Such reliable measures also produce the same results when applied by different researchers. This outcome depends on there being an explicit procedure that can be followed (Keohane *et.al.*, 1994:25). Though I had but limited opportunities to obtain ECOWAS documents in the Accra peace process, this was mediated by my attempts to document the progress during the peace process from the news records from the Foreign Broadcast International Service (FBIS).

### ***Secondary Literature***

The analytic frames were built along the work of Buzan (1991), Buzan and Wæver (2003), Anda (2000) and Chabal and Daloz (1999). They provide theoretical

frameworks through which to shed the light on the argument concerning the diplomacy, the distribution of power and the personal rule, as applied in Liberia.

The analysis of the thesis was begun by presenting the discussion on the history of Liberian conflict. My main sources are analytical works mostly from Ellis (2001), Bøås (2005), Gifford (1993), and Huband (1998). I refer to their work as my main secondary sources. They analyze and discuss different aspects in the Liberian civil war and since they focus on different perspective during the war, their work provides a conceptual framework and introduction to the study of my case.

Using secondary sources involves some risks and dangers engendered. Using theories by others and investing them with one's own interpretation can be problematic because there is always a chance of having misinterpreted the other person's theory or opinion. Furthermore, we should not forget that secondary literature is also a interpretation of events, opinions, and statements. Thus, using it will in many cases imply an interpretation of an interpretation.

Another issue of concern is about a risk of using biased resources. Many writers hold personal opinions about it, and whether intentionally or not, they may incorporate a political agenda into the writing. In a situation of such complexity, it is difficult to be completely free of prejudices and biases and it is impossible to avoid biased literature. And this is, for instance, the case of Liberia, where there has been a 'demonization' of Charles Taylor as a warlord (Hyman, 2003:190-191). This has also contributed to the fact that some literature may overly portray Taylor as the epicenter of the problems. On the other hand, I believe that a larger structural explanation might be better employed in this case. To counter the possible problem, a variety of authors and experts could be referred to as relevant sources. I have also tried to use the works of both the Western and African scholars.

#### *News Record from the Foreign Broadcast International Service (FBIS)*

Other secondary sources I use include the collection of news excerpts from the Foreign Broadcast International Service (FBIS). It is a US government operation which translates the text of daily broadcasts, government statements and selected news stories from non-English sources around the world. FBIS' news database



consists of various broadcasting stations, e.g. Paris Radio France Internationale and Paris Agence France-Presse (AFP), Dakar PANA, Accra Ghana Broadcasting Corporation Radio, Kaduna Radio Nigeria, or Lagos Vanguard. My sources from FBIS include details and transcripts based on daily publications, and were mainly during the period of 1999 up to 2003.

The library at the Nordic Africa Institute is linked to the Biblioline—Africa-Wide NiPAD database. The news reports from the FBIS were accessed through this database. In order to find the news reports for the process of diplomacy in the Liberian conflict, I performed the search by combining the following hits:

*During the publication year of 2003*

1. “ECOWAS Liberia and Charles Taylor”, resulting in 277 hits;
2. “Olusegun Obasanjo and Charles Taylor”, resulting in 148 hits;
3. “Liberia Peace Talk June 2003 and Participating Country”, resulting in 8 hits;
4. “Mohammed Ibn. Chambas and Liberia”, resulting in 58 hits;

*During the publication year of 2001-2002*

5. “Liberia and ECOWAS” resulted in 239 hits,

*During the publication year of 1999-2003*

6. “Peace talk and ECOWAS” resulted in 141 hits.

However, by combining various keywords I hope to gain more documents from different points of view to complete the picture of the situation. With the different combination of keywords, some results did overlap. Despite the overlapping results of the news reports, the thorough integrated information I obtained from the major search of this news database is organized and presented in Chapter IV of this thesis.

Since every slice of social life potentially offers an unlimited amount of evidence, researchers must be selective in their use of it (Ragin 1994:67). The problem of selecting evidence returns us to ideas and analytical frames. Sometimes the images social scientists construct from these pieces of evidence may not conform to the initial ideas and frames that defined the evidence as relevant in the first place. The need for selectivity introduces a problem. When a writer chooses a particular

point of view, he or she selects only the pieces of evidence that support that position for reporting (*Ibid.*). This has been the case in assessing the Biblioline—Africa-Wide NiPAD database. There is a risk that I have found only what seems to confirm my own hypothesis. I have therefore tried to search for material that disconfirms my initial assumptions.

Regarding the reliability of the news excerpts, I have no guarantee of their authenticity apart from the reputation of the news agency. With regard to the Foreign Broadcast Information Service, it is a US government operation which translates all sorts of reports such as daily broadcasts and official statements from non-English sources around the world. There is always a possibility that the materials presented in this database are also used for intelligence material. However, one should keep in mind that these archives only present parts of the information that the service had been able to gather. Some parts of the diplomatic activities have probably gone unreported and hence not presented in the database.

### *Reports*

I also made use of different reports from various humanitarian non-governmental organizations such as the International Crisis Group, Amnesty International, Human Right Watch, Internal Displacement Monitoring Centre, as well as the news database of the Integrated Regional Information Network (IRIN) Africa English Service which is provided by the UN Office for the Coordination of Humanitarian Affairs (UNOCHA).

### *Interview*

As I had not had any personal experience or first-hand information about the Liberian conflict, I conducted an interview with Leif Sjøfting, former country director for the Norwegian Refugee Council (NRC) who was in Monrovia during the battles following the collapse of the Accra Peace Process in June 2003. NRC is a private foundation and one of the largest humanitarian organizations in Norway specializing in international activities for refugees and contributes towards the protection of displaced people. The information gave me an understanding of the urgency of the

situation in the aftermath of Taylor's indictment, particularly on the humanitarian situation.

### **Presentation of the Chapters**

Following this introductory chapter, chapter *two* will present a more thorough discussion of the theoretical concepts, namely the theory on diplomacy, the weak institutionalization of politics in Africa, and the regional security complex theory. Chapter *three* will provide a brief outline of the history of the Liberian conflict. The focus is on the absence of international attention during the early period of war, followed by ECOWAS' intervention, and the period during Charles Taylor's presidency. This chapter will provide a descriptive background that leads to the diplomacy in the peace process in Liberia. Chapter *four* will emphasize a series of the diplomatic initiatives in West Africa, particularly on the latest peace negotiation round in Accra, Ghana. Two points will be presented as the background to the decision concerning Taylor's exit: the indictment of Taylor from the Special Court of Sierra Leone and the consequences following the indictment. These events would lead to the safe have arrangement. Chapter *five* will take us to the conceptualization of the theoretical framework in order to look at the political dimension in the West African diplomacy in the Liberian crisis. The attempt to explain the political dimension of the diplomacy will be provided by combining the elements of relations in the regional security complex and elements from the concept of weak institutionalization of politics in Africa. Finally, chapter *six* ends the thesis by presenting the conclusions and pointing to possible directions for future research projects.

## II. THEORETICAL FRAMEWORK

The theoretical framework of the thesis is built around three main theories: the concept of ‘weak institutionalization of political practice’ by Chabal and Daloz (1999); the ‘characteristics of the West African diplomacy’ by Anda (2000); and the regional security complex theory by Buzan and Wæver (2003). As the focus of the thesis on the West African diplomacy, I will first present the general concept of diplomacy by Bull (1977). The general concept of diplomacy refers to ‘state’ as its main actor. With regards to the identification of the characteristics the West African diplomacy, I shall continue by the concept of weak institutionalization of political practice in Africa to discuss the nature of the state and the politics in the region. Finally, the conceptualization of the characteristics of West African diplomacy will be utilized to discuss the regional security complex of West Africa. This theoretical framework will help us identify the political factors for the diplomatic arrangement that brought about Taylor’s orderly exit from Liberia.

### **Diplomacy**

Bull (1977:75) refers to diplomacy as “the conduct of relations between states and other entities with standing in world politics by official agents and by peaceful means.” This term is applied to the official relations not only of states but also of other political entities such as the international organizations (p.76).

According to Bull (p.77-78) diplomacy includes the formulation and execution of a state’s external policy, both by the bilateral or multilateral relations. Bull (1977) asserts that the conduct of diplomacy can be either *ad hoc* or institutionalized. They are institutionalized in the sense that they take place against the background of a permanent relationship among the parties involved, thus on the basis of well-understood rules and conventions (p.78). Diplomacy can also be *ad hoc* when they are conducted beyond the permanent relationship, thus eluding the rules and convention embedded.

Diplomacy can also function in facilitating the communication between the heads of state and other entities in world politics. It aims to minimize the effects of

friction in international relations. (*Ibid*, p.81-82). The interaction and diplomatic approach being performed by the West African states is the empirical piece of evidence from which we could start off deeper discussions concerning the characteristics of political interactions in the region.

### **The Weak Institutionalization of Political Practices in Africa**

The starting point in this conception lies in the argument that the state in Africa was never properly institutionalized as required in the Weberian sense of the modern state because it was never significantly emancipated from society (Chabal & Daloz, 1999: 4).<sup>6</sup> The African post-colonial state has failed to become differentiated from the society over which it rules. Thereby the African state cannot acquire the political status which would give its legitimacy and its proper institutionalization. As such, this fundamental concept of power in an African state is defined as “the informalization of politics.”

By having a weakly institutionalized state, the systems where the public and private spheres operate become functionally vague. This is known as the patrimonial system. In the patrimonial model there is a lack of distinction between the civic and personal spheres (*Ibid*. p.5). Those who are in power could easily extract the profit through weak institutionalization of political practices (p.13). To illustrate, the criterion for selection in the recruitment of the state-salaried employment is based on kin, communal, or other types of loyalty to the ruling elites, rather than on the qualification or competence. In other words, the logic according to which state service operates is resolutely particularistic, personalized, thus informal (p.31).

The failure of emancipating the state from society has profoundly limited the scope of ‘good government’ in sub-Saharan Africa. Nevertheless, the very weakness and inefficiency of the state has been profitable to the African political elites. The development of political machines and the consolidation of the clientelistic network within the formal political apparatus have been immensely advantageous. It has allowed the elites to respond to the demands for protection, assistance and aid from

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<sup>6</sup> According to Weberian approach, the modern state is the outcome of a process by which the realm of politics is gradually emancipated from society and constituted into increasingly autonomous political institutions. This process marked the end of patrimonialism, where the public and private sphere becomes functionally distinct. (See Chabal & Daloz, 1999: Chapter 1 for details).

the members of their constituency communities. In exchange, the elite will receive the recognition of the political prominence and social status as patron. The notion that politicians, bureaucrats or military chiefs should be the servants of the state simply does not make any sense. Their political obligations are, first and foremost, to the kin, their clients, their communities, their region, or even to their religion.

The ramification of the weak institutionalization of politics in Africa generates two consequences: First, the state in Africa is vacuous in that it rapidly disintegrated and fell prey to particularistic and factional struggle. Consequently, it failed to acquire either the legitimacy or the professional competence which are the hallmarks of the modern state (p.14). Second, the state in Africa is also ineffectual in that it has never been in the interest of the political elites in Africa to work for the proper institutionalization of the state apparatus. In other words, its usefulness is greatest when it is least institutionalized (*Ibid.*).

Deriving from the concept of weak institutionalization of political practices in Africa, there are two central elements that are coherently present: the personalization of power and the importance of vertical links among the elite.

### ***The Personalization of Power in Africa***

The politics in Africa is conducted in the framework of personal rule. It is a result of the lack of a clear cut and legitimate separation between the private and public domain. Consequently, this personalization of politics is being transformed into informal manner. Various levels of social identification and the loyalty which exist in African societies facilitate this informal manner (p.6).

The African informal political order is a system grounded in a reciprocal type of interdependence between leaders, courtiers, and the populace. It is a system that works to maintain social bonds between those at the top and bottom of society (p.44). It is therefore necessary to develop a clientelistic framework where the elite could maintain its power through the support of their clients.

The issue of legitimacy in Africa is firmly embedded in the patrimonial practices of patrons and their networks. The legitimacy of the African political elites derives from their ability to nourish the clientele on which their power rests. It is

therefore imperative for the elite to exploit the governmental resources to nourish and sustain their patrimonial system (p.15).

As also pointed out by Bøås (1996:60), the most prominent characteristic of the African state is the lack of institutionalized constraints within its system. The lack of institutional constraints has made politics in Africa open to personal and factional struggle aimed at controlling the state apparatus. The consequence has been the lack of political stability. At times, political game is reduced to a fight between personal contenders for power

The process of establishing a re-Africanization of the Western concept of state has led to reshaping of both political institutions and political actions by more informal and personalized African codes of practice (p.146). In most African countries; the state is no more than a pseudo-Western façade masking the reality of deeply personalized political relations (Chabal & Daloz, 1999:16).

### ***The Importance of Vertical Link among the Leaders***

The second t factor of African politics is the overriding importance of vertical links within the political system. This vertical links define the patrimonial system. Ideally, all patrons seek to constitute themselves as “Big Men”, or as the elite who are in power (Chabal & Daloz, 1999:15). What is significant in Africa is the extent to which vertical and personalized relations actually drive the logic of the political system. It is the ultimate ambitions of those who have power to establish their standing as “Big Men” However, such conception is subjective, and can only be achieved within a context of personalized relations. Within these relations, the clients or the dependents will ensure their recognition to the elite. Recognition as the *primus inter pares* among all Big Men, the superior among the superiors, is also highly desirable. This phenomenon is not exclusively confined to domestic politics. As shall be seen from further discussion in Chapter V, a concern over the hierarchical power arrangements in the regional level also does matter.

By maintaining their control over power, the aim of the elite is not merely to gather power for their selves. It is much more fundamental to use that power to purchase the “affection” of their people (Chabal & Daloz, 1999:158). In this light, the

importance of survival is highlighted; albeit it lays more emphasis on the ruler's survival rather than that of the state. Rulers seek to ensure their personal survival by seeking the survival and indeed strengthening of their state (Clapham, 2000: 4). The institution of the state is built as an arrangement through which the regime of personal rule is able to secure stability (Bøås, 1996:63). By taking this into consideration, it is argued that the foundations of political accountability in Africa rest on the particularistic links between "Big Men" or patrons and their constituent communities, either in the domestic or regional level.

### **The Characteristics of West African Diplomacy**

Based on the discussion on the weak institutionalization of political practices in Africa, we now return to the concept of diplomacy. In the issues of political and diplomatic interactions in West Africa, Anda (2000:54) refers to the aspects of inter-state relationships and the political network of the relations. He argues that the relationships between states may either be cooperative, competitive, or conflictive. Generally they reflect the power relations between states.

Regarding the inter-state relations in West Africa, the availability of lean resources and the perception thereof play a fundamental role in the patterns of diplomatic distribution (Anda, 2000:121-126). As such, he formulated the characteristics of the West African diplomacy according to his study.

First, the diplomatic communicative network within West Africa is fairly intensive. Despite its intensity, it is difficult to assess the decision making process of foreign policy since the political structure is highly centralized (p.125).

Second, personalities played a significant role in African diplomacy. It consistently enhanced the central role of the leader as the formulator of foreign policy (p.126). This emphasis on the personal interaction and communication undoubtedly adds an individualistic angle to African foreign policies. Within the personalized nature of the African leadership, any established pattern of foreign policy decision may sometimes be easily upset by the leader's idiosyncratic action (*Ibid.*).

Third, the contention of foreign policy making in Africa is hindered by the absence of an experienced diplomatic corps and slim national budget. The defects are



somewhat compensated for by the frequent personal interactions between African leaders (p.126). Both formal and private visits to the neighboring states are common. Thus, the result of these visits is very much of policy coordination. This practice also signifies the importance of the presidential dominance over the foreign policy issues.

Fourth, the critical issues are often negotiated at the highest level of the decision making forum. It involves the summit diplomacy and is attended by the heads of state (p.126).

From the characteristics of the West African diplomacy, the role of the leader could be concluded as the most important feature in the West African diplomacy. The diplomacy which is made through the visits among the heads of state may serve as a useful analytical barometer for assessing the political relations between states. Thus, these characteristics will be utilized to discuss the political interaction in West Africa. I will now turn to regional security complex theory by asserting that West Africa is a regional security complex. At the end, the assessment of the regional security complex will help us identify the political factors that shaped the West African diplomacy.

### **The Regional Security Complex Theory**

The main concept in this theory is derived mainly from the work of Buzan and Wæver (2003) and Buzan (1991). Regional security complex (RSC) is defined as a set of states with a significant and distinctive network of security relations that ensure the members have a high level of interdependence regarding security. It is a “group of states whose primary security concerns link together sufficiently closely that their national securities cannot realistically be considered apart from one another” (Buzan, 1991:190). The central element in this theory is about the security relationship and the elements of interdependence in the region that concern security.

In security terms, the concept of a ‘region’ implies that some sort of distinct and significant security relations do exist among a set of states which are locked into geographical proximity with each other (Buzan, 1991: 188). In order to qualify as an RSC, a group of states must possess a relative intensity of security interdependence

and security concerns that establish them as a linked set in the region (Buzan & Wæver, 2003:48).

Within this framework, West Africa can be defined in term of a regional security complex. The states in West Africa share the same border along the sub-region, thereby share the same security concerns (Berman & Sams, 2000:77). Consequently, by viewing the close relationship between the civil war in Liberia and another security threats in the region, it clearly demonstrates that their national securities cannot be considered apart from one another (Bøås, 2000:144).

Buzan and Wæver (2003) argue the states in the region are dependent on the security practices against each other (*Ibid.*). This security interdependence is also strongly influenced by the power of the units or states in the region (p.46). Within the structure of anarchy, the essential structure and character of RSC are defined by two kinds of relations: the distribution of power and capabilities between the states within the regional subsystem and the patterns of amity and enmity among them (Buzan & Wæver, 2003:49).

### ***Power Relations in the Regional Security Complex***

Power relations in RSC operate through the concept of balance of power in a regional system. The concept of balance of power explains how power operates in the system. 'Balance of power' refers to the general concept of one or more states' power being used to balance another state or group of states. It could also refer to any ratio of power capabilities between states or alliances. This counterbalancing coalition occurs regularly and it maintains the stability of the international system, as well as the regional system (Goldstein, 2004:92).

The most important characteristic of an international system is the distribution of power among states. In the anarchy of the international system, the most reliable brake on the power of one state is the power of other states. Power distribution as a theoretical concept can be applied to all units in the international system or in one particular regional system (*Ibid*, p.97).

The distribution of power is operationalized into the term of polarity. Polarity refers to the number of independent power centers in the system: unipolarity as the

one power center in the system, bipolarity as the two power centers in the system, tripolarity as the three power centers in the system, or multipolarity with more than three power centers in the system (p.98).

It is thus important for analysis within the framework of RSC theory to determine the power distribution in the regional system. The power distribution in the West African regional security is unipolar (Buzan & Wæver, 2003:239). As claimed by Buzan and Wæver, the West African RSC comprises a set of weak states. Most of which are also weak powers and dominated by a regional power that is also a weak state. Although the existence of a regional organization does not necessarily indicate the existence of the matching RSC, ECOWAS's explicit move into military-political security field, seemed significant enough to justify West Africa as a regional security complex.

However, the power relation in the regional security complex theory leads to second character of RSC: the pattern of amity and enmity. The pattern of amity and enmity comes as a consequence of the particular distribution of power in the region. The dimension of amity and enmity adds a clearer sense of the relational pattern and character of insecurity. It takes the firm form of interactions among the states, thus indicates the security relation in the region.

### ***Pattern of Amity and Enmity in the Regional Security System***

Within any given regional security complex, there exists a spectrum of relational possibilities which is described by the degree of amity and enmity. Thereby, these relational possibilities define the security interdependence (Buzan, 1991:218). Amity is suggested by Buzan as the relationships that range from genuine friendship to expectation of protection and support. And by enmity he meant the relationship defined by suspicion and fear (p.189-190). Between these two poles we have a broad band of indifference or neutrality, in which amity and enmity are either too weak to matter much. It can also be so inter-mixed that the overall pattern of amity and enmity is completely blurred. This could be mediated by the pattern of rivalry, competition, and alliance, which will operationalize the pattern of amity and enmity (Buzan & Wæver, 2003:45, 47).

The pattern of amity and enmity could arise not only from one single source such as the distribution of power within a given subsystem, but also from various sets of sources such as border disputes, interest in ethnically related populations, ideological alignments, or long standing historical links (Buzan, 1991:190). It could also arise from the contemporary security issues such as trans-border trade, patterns of investment, natural resources, crime, or smuggling of weapons and drugs (Bøås, 2000:144).

A high level of threat and fear that is felt mutually among two or more states may identify a security complex. Hence, the pattern of amity and enmity offer a more rigid perspective in seeing regional security rather than the aspect of balance of power. I will therefore utilize both elements of the regional security complex—the distribution of power and the pattern of amity and enmity—to provide an analytical framework for the political dimension of the diplomacy in the region in West Africa.

### **Chapter Summary**

Diplomacy refers to the conduct of relations between states and other entities with standing in world politics such as the international organizations. By bringing the conception to the context of Africa, it is argued that the state in Africa is weakly institutionalized. The starting point in this conception lies in the argument that the state in Africa was never properly institutionalized. The lack of the institutional constraints enables the leaders to transform the state into their own particularistic and factions struggle. It reflects the informalization of politics in Africa. Thus, it is conducted within the personal rule. The accumulation of power is imperative as the fundamental concept of power for the leader. As such, the African state cannot acquire the political status which would give its legitimacy and its proper institutionalization.

The two central elements of the concept of the weak institutionalization of power in African politics are the personal rule in the personalization of power in Africa and the importance of vertical link among the leaders. Based on these two aspects, the interactions within the diplomacy in West Africa is marked by the highly personalized character, thus it will emphasize the presence of the leader or the head of

state. The safe haven arrangement for Taylor was also a result of the interactions and process of this kind.

The conception of a regional security complex helps us to transform the West African diplomacy into a conceptual unit. It is thus important to locate the West African diplomacy into the theoretical framework of the thesis. An insight into the political dimension of the West African diplomacy will be provided by looking through the elements of the distribution and the pattern of amity and enmity,.

### **III. HISTORY OF THE LIBERIAN CONFLICT**

The aim of this chapter is to give a brief overview of each phase during the fourteen years of conflict in Liberia. However, our concern is focused on three points: the establishment of the Liberian state which would lead to the first phase of the conflict in 1989; the involvement of the West African states in the Liberian conflict due to the absence of viable international intervention; and the period during Charles Taylor's presidency that leads to the second phase of the conflict in 1999.

#### **The Establishment of the Republic of Liberia**

The state of Liberia grew out of a colony established between 1822 and 1861 by the American Colonization Society, which resettled freed slaves in the West African coastal areas from the United States.<sup>7</sup> About 12,000 repatriates that came became known as the Americo-Liberians (Gifford, 1993). In 1847 they declared the Republic of Liberia. The American style of governance, with the House of Representatives and the Senate, was introduced in its constitution (p.10-11).

The relationship between the repatriates and natives in the hinterland was never harmonious. The new political elite, the Americo-Liberian, always perceived the natives as enemies. As such, the construction of them as a common enemy was meant to consolidate the Americo-Liberian's group identity (Utas, 2003:96). The delineation of identity between the repatriates and the natives was therefore institutionalized. It distinguished the Americo-Liberians from the other ethnic groups in Liberia.

In 1870, the True Whig Party (TWP) was established and shortly after that they came into power. From this point on, one party rule became the norm in Liberia. TWP represented the interests of the wealthy and powerful Americo-Liberians, and they monopolized the executive, legislative, and judicial posts (Tefft, 1992: 30). Despite the absence of an efficient bureaucratic administration, the TWP was able to achieve an almost totalitarian dominance of the society (Ellis, 1999:48).

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<sup>7</sup> The American Colonization Society was a philanthropist organization aimed at liberating slaves in the US and returning them to Africa. Many saw the scheme simply as a way for America to free itself of the problem of the black freedman, and those advocating abolition saw colonization as a prop for the institution of slavery (Gifford, 1993:9).

The political and administrative system in Liberia was built based on the system of the plantations practiced in the US. But, in Liberia, the freed slaves were the ‘masters’ and the indigenous people were the ‘slaves’ (Clapham, 1989:99). Reacting to this, the indigenous populations in the hinterland revolted on several occasions.

There were two important elements in the construction of the Americo-Liberian hegemony: the military force and the establishment of administrative boundaries (Bøås, 2005:77). The military means was one coercive way to isolate the indigenous population in places that had been assigned to them, also to repress their uprising attempts. On the other hand, the administrative boundaries were established in Liberian hinterland through a system of indirect rule. This system appointed and co-opted the local elite into part of the government service (Ellis, 1999:37). It pacified the local elites under the control of the government.

Prior to the establishment of the administrative boundaries of the TWP state, the ethnic structure of Liberia had a flexible and inclusionary character (Bøås, 2005:77). Administrative boundaries, however, strengthened differences between many ethnic groups of Liberia.<sup>8</sup> Under this indirect rule, the hinterland was divided into sixteen tribal clusters. Each tribal chief was co-opted into the government system. The practice of cooptation marked the establishment of the patrimonial system in Liberia. The existing ethnic cleavages in Liberia were thus sharpened by the administrative boundaries. In this case, ethnic composition was socially constructed, in line with the political interests that were in place when it was applied.

Resulting from the characteristics of the administrative government, the nature of the state established by the TWP also gave a strong background to the future conflicts. By the early 1920s, the Americo-Liberian elite had secured a firm grip on the political and economic power in Liberia. As regarded by Chabal and Daloz (1999), it was motivated by the need of the elite to secure their positions through alliances with the other Liberian “big men”, such as high ranked officers, through clientelistic arrangements with the non-equals (p.15). A complex system of pyramidal

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<sup>8</sup> These are Baasa, Belle, Dey, Gbandi, Gio, Gola, Grebo, Kissi, Kpelle, Krahn, Kru, Lorma, Mandingo, Mano, Mende, and Vai; each of which was placed under the supervision of a paramount chief (Bøås, 2005: 75).

patron-client relationship throughout Liberian society, with the Americo-Liberians at the top, maintained the political rule in Liberia. Most of the reigns in Liberia were built on the combination of the personal power and the preemptive strikes against the enemies (Bøås, 2005:78; Brown, 2003: 221).

The stable neopatrimonial system in Liberia lasted until 1970, as it had the available resources necessary to maintain the system. The neopatrimonial system maintained a stable social structure that ensured that the Americo-Liberians remained in power. The indigenous population was the group that suffered the most under this system. They were completely marginalized both politically and economically (Bøås, 2005:78).

Starting from the presidency of William Tolbert (1971-1980), the patrimonial state of Liberia started to face hardship. Tolbert did not show the same ability and willingness of his predecessors to use coercion and patronage to maintain the neopatrimonial state. At the same time there was another severe challenge: the resource needed to nourish the patronage network almost run out (*Ibid.*). From this point on, Liberia started to face great economic problems.

As a solution to the economic problems, the government promptly initiated an unpopular policy by raising the prices of basic needs, including rice (Brown, 2003:220). With most of the population living under poverty line, a serious riot followed by widespread looting occurred in Monrovia on the 14 April 1979 (Ellis, 1999:50). A state of emergency was declared and as commonly occurred, the riots were put down with force. The government arrested most leaders of the small and fragmented opposition groups with the accusation of plotting a coup against the government. However, only two days before their cases were due to appear in the court, a military coup in April 1980 overthrew the government. Tolbert was killed in the coup, and this event marked the end of the Americo-Liberian's era in Liberia.

### **Samuel Doe's Presidency and the Domination of the Indigenous**

The 12 April 1980 coup brought Master Sergeant Samuel Doe, a low-ranked military officer of Krahn origin, to power in Liberia. Initially the coup was well received among ordinary Liberians. Having assumed power, the coup perpetrators suspended



the constitution, banned political parties, and released political prisoners. The People's Redemption Council (PRC) was established as the new government under Doe's chairmanship (See Ellis, 1999: 54-65 for Doe's early period of presidency).

However, it did not take long before the new government was captured by the logic of the neopatrimonial state.<sup>9</sup> The PRC developed a vehicle of enrichment for its members and the group to which they belonged. The fact that Doe was relatively unconnected politically forced him to use ethnic politicization and the manipulation of ethnic affiliations as means to consolidate his power (Hoffman, 2006:310). With regard to this, ethnicity became even more politicized and polarized.

To achieve his goals, Doe rearranged the structure of ethnic group relations in Liberia. He centered and circulated his power among the Krahn group. In addition, he began to court Mandingo traders in the country. The Mandingos had never had a good reputation in Liberian society. The ethnic based circulation of power was the way to marginalize the other ethnic groups, the Gio and Mano, whose populist leader Thomas Qwiwonkpa, was seen as the biggest threat to Doe's authority.<sup>10</sup>

The brutal and authoritarian nature of Doe's rule and the Cold War geopolitical considerations brought Doe's regime to rely on support solely from the US government as the old time's patron of Liberia (Ellis 1999, Chapter 1). Even the extremely corrupt election in 1985 was approved by the US government. An explanation for this could be found in the context of Cold War, during which the US gave full support for any government that became the US's ally (see Hyman, 2003; Huband, 1998; Levitt, 2005).

The fraudulent 1985 election caused a great political instability in Liberia. Coup attempts and uprisings against Doe's government were put down by violence and repression. These political troubles came at a time when Liberia faced a severe

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<sup>9</sup> Despite its mask of democratic governance, the realities of the Liberian state came closely to resemble the familiar American model of the highly centralized and authoritarian one-party state or "patrimonial regime." Power was concentrated in the personal rule of the president, exercised through state-controlled patronage networks, and maintained through the use of repressive force, with the one party system serving as its supporting legislative arms (Brown, 2003). The similar logic was repeated by Doe during his presidency.

<sup>10</sup> Qwiwonkpa used to be one of Doe's companions in the 1980 coup against Tolbert. He had been a popular figure among the population, as he lived a low-profile life, rather than adopting the luxury of power. Qwiwonkpa also showed constant objection towards corruption and insisted on immediate return to the civilian rule. Later, he became a strong opponent of Doe (Gifford, 1993:23).

economic hardship (Levitt, 2005). This situation led to the eruption of the conflict.<sup>11</sup> During Doe's last five years in power, corruption, grand theft of state resources, murder, rape, and other human rights abuses were not uncommon (Bøås, 2005). Doe's administration had tried to recreate the glamour of Americo-Liberian era by centralizing the power on their own group and accumulating wealth within it (Bøås, 2005:78). It proved to be unsuccessful and they ended up maintaining control in the country by no other means than force.

### **The First Phase of the Liberian Conflict: NPFL's Incursion**

The outbreak of the conflict was on 24 December 1989, when a small rebel army self-claimed as the National Patriotic Front of Liberia (NPFL), entered the Liberian border from Cotê d'Ivoire. The NPFL was under the leadership of Charles Taylor.<sup>12</sup> Having crossed the Ivorian border, they established a military base in Nimba County. In the beginning, the insurgents were underestimated and considered to be a minor armed movement. However, only within half a year, the NPFL had already controlled 90 percent of the whole country except Monrovia (Bøås, 2001:709; Utas, 2003:10; Levitt, 2005:206).

Doe ordered his Krahn-dominated army to attack villages in Nimba county, knowing that the manpower and the support for Taylor mainly came from the Gio and Mano populations who were concentrated there. In retaliation, Taylor ordered the NPFL troops to target the Krahns and Mandingos in their attacks (Ellis, 1999; Huband, 1998; Bøås, 2001). Essentially, the conflict was a result of the resentment against the Krahns and Mandingos, the ethnic groups favored by Doe (Huband, 2001). It escalated open fighting, heading towards Monrovia as the final target.

During the summer of 1990, there was a major split within the NPFL, mainly due to the internal distribution of power (Utas, 2003:10). Prince Yeduo Johnson formed the Independent National Patriotic Front of Liberia (INPFL) and left Taylor.

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<sup>11</sup> In November 1985, Qwiwonkpa launched a coup attempt due the fraud of the election in which he participated in and was later dismissed by Doe. The failed coup led to Qwiwonkpa's execution and retaliating violence towards the ethnic group of Qwiwonkpa, the Gio and another close ally, Mano, in the Nimba county (Gifford, 1993:23).

<sup>12</sup> The NPFL was the movement originally founded by Qwiwonkpa in opposition to Doe. It was later revived by survivors of Qwiwonkpa's 1985 coup attempt. The revived NPFL was originally a collection of exiles who had little in common other than their hatred of Doe and his government. Taylor emerged as the group's leader only because he was the one with the best foreign contacts (Ellis, 1989:158).

After the split, Johnson and Taylor's armies fought each other. Nevertheless both soon trapped Doe and his remaining Krahn fighters in Monrovia. By August 1990, Liberia had descended into anarchy and violence became an everyday occurrence on the streets of Monrovia.

### **ECOWAS Intervention as a Regional Response**

At the height of the war, Doe had not only lost de facto control of the state to Taylor's NPFL, but also his regional and international legitimacy. The deterioration of security situation in Liberia was a crucial concern for some of the neighboring countries in West Africa.

As addressed to the UN Security Council in 1990, the possible spill-over of the conflict into neighboring countries and the massive number of refugees fleeing the country became the primary concern of the neighboring countries in West Africa (Jaye, 2003:234). Conflicts generally have a significant regional repercussion because instability in one country has the potential to generate spill over and demonstration effects in nearby countries (*Ibid.*). At that point the UN was invited to join the mediation effort in Liberia. However attempts to place the Liberian crisis before the Security Council's agenda failed. In part because of the opposition from Côte d'Ivoire, and because the Council's members shared the US view that the problem should be solved by Africans (Adibe, 1997:471).

A reason behind the US reluctance to intervene was the its preoccupation with changes in the international system caused by rapid political changes in the former Soviet bloc. At the same time the US was also occupied by its intervention following the Iraq's invasion to Kuwait (Ellis, 1989:156). Consequently, the US soon began consultation with its African allies with a view of orchestrating a regional response (Adibe, 1997). However, the dynamics of the war changed quite sharply by the end of the spring of 1990. A series of massacres started to target foreign nationals in Liberia, by government and rebels forces alike. The US responded by deploying forces merely to evacuate US citizens and privileged foreigners residing in Liberia (Adibe, 1997).

Plea for help was also addressed to the African Union (Adibe, 1997:472). Not surprisingly, the AU resorted to its article of non-interference in the internal affairs of

member-nations. However, the new OAU leadership, comprised of President Yoweri Museveni of Uganda as the chairman and former Tanzanian foreign minister, Salim Ahmed Salim as the Secretary General, viewed that the norm of non-intervention did not apply to the Liberian conflict. Later, they approached Nigeria, the dominant West African state, to lead regional force into Liberia within the framework of ECOWAS (*Ibid.*).

The combination of the absence of international community and the encouragement from the AU, made the Nigeria's military ruler, General Ibrahim Babangida, to take the lead in mediating the Liberian conflict. He seized the opportunity not only to exercise the statesmanship, but also to divert national and international attention away from mounting socio-economic problems and political abuses at home.

During the ECOWAS summit in Banjul, May 1990, Babangida urged the other heads of state in the ECOWAS 'to bring the Liberian crisis to a speedy and peaceful end.' The call generated the 'ECOWAS Peace Plan for Liberia' with immediate emphasis on military means (Adibe, 1997:473).<sup>13</sup> However, diplomatic approach was not a priority in this peace plan. The course of ECOWAS' reluctance towards means of diplomacy was due to the organization's lack of experience in the diplomacy of multilateral security (*Ibid.*). Nevertheless, the heavy economic toll of the refugee and humanitarian situation on Liberia's neighbors made the rapid intervention by ECOWAS an imperative (*Ibid.*). Promptly opting for military means, on 7 August 1990 the ECOWAS Ceasefire Monitoring Group (ECOMOG) was established under the leadership of Nigeria as a regional peacekeeping force (See Alao, 1998: 62-65; Olonisakin, 2003; Aboagye, 2004).

Most of the initial force came from the Anglophone states. Nigeria and Ghana supplied the largest contingents, joined by the Gambia and Sierra Leone (Grant-Thomas & Taw, 1999:60). Guinea, which sustained the largest influx of Liberian refugees, was the only francophone state that contributed troops to ECOMOG

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<sup>13</sup> The results of the Peace Plan were: immediate cessation of hostilities by all factions; the formation and immediate deployment of ECOMOG to Liberia; generalized disarmament of the warring parties by ECOMOG; an embargo on the importation and acquisition of arms by the warring parties in Liberia; the formation of an Interim Government of National Unity pending the conduct of general and presidential elections in Liberia (See ECOWAS, Decision A/DEC.1/8/90 in Adibe, 1997).

(Mortimer, 1996:294). In what may be perceived as the continuation of the regional rivalry, the Francophone states objected ECOWAS intervention. Burkina Faso and Cotê d'Ivoire clearly declared its opposition to ECOWAS intervention. On the contrary, Senegal expressed its reservation towards ECOWAS intervention by referring to Nigeria's lack of consultation in the decision making process.

ECOMOG's entry into Liberia was largely ineffective due to the poor planning, the lack of adequate equipment, and the basic intelligence information (Alao, 1998:64-65). ECOWAS' official mandate was to impose ceasefire and help to form an interim government that could hold elections within twelve months. However, in unofficial manner, the mandate was rendered much simpler: to keep Taylor away from any legitimate form of power (Bøås, 2005:81).

Nevertheless, another event occurred. On the 9 September 1990 Doe was abducted by Prince Johnson and his INPFL while making his way to the ECOWAS headquarter in Monrovia. Once in Johnson's custody, Doe was shot, beaten, viciously mutilated, and murdered. His death was actually being taped and the video turned out to be the best-selling VHS in West Africa (Ellis, 1999; Huband, 1998).

Subsequent to this situation, neither Taylor nor Johnson had the military resources to gain control over Monrovia. Although ECOMOG could prevent Taylor and Johnson from controlling the city, they also had insufficient military resources to defeat the rebels. Forced with this situation, ECOMOG decided to cooperate with the newly emerging factions in fighting Taylor's force (Bøås, 2005, p.81). From this point on, ECOWAS was no longer neutral in the Liberian conflict.

The new factions that fought alongside with ECOMOG were mainly formed on the basis of ethnicity (Bøås, 2005:82). The Krahn and the Mandingo, Doe's ethnical ally groups, formed the United Movement for Democracy in Liberia (ULIMO). Their only shared goal was to keep Taylor away from power, thus it made them the counterparts for ECOMOG. However, this goal was not strong enough to make a sustainable political alliance. It resulted in an open conflict between the two groups. In 1995 ULIMO split into two factions: ULIMO-J (the Krahn faction) and ULIMO-K (the Mandingo faction). In the latter stage of the conflict, the ULIMO-K

would evolve into LURD, and the ULIMO-J would develop into MODEL (Bøås, 2005; Utas, 2003).

The period from 1990 to 1997 in Liberia was basically a period of massive human rights violations and failed attempts to bring the parties to agreement for peace and reconciliation. The inability of the warring parties to find common ground for peace eventually led to the breakdown of thirteen peace talks (Adibe, 1997:473).

### **Charles Taylor's Presidency**

The failed attempts to implement peace agreements in Liberia were mostly due to the inability of Nigeria to accept any deals which included Taylor (Bøås, 2005:83). However, Taylor and Nigerian leader, Sani Abacha reached an agreement in 1996 (Ellis, 2001:4; Francis, *et.al.* 2005: 128). There were two reasons for doing this agreement: first, because Taylor's NPFL was militarily weakened and second, because Abacha wanted to break out from the international isolation due to his status as the undemocratic military dictator in Nigeria (Bøås, 2005:83). Other analysts believed that Nigeria was becoming weary of the prolonged intervention in Liberia, and was seeking an exit strategy (Francis, *et.al.*, 2005). If Nigeria emerged as the peacemaker in Liberia, it would send a strong signal to the international community that Nigeria could not be ignored. It was a tactical cooperation between Abacha and Taylor that they determined on letting a democratic election decide who would govern Liberia in the forthcoming years (Bøås, 2005).

Based on this agreement, the fourteenth peace accord led to an election on 19 July 1997. It was held under the supervision of international observers. The result brought about Taylor's party, the National Patriotic Party (NPP) in defeating the other 12 parties at the polls by more than 70 percent vote. The NPP received 75.3 percent of the vote, Ellen Johnson Sirleaf (who later would be elected as Liberian president in the 2005 election) received only 9 percent, while Alhaji Kromah, the leader of the ULIMO-K (the predecessor to LURD) only received about four percent (Levitt, 2005:210).

The little share of votes that the other election candidates gained was interlinked with the long historical construction of Liberia. There had always been

suspicion that ULIMO was actually the political project of the Mandingo. Meanwhile Johnson Sirleaf, the Harvard graduate who was the preferred candidate of the international community was seen as the continuation of the old Americo-Liberian regime. Voter turnout was overwhelming; over 600.000 of the 700.000 registered voters participated in the election. The NPP won 21 out of the 26 Senate seats and 49 of the 64 House of Representatives seats (Levitt, 2005).

Taylor's victory could not simply be attributed to the fact that he had enough weapons and soldiers to continue the war if he lost. More important was the fact that Taylor's movement was the most ethnically diverse of all Liberian factions. His support came from the broader spectrum than any of the other armed factions (Bøås, 2005:83). Taylor's victory might also be explained by "a heady brew of electoral rules and irregularities, a huge campaign, a backbone of support, a divide and weak opposition, and his apparent dominance of the security question" (Harris, 1999:451-452). After all, the 1997 election was certified as a fair election. In what was seen as a largely conciliatory gesture, some government posts went to the members of the opposition parties (Levitt, 2005:211).

In the aftermath of the 1997 election, the situation in Liberia was mainly stable. It was due to Taylor's coercive manner in maintaining order in Liberia, which was similar to his predecessors. Taylor was interested in personal wealth and power, and he too was soon captured by the patrimonial machine of the politics in Liberia. The state apparatus were used as the extension of his own personal power. This in turn created potential conditions for the breakdown of law and order. Taylor repeated the same path and fatal mistake of his predecessors by filling the army with ethnic loyalist, and using them as a tool against his political opponents. The institutionalization of violence as the mean to maintain his power was highly exercised throughout Taylor's regime. For most of the leaders in Liberia, the capacity to exercise violence was the foundation for their political power (Hoffman, 2006:314). Violence became the legitimate claim towards Taylor's authority and power (p.315).

This pseudo-stability however, did not last long. Only within two years after Taylor assumed the presidency, Liberia returned to a situation of widespread

insecurity, weak economy, the collapse of public infrastructure, patronage-fuelled corruption, interethnic clashes, and false coup plots. As a result of the declining security situation, particularly in Monrovia, Taylor lost his popularity. Reshuffling of Taylor's cabinet ministers also became common. Even a string of extrajudicial killings became one of many ways in which Taylor sought to thwart any challenges to his authority. The absence of the rule of law marked the daily affairs in Liberia, and all of these led to the tense political climate in Liberia.

The tension also emerged between Taylor and ECOMOG concerning issue of disarmament and security sector reform. In contrary to the ECOMOG's mandate, Taylor's government did not completely cooperate with ECOMOG in demobilizing approximately 35.000 former combatants. Instead, many of them were rearmed and reintegrated into the Armed Forces of Liberia (Levitt, 2005: 212). These forces preyed the civilian population and contributed to the wave of violence throughout the country.

Taylor also faced a strong pressure from the international community. After the 1997 election the international community promised to contribute to the rebuilding of Liberia. Shortly, they showed dissatisfaction with the political developments in Liberia and disengaged from the country. The UN later implemented the economic sanctions to Liberia in 2000 and 2001. The sanction was imposed after there was an indication on Taylor's involvement in the conflict in the neighboring Sierra Leone (Africa Confidential, 2000:6). Although this sanction weakened Taylor, the major sufferings were undergone by the civilian population in Liberia.

During the period of Taylor's presidency, his domestic opponents were disorganized and united only by their opposition to Taylor as an individual. Their sole agenda was to remove Taylor from power; rather through military approach than political. The UN sanctions that weakened Taylor on the other hand opened new opportunity for Taylor's opponents. After the sanction was implemented, an armed group, the Liberians United for Reconciliation and Democracy (LURD) initiated its first larger offensive operations in Lofa county, bordering Liberia and Guinea (International Crisis Group, 2003a: 3). Being concentrated in that district, it marked the second phase of the Liberian conflict.



## **The Second Phase of the War: the LURD & MODEL Insurgents**

LURD was established on a basis of the now-defunct Mandingo faction of ULIMO-K. The early attacks in Lofa County were carried out by former members of ULIMO-K, many of whom fled Liberia when Taylor was elected president (International Crisis Group, 2003a: 3; Africa Research Bulletin, 1999b:13605).

At the same time, ECOMOG officially began its final withdrawal from Liberia in October 1999 since its mandate officially ended (Africa Research Bulletin, 1999c:13729). By May 2001, the LURD had claimed firm control of Lofa County and prepared on heading south towards Monrovia. In response to LURD's advancement into Monrovia, Taylor urged his former NPFL allies to take up arms against the LURD (Africa Research Bulletin, 2002a:14714).

The Lofa County in the northwestern Liberia is located on the Guinean border and is home to many anti-Taylor Mandingos (Africa Research Bulletin, 1999b:13605). The Mandingo had been targeted by Taylor's forces because of its association with LURD (*Ibid*). However, the role of Guinea should be taken into consideration as the LURD established its base there. Mandingo is an important group in Guinea. Lansana Conte, the president of Guinea, was allegedly giving support for LURD. Conte himself belongs to an ethnic group that historically had been a close ally of Mandingo.

In what may be seen as a retaliation for Taylor's backing of a Guinean rebel group, in 2001 the Guinean government allegedly began supplying the LURD with arms and ammunition.<sup>14</sup> This was the reason for the leadership of LURD gained support from the continuation of their struggle in Guinea. The connection between LURD and the Guinean leadership, although complicated, was mainly based on ethnicity (Bøås, 2005:85; Levitt, 2005:225). The crises in Liberia, Guinea, and in Sierra Leone contributed to the bigger armed conflict in the area in the Mano River areas.

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<sup>14</sup> Since early September 2000, Liberia, Guinea, and Sierra Leone, known as the Mano River Union nations, share mutual tension along its border areas and have been exchanging accusations of harboring or supporting dissidents destabilizing each other's territory. The accusations were addressed mainly to Taylor's support for Revolutionary United Front, the main rebel group in Sierra Leone. Taylor was accused of fueling the conflict in Sierra Leone, while Guinea and Liberia have exchanged accusations and counter-accusations about cross-border attacks from each other's territory (See various news excerpts from Foreign Broadcast Information Service, January-August 2001).

The three leaders of Liberia, Sierra Leone and Guinea were brought together by ECOWAS to peace talks. They agreed to work together to restore stability in the area, specifically by tightening their borders' security (Africa Research Bulletin, 2002b:14753). However, the exchange of agreements between the three heads of state and the various talks held within the framework of ECOWAS did not improve the security situation. No security progress was made in Liberia during May 2002, even though ECOWAS urged both the Liberian government and the rebels to accept an immediate cease fire (Africa Research Bulletin, 2002c:14861).

As fighting continued, in April 2003, there was a confirmed statement on the existence of a new rebel group, the Movement for Democracy in Liberia, known as MODEL (IRIN, 28 April 2003). While the LURD was supported by the government of Guinea, MODEL was supported by Cotê d'Ivoire (International Crisis Group, 2003a:3). The background of establishment of MODEL was relatively similar to LURD. Encouraged by the success of LURD, Krahn leaders exiled in Cotê d'Ivoire formed MODEL. Concerning this, the current Ivorian president, Laurent Gbagbo, was convinced that Taylor had helped rebels who operated in Cotê d'Ivoire. In order to retaliate, Gbagbo allowed MODEL to establish base along the border with Liberia (Bøås, 2005:85-86).

The involvement of Taylor in Ivorian crisis was mostly indirect.<sup>15</sup> It was conducted through his old links with Côte d'Ivoire and his relationship with Burkina Faso's president, Blaise Compaoré. Taylor's involvement intensified once the problems inside Liberia with LURD and MODEL gave him the reason to support the rebel movements in the western Côte d'Ivoire. The battles intensified, and the condition for the civilian population in Liberia got increasingly worse.

### **Humanitarian Crisis in Liberia**

Since the end of 2001, the major armed confrontations along Lofa County led to the displacement of some 65.000 IDPs (Norwegian Refugee Council, 2004:24). In addition, this outburst of violence resulted in new influx of Liberian refugees in the

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<sup>15</sup> The conflict in Côte d'Ivoire dominated the agenda of ECOWAS throughout the end of 2002 as the rebel group occupied the western part of the country. France, as the colonial patron promptly deployed its troops to monitor the ceasefire and protect foreign nationals. (See various news reports from Foreign Broadcast Information Service, December 2002).

bordering Guinea, Sierra Leone, and Cotê d'Ivoire (*Ibid.*). In the beginning of 2002, fighting in the towns near the capital of Monrovia had caused the displacement of at least 20.000 persons (*Ibid.*). These numbers illustrated that the humanitarian crisis had reached the catastrophic levels. Due to the heavy fighting, humanitarian relief agencies were unable to access 70 percent of the country (*Ibid.*). This humanitarian situation became a major concern for the international community.

The armed hostilities had worsened since January 2003 when LURD advanced towards the capital of Monrovia from the north. In addition, the emergence of MODEL from the east, along the Cotê d'Ivoire border, increased the number of Liberian civilians and refugees of other nationalities at risk. Taylor was forced to face a two-front battle far beyond his military capability (Bøås, 2005: 86). Monrovia was trapped between two armed groups and shelled with heavy artillery. The intensifying battles in Monrovia deteriorated the situation.

The worsening condition for the civilian population became the background to the peace negotiation in Accra, Ghana. With government forces concentrated in Monrovia, and people escaping from LURD and MODEL's attacks on the outskirts of Monrovia, the capital city was rendered the biggest IDP camp (Søfting 2006 [Telephone interview]). The number of people sheltering in Monrovia exceeded the capacity of the facility itself.

The numbers of civilian casualties were mounting. Most of the humanitarian workers had to cope with the situation and were forced to work with limited facilities. The main problem that they faced was mainly due to the lack of sanitation, clean water, and electricity. The next chapter will present how the deteriorating situation in Monrovia became the main consideration for the West African diplomatic community in its attempt to persuade the government of Liberia, LURD, and MODEL to negotiate.

## **Chapter Summary**

From the brief outline of the history of Liberian conflict, we can see that there are certain key features that emerge. The element of the national sovereignty in Liberia was never resulted from the popular will. Rather it was the outcome of a heavy

exercise of power and violence from the government. At the end, it created an outbreak of conflict. The similar problem also arose during Taylor's presidency. Taylor was trapped in the same state machinery as his predecessors. Unable to gain popular support from the population, the situation triggered the eruption of hostile armed conflict.

The other key feature is the absence of viable international attention that forced West African states to sort things out in Liberia through ECOWAS. In the initial phase, its involvement was complicated by poor military capabilities. The hostilities from some of the francophone states like Cotê d'Ivoire and Burkina Faso complicated the situation. The security concern over the threat emanating from Liberia engendered the involvement of West African states during the second phase of the conflict in 2003. Moreover, the deteriorating humanitarian situation became the main concern for the peace talks.

#### **IV. DIPLOMACY IN THE ACCRA PEACE PROCESS 2003**

This chapter presents the diplomatic efforts by ECOWAS to find lasting peace in Liberia. The events during Taylor's presidency may shed some light on the humanitarian emergency in Monrovia in 2003. ECOWAS' diplomatic initiatives resulted in all major parties in Liberia would join the Accra peace talks. Giving an account of the practice of the diplomacy conducted in this period, I aim to pinpoint the condition that led to the safe haven arrangement for Charles Taylor. The notion of pragmatism as a prominent element of the West African diplomacy will also be discussed.

##### **The Path towards the Accra Peace Process 2003**

During the period of 2001, the endless tension engulfing the border shared by three Mano River states, namely Liberia, Guinea, and Sierra Leone, occupied the agenda of ECOWAS. The three countries had exchanged accusations and counter-accusations of the others harboring or supporting dissidents that destabilized their territories. Most of the efforts by ECOWAS on the Mano River crisis attempted to mediate the conflict were negotiated at the highest level by of the regional forum. The initial summit meeting on the Mano River crisis was sponsored by Obasanjo, the Nigerian president, and Alpha Konare, the Malian president who held the chairman of ECOWAS at the time (FBIS, 2001a).

With regards to the broader scope of de-escalating tension in the Mano River area, ECOWAS tried primarily to engage the peace process in Liberia and encourage Taylor to participate in the peace negotiation with LURD. The efforts included: an ECOWAS mini-summit in Dakar, Senegal;<sup>16</sup> the Rabat Process brokered by King Mohammed VI of Morocco;<sup>17</sup> and the Abuja round in March 2002 (FBIS, 2002a). The following peace talk which was held in Ouagadougou, Burkina Faso on the 8-10

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<sup>16</sup> Despite some diplomatic prodding from the Malian president and chairman of ECOWAS, Konare, Taylor rejected the invitation and sent his foreign affairs minister instead (FBIS, 2001e).

<sup>17</sup> The three leaders of Liberia, Sierra Leone, and Guinea met in Rabat on 27 February 2002. They agreed to work together to promote peace, understanding and good neighborly relations, and to put in place a cooperation mechanism. This meeting was also ushered by ECOWAS (FBIS, 2002b).

July 2002 resulted in a significant outcome.<sup>18</sup> Despite the absence of the government of Liberia, the talk called for establishment of an “international contact group on Liberia” (FBIS, 2002d).

As a response to this recommendation, the UN sponsored the establishment of the International Contact Group on Liberia (ICGL) on 17 September 2002 in New York. It was made up of the ECOWAS, the AU, the European Union, Ghana, Nigeria, France, the United States, Britain, the United Nations and Morocco.<sup>19</sup>

The establishment of the ICGL represented the attention of international community and marked the success of the ECOWAS to seek support from them for the peace process in Liberia. In my view, the intense diplomacy was successful in gaining support from the international community in the peace process.

The establishment of the ICGL showed a sensible international involvement in the peace process on Liberia. It also prompted the credibility of the peace process for the warring parties. Efforts by ECOWAS were also continuously conducted through various meetings and interactions among the heads of state in order to advocate peace negotiations. The initiatives at the presidential level were very much present at this point in order to formulate the strategy of ECOWAS in addressing the issue of Liberia. Further on, after the first ICGL visit in Mano River area,<sup>20</sup> Charles Taylor and the Ivorian President, Laurent Gbagbo met on the 22 April 2003 (FBIS, 2003b). There was no official statement given concerning this meeting. However, the progress on their diplomatic relations implied that both heads of state were willing to cooperate.

The compliance of Taylor to cooperate was believed to have relations with the economic sanction from the UN. As the sanctions caused more difficulties to Liberia, it prompted Taylor’s cooperation in the peace process. Hence, there was a hope that

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<sup>18</sup> The peace talk was sponsored by prominent Liberian politicians in exile, such as Amos Sawyer and Ellen Johnson-Sirleaf and attended by LURD, political parties, and civil organizations (FBIS, 2002c). The presence of Sawyer and Johnson Sirleaf as the prominent political leader of Liberia, in the Ouagadougou round, might encourage the involvement of the international community in finding solution to the crisis.

<sup>19</sup> The Executive Secretary of ECOWAS, Mohammed Ibn. Chambas then reported to and consulted the US Secretary of State for African Affairs, Walter Kansteiner about progress in the peace process (FBIS, 2002c). At its first meeting in December 2002, the ICGL agreed to resolve the Liberian crisis through the promotion of internal dialogue among all the political groups, and good neighborliness among the three neighboring countries Guinea, Liberia and Sierra Leone (FBIS, 2003a).

<sup>20</sup> On 14 April 2003, a team of ICGL Monday began a two-day visit to Guinea, Liberia and Sierra Leone to prepare the ground for peace talks on Liberia. (FBIS, 2003a).

the cooperative behavior might help lifting the sanctions from Liberia.<sup>21</sup> Meanwhile, Taylor also asked for help from the AU and other ECOWAS states, to back Liberia in the UN forum (FBIS, 2001c). ECOWAS, at the same time, made an effort to propose lifting the sanction by making an assessment report on the effects of sanctions on Liberia (FBIS, 2001d). This report was submitted to the UN General Assembly, and later passed on to the UN Security Council.

At this point the diplomatic initiatives of the ECOWAS showed the cooperative behavior among its member states. Every state seemed to work together towards the improvement of the situation in Liberia. Efforts to bring peace in Liberia reached a final point when in April 2003 the warring parties in Liberia were convinced to be brought to the negotiation round. In this regard, the Malian President, Toumani Toure agreed to host the Liberian peace talks (FBIS, 2003a), and the former Nigerian leader, Abdulsalami Abubakar was appointed by ECOWAS as mediator (FBIS, 2003c).

On the 16 May 2003, after several exchanges of meetings, ECOWAS announced that peace talks between the Liberian government and two rebel groups would take place on 2 June 2003 in Accra, Ghana. The talks, to be held under the aegis of the ICGL, were expected to result in a comprehensive peace process (FBIS, 2003e; Wrokpoh, 2003).

This negotiation round was seen as a crucial and important chance to bring peace to Liberia since all major parties to the conflict were involved. Thus, it marked the success of the West African diplomatic community in orchestrating the peace talks. Preliminary talks with both groups were scheduled to be held in Sierra Leone prior to the Accra meeting. However, it was not as smoothly as expected because the delegates from MODEL failed to show up. Later it indicated its reluctance to compromise its demand, which was the resignation of Taylor (IRIN, 27 May 2003).

Despite the objection from MODEL, the preliminary process continued. Later on, the date and the place of the negotiation round were changed. The date was

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<sup>21</sup> The new sanction against Liberia was come into force on 7 May 2001 and included a 12-month ban on imports of all rough diamonds originating from or passing through Liberia, restriction on air travel by its senior officials. It was given in continuation to the previous arms embargo and economic sanction enforced on 7 March 2001 (IRIN, 30 June 2003).

changed to 4 June 2003, and the location was moved from Accra to Akosombo, a town which is 60 kilometers away from Accra, in the eastern region of the country. The likely reason for this change was presumably due to security concerns (Wrokpoh, 2003). Nevertheless, the peace round was still known as the Accra peace talks.

After the long process of regional efforts, the peace talk was commenced on 4 June 2003. Due to the significance of this peace round, a number of West African heads of state attended the meeting, as well as Thabo Mbeki, the president of South Africa and Joaquim Chissano, the president of Mozambique as the chairman of the AU (FBIS, 2003f). The expectation for this round was high. Furthermore, Taylor, in his statement during the opening ceremony, offered to step down if that would bring peace (*Ibid.*). It indicated a good start for the negotiation.

However, on the same day of the opening of the peace talk, another event occurred. The chief prosecutor of the Sierra Leone Special Court unexpectedly unsealed an indictment towards Charles Taylor containing charges of crimes against humanity in Sierra Leone's conflict (FBIS, 2003g). The peace talks suffered a blow due to this indictment.

### **The Indictment and its Consequences**

The indictment from the Special Court for Sierra Leone (SCSL) went public when David Crane, the prosecutor at the SCSL, unsealed an indictment and a warrant of arrest for Taylor. The charges came as a result of Taylor's alleged backing of the RUF during Sierra Leone's civil war. The indictment constituted charges of crimes against humanity, war crimes, and other serious violations of international humanitarian law. Taylor was indicted on 17 accounts, ranging from "terrorizing the civilian population and collective punishments, sexual violence, use of child soldiers, abductions and forced labors, to attacks on the UN Mission in Sierra Leone personnel" (The Sierra Leone Special Court, 2003)

The indictment had actually been issued on 7 March 2003, prior to its final public announcement. However, because the power of the court was limited to the jurisdiction of Sierra Leone, announcing it without a strategy would risk the prospect



of arresting the target. That was the reason for the announcement to wait until the timing was perfect. Crane felt that indicting Taylor might help to avoid what was perceived as Taylor's manipulation of the peace talks in Ghana to secure an outcome favorable for his own future. As Crane put it:

It was very apparent that in order to have a legitimate process the negotiators (in Ghana) had to know that they are dealing with an indicted war criminal so that once this card was turned over, a legitimate peace process could start, as opposed to one that would have eventually been considered a sham and a way of manipulating the good intentions of other nations so that one (participant) could survive and live another day which is what Charles Taylor's ultimate motive was...He was using the Accra (Ghana) summit as another means by which he could hang on to political power and to manipulate events while the rebels began to move in Monrovia (See Cobb Jr., 2003)

In statements about his decision to reveal Taylor's indictment while the president was at the Ghana peace talks, Crane suggested that only outside of Monrovia would there have been a realistic chance of an arrest (Cobb Jr., 2003). As the jurisdiction of the Sierra Leone special court was limited to Sierra Leone only, it could not reach Taylor unless he was handed over to Sierra Leone special court or if he were outside the national border of Liberia.

The Special Court applied a strict dogmatic approach in the post-conflict peace building in Sierra Leone.<sup>22</sup> Being guided by the legalistic tools, it showed that the authorities in the Special Court did not share the same approach and standard as the other authorities in the region. The relativity between what is proper and should be done collided at the point when local custom met the universal value of legal system.

Subsequent to this, Crane asked the Ghanaian government to hand Taylor over to the Special Court. Ghanaian government ignored Crane's request, and let Taylor returned to Monrovia after the opening ceremony. Taylor immediately returned to Monrovia. At the same time LURD and MODEL also withdrew from the negotiation by claiming that "they will not negotiate with a war convict" (IRIN, 6 June 2003). Hence, they immediately mobilized their troops, heading towards Monrovia. As a

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<sup>22</sup> In the post-conflict peace building in Sierra Leone after Lomé Peace Accord in 1999, there were two organs established to deal with the process of reconstruction of the society in Sierra Leone: the Truth and Reconciliation Commission and the Special Court in Sierra Leone. Although they were supposed to cooperate, their works did not consult each other. The Special Court rather fully functioned as an independent judicial entity (See Lamin, 2003 for details).

result of the indictment, the negotiation suffered a breakdown. The situation later developed into a critical condition, and forced an emergency decision to be taken.

### **Ghana and Its Immediate Reaction**

The indictment came at a delicate moment as in short time LURD forces had advanced to the outskirts of Monrovia. The violent defeat of Taylor's regime would become a virtual certainty if no negotiated solution could be reached. The ill-timed announcement of the indictment showed a clear lack of understanding of the regional politics dynamics (Aboagye & Bah, 2004). The Special Court's inadequate consultation with ECOWAS and the Ghanaian government before unsealing the indictment indicated that the court disregarded the conflict dynamics in the region (p.4).

Although arresting Taylor and handing him over to the court might have been the right thing for the Ghanaian government to do, it would have been viewed in many quarters as a breach of the norms of diplomacy and as a betrayal of traditional hospitality (p.4). Based on this, it was considered that the loyalty within the members of the heads of state was still strong. (Baker, 2004:1497). Thereby, other solution to overcome the situation should be initiated.

The indictment was viewed as a direct attack on the West African attempts to find diplomatic solution to the Liberian crisis. The political leadership in West Africa found it unsuitable and disrespectful to corner a fellow African president and also completely at odds with their diplomatic initiatives. Crane's dogmatic style, neither considered nor compromised the diplomatic practice attempted to find solution in Liberia (Bøås, 2005:87).

Regarding Ghana's immediate reaction to the indictment, one might consider the event back in 1990 when Doe was captured by Prince Johnson of INPFL. The Ghanaian authority was in charge of securing the situation. Nevertheless, the Ghanaian authority felt responsible for the murder of the late President Doe which took place when the ECOMOG Field Commander, General Arnold Quainoo was

commanding ECOMOG in Liberia.<sup>23</sup> Unwilling to experience the same embarrassment, the Ghanaian authority put efforts not to repeat the same failure (Aboagye & Bah, 2004:4).

### **Consequence 1: Military Option of the Warring Factions**

The indictment immediately bolstered the determination of LURD and MODEL to pursue a military option (Aboagye & Bah, 2004:3-4). This was clearly manifested when both groups hardened their positions at the negotiations, insisting that they would not negotiate with an indicted war criminal. Taylor, on the other hand, was determined to fight to the last. This option did not fit well for the civilian population in Monrovia, as they would be trapped in a heavy fighting with no prospect of escaping.

One prompt attempt by ECOWAS to halt the escalation of violence was reached when the government signed a cease-fire agreement with the rebel groups (IRIN, 17 June 2003). However, Taylor withdrew his support for this agreement and the fighting continued for several days (IRIN, 23 June 2003). Nevertheless, continued aggression delayed the deployment of the Joint Verification Team which was established by the ceasefire accord.<sup>24</sup>

As the rebel force advanced to the outskirts of Monrovia and reached the northern district near the St. Paul's River Bridge, the final crossing leading directly to the heart of the Monrovia; thousands of panicked civilians again fled the western suburbs for the city center. In response to this, Taylor announced "I will stand and fight until they stop killing my own people...My men must understand now that I'm going no place, nowhere, until the international community has sufficiently deployed troops in this country" (BBC, 2003). By this, Taylor clearly indicated his insistence to stay. On the other hand, LURD and MODEL also stood firm on their advancement towards Monrovia. The stagnation caused by the indictment made a critical situation in Monrovia as the thousands of displaced persons were at risk.

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<sup>23</sup> The questions whether ECOWAS was deliberately handing off Doe to Prince Johnson was debatable since there were no sufficient fight from the ECOMOG troops defending Doe (Accounts on Doe's abduction can be found in Ellis,1999; Huband, 1998).

<sup>24</sup> The Joint Verification Team was consisted of military observers from ECOWAS, the international community, and representatives from the LURD, MODEL, and the Liberian government with mandate to establish the position of all warring parties on the ground.

## **Consequence 2: Stagnation to the Peace Talks**

As fighting between the factions continued, West African mediators threatened to formally end the peace talks (International Crisis Group, 2003b). The facilitator of the peace talks, Abdulsalami Abubakar, appealed to all three groups to adhere to the cease-fire (IRIN, 26 June 2003). ECOWAS and the diplomatic community in West Africa tried all they could to bring back the confidence and to mend the negotiation process. Seemingly, the efforts succeeded in resuming the negotiation.

On the 18 July 2003 the participants in the Accra talks began analyzing a draft of the comprehensive peace document released by the mediators (IRIN, 19 July 2003). In this draft, the mediators had proposed that the conference delegates select a president and a vice president to head a transitional government (*Ibid.*). Yet, the progress with the negotiation at this point was also stalled as both LURD and MODEL refused to sign a draft peace agreement (IRIN, 22 July 2003b).

Both contingents were displeased by the lack of representation extended to them in the draft. It was stated that top government positions would be reserved for members of political parties and civil society groups that had not fought during the civil war (*Ibid.*). However, LURD rejected any political settlement that did not incorporate LURD in it, by arguing that “politicians could not disarm the fighters” (*Ibid.*).

In order to safeguard the ultimate objective of the peace process, ECOWAS did everything to keep the peace process continued. The negotiation situation after indictment was characterized by the resistance of the LURD and MODEL on their demands in the negotiation. Furthermore, the battles continued and Taylor was cornered in Monrovia. This might lead to the win or lose situation. The urge of an intervention strategy was put forward, in order to save the situation for the sake of the civilians trapped in Monrovia.

## **Unavoidable Humanitarian Crisis in Monrovia**

As the consequence of LURD’s military reaction, an estimated number of 200.000 displaced Liberians from camps outside the capital city moved into the centre of Monrovia (International Crisis Group, 2003b:5). They were reluctant to go back to

their previous and permanent shelters because they were afraid of raids by the rebel groups that would be directed against them (Søfting 2006 [Telephone interview]).

June in Liberia is in autumn and dominated by frequent heavy rain. Monrovia was practically an abandoned city with ruins marked by the fierce fightings that had taken place. People who fled to Monrovia barely found shelters to stay, so most of them lived on the street. Lack of sanitation, clean water, and medicine supplies made the displaced people vulnerable to diseases.<sup>25</sup> The capital city was basically blocked and isolated. With LURD forces controlling the port, the food supply through the port was also cut. Starvation also became another problem for the displaced persons trapped in Monrovia (IRIN, 29 July 2003).

As the heavy fighting continued throughout the week, LURD and MODEL forces advanced into the heart of Monrovia. They riddled the capital city with mortar fire and attempting to cut off roads to the interior (IRIN, 21 July 2003). Dozens of people were killed in what was the third major attack on Monrovia in less than two months. The deteriorating situation was reported by hundreds of bodies lying unattended on a main avenue that led from Monrovia to the suburbs (IRIN, 8 June 2003). Most people, angered by the absence of any interventions by the US, placed the bodies of individuals killed by mortar fire in front of the gates of the US Embassy (IRIN, 22 July 2003a). The people's demand on the US intervention was high. Eventually it never came during the critical period. At the time, at least 3000 people had died during the fierce fighting in Monrovia.

The humanitarian crisis in Monrovia of the June 2003 was considered by the diplomatic community in West Africa as the repetition of the similar emergency in the earlier phase of conflict. At the time Taylor's NPFL advanced towards Monrovia which was also packed with fleeing civilians. Trying to avoid the similar disaster, the West African diplomatic community attempted prevention through the diplomatic ways. It was clear that if the rebel force were to be confronted with force; more damage to humanitarian situation would take place.

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<sup>25</sup> The situation with the displaced people and refugee in Monrovia; before and after Taylor's departure was that the capacity of the Monrovia to endure floods of refugees exceeding the ability of what it could take. Due to long years of war there had been significant run-out of clean water and electricity in Monrovia, as the fighting had destroyed the entire basic infrastructure in the city (Søfting 2006 [Telephone interview]).

### **Steps leading to Pragmatism: the Safe Haven Arrangement**

The indictment indeed had made the negotiation close to complete breakdown. As LURD and MODEL resisted on military option, the humanitarian disaster turned out to be the fatal consequence of this option. LURD and MODEL also stood firm on their demands in the negotiation process. This sudden urge left no other choice but to create a win-win solution that contented everyone. Thus, it could not be achieved by the military means.

Based on the approach of the thesis, it is the likely explanation that Obasanjo, the Nigerian president, came out with the option of proffering a safe haven for Taylor. Taylor's exit was believed to meet the demands of the LURD and MODEL, thus might end the armed violence. Subsequently, after the indictment was made public, there were widespread rumors about a safe haven arrangement being prepared by Nigeria. Following the collapse of the Accra peace round, on 2 July 2003, Taylor discreetly sent his envoy, the Liberian foreign minister, Monie Captan to Nigeria and brought an undisclosed letter (FBIS, 2003h). This initial interaction could indicate Taylor's consideration on the offer.

However, it cannot be claimed that Obasanjo stood alone behind this decision. One must bear in mind that the decision was closely consulted by the international community and agreed by the diplomatic community in West Africa. The international community backed Obasanjo's policy, thus justifying asylum as a way out of the civil war in Liberia. According to Sir Jeremy Greenstock, a senior UN diplomat, "as Nigeria does not have the law that would allow Taylor to be extradited to the special court in Sierra Leone; it was Obasanjo's decision to make that offer public" (FBIS, 2003h). The situation that urged Obasanjo to take critical decision was based on the stagnation in the negotiation process. What could be explained is that the decision was taken as a result of the sudden urge towards the situation in Monrovia. Nigeria took the lead to find a way out from the deadlock. The decision was resulted from Obasanjo's unilateral decision that bypassed the institutional regulations by ECOWAS. The decision of Obasanjo proved that individual played a significant role in West African diplomacy (Anda, 2000:126). In an emerging

humanitarian crisis, the arrangement was conducted in a strong *ad hoc* manner. Above all, it was the sense of pragmatism that strongly dictated.

Despite Taylor's initial rejection of the plan, during Obasanjo's visit to Liberia on the 6 July 2003, it was officially announced that Nigeria offered a safe haven for Taylor. ECOWAS Executive Secretary, Mohammed Ibn. Chambas termed Obasanjo's visit as "a part of behind-the scene moves so that the peace process moves forward" (FBIS, 2003i). His remark could be seen as the support of the ECOWAS on the safe haven arrangement. Later on the same day, after meeting Obasanjo, Taylor reportedly accepted the offer in a term that was called "an orderly exit from power", and agreed to transfer the presidency to Moses Blah, his vice president. (IRIN, 6 July 2003; FBIS, 2003j).

By accepting Obasanjo's offer, Taylor avoided the fate of two of his predecessors, Tolbert and Doe, who were killed during their period of presidency. He also managed to avoid the prosecution from the Special Court in Sierra Leone (Bøås, 2005). For LURD and MODEL, their demand throughout the peace talks was fulfilled as Taylor agreed to accept the safe haven arrangement. They indicated the willingness to negotiate. Consequently, the Accra peace talks was resumed.

In reaction to Obasanjo's decision, there were domestic polemics and debate in Nigeria, especially from the families of the Nigerian journalists that were killed by Taylor's army (FBIS, 2003n). Ignoring the pressure, Obasanjo kept his terms with Taylor. It was highlighted that Obasanjo's decision was unilaterally taken without considering and consulting the Nigerian Parliament (FBIS, 2003k). This marked a strong personal dimension in the safe haven arrangement.

A theoretical explanation on this matter might utilize the conceptualization from Chabal and Daloz (1999). As the lack of clear cut and legitimate separation between the private and public domain, the politics in Africa were being transformed into informal manner. Occasionally, it was conducted in the framework of personal rule (p.6). Obasanjo's decision was conducted within the personal rule. Being in an informal manner, he could overcome the procedural regularities within ECOWAS.

It was the pragmatic decision that was steadfastly employed here. In the situation like Liberia, it was necessary to make a decision based on political

necessity, rather than to be held down by the weight of procedural matters while thousands of people were dying and others fleeing the country (Jaye, 2003:232). This decision was largely characterized by an *ad hoc* process, in which approach to be taken was determined at the last minute. (Anda, 2000:125). Thus, it was the *ad hoc* character that was evident. Obasanjo's personal rule was also the source of the *ad hoc* characteristic in the decision. However, at the same time, the safe haven offer was only possible because Nigeria had sufficient resources to assume the bulk of the burden in securing Taylor's exit from Liberia (Grant-Thomas & Taw, 1999:71).

### **International Endorsement to the Safe Haven Arrangement**

The support from the US might have been viewed as the most important support for Obasanjo's decision. During an official visit to Nigeria from 11 –12 July 2003, Bush congratulated Obasanjo on the safe haven arrangement for Taylor. However, this can be interpreted as an endorsement from the US that the removal of Taylor from Liberia was the best interests of peace in Liberia (FBIS, 2003l). The US Secretary of State, Colin Powell, also indicated that the US would participate in a peacekeeping operation in Liberia. He said that “a transfer of power in Liberia would have to be facilitated and supported in some way by the US,” and that any military involvement would be conditioned on Taylor's resignation (Stevenson, 2003).

By taking this as a signal of approval from the international community, Obasanjo intensively started to run the regional diplomacy in furthering the term of the arrangement. One of the visits was conducted on 13 July 2003 when he visited Guinea's president Lansana Conte (FBIS, 2003m). The most likely explanation is that these meetings could be seen as one of the efforts to socialize the decision of proffering an exit for Taylor, and make it known to the heads of state in West Africa.

Obasanjo continued his prominent role in the post-indictment period. It has been suggested that Obasanjo alone took the role in safeguarding the peace process in Accra. Obasanjo's visits to other states in West Africa were most likely conducted in order to coordinate his decision with the other states in West Africa. The absence of objections from the other West African states might indicate the awareness shared in the region. Every member state in ECOWAS seemed to realize that such sudden urge



in the Liberian situation needed a intervention strategy. Nigeria, as supported by the other West African states, determined to make the most urgent decision. The political pragmatism became the imperative consideration for the safe haven arrangement.

### **Post-Safe Haven: Continuation of the Diplomacy**

Promptly after Taylor indicated his willingness to accept the safe haven arrangement, the peace negotiations in Accra shifted from talks of cease-fire condition to the formation of a transitional government (IRIN, 9 July 2003). Specifically, there were intense negotiations over who should head the interim government after Taylor's departure. Diplomats at the talks indicated that up to forty two names had been suggested for the position (*Ibid.*). Representatives of the Liberian government indicated that the vice president of Liberia, Moses Blah, should take over as the constitution dictates. However, LURD and MODEL strongly disagreed to the idea while pointing to Blah's close connection to Taylor.

### **International Force Deployment as Security Guarantee in Liberia**

On the 25 July 2003, the US announced the deployment of its troops under the multinational force of the UN for a limited time and scope. This came shortly after ECOWAS announced to have a force consisting of 1.300 Nigerian troops to be deployed in a week. Despite the rebels' promise to adhere to the cease-fire, intense fighting occurred over the weekend of 26-27 July 2003 (IRIN, 27 July 2003).

In the period of July 2003, ECOWAS made progress toward the deployment of a peacekeeping force known as the ECOWAS Military Mission (ECOMIL) into Liberia. The first group of the Nigerian-dominated ECOMIL arrived in Liberia on 4 August as a vanguard force. A number of 1.500 troops were placed on immediate standby, while ECOWAS expected to have in total 3.250 troops on the ground in Liberia consisting of the troops from Nigeria, Ghana, Benin, Togo, and Mali (IRIN, 31 July 2003).

The decision on the ECOMIL deployment was taken during the Emergency Summit of ECOWAS concerning the crisis in Liberia. In that forum, Ghana's President John Kufour urged fellow West African leaders to take a quick action to save Liberia from self-destruction (*Ibid.*). Again, it signified another character in the

West African diplomacy, that the critical issues were often negotiated at the highest level (Anda, 2000:126).

Along with the peacekeepers' arrival, the rebels agreed to hand over areas of the capital under rebel control to the peacekeepers and withdraw from Monrovia (IRIN, 4 August 2003). In response to the ECOMIL's deployment, the US also sent a seven member marine team to clear the way for humanitarian relief and discuss logistical needs with Nigerian peacekeepers. Thousands of Liberians, exhausted by the long period of intense fighting, welcomed the peacekeepers as the troops moved into Monrovia on 6 August 2003 (IRIN, 7 August 2003).

### **The Comprehensive Peace Accord on Liberia**

On the same day as the arrival of ECOMIL, a motion to approve Taylor's resignation and his replacement by the vice president of Liberia, Moses Blah, was approved by the Liberian Senate and House of Representatives by a vote of 46 to 1 (IRIN, 7 August 2003). On the 11 August 2003, Taylor resigned from the presidency of Liberia and went into exile in Nigeria (See Hoffman, 2006:315-320 for details). On the same day Taylor arrived in Nigeria, where he was welcomed in a presidential ceremony. Immediately after Taylor's resignation, Blah took the oath of office as the president of the interim government of Liberia.

The following day, on 12 August 2003, the LURD signed an accord to hand over control of the port of Monrovia within two days and to withdraw from Monrovia (IRIN, 12 August 2006). The Nigerian peacekeepers, accompanied by US Marines worked to secure food and aid to the citizens (IRIN, 15 August 2003).

At the same time, Blah held talks with leaders of both the LURD and MODEL, expecting to finalize a peace agreement over the coming week. Responding positively towards the prospect of peace after Taylor's exit, all parties agreed to sign the peace agreement. On 18 August 2003 the Comprehensive Peace Agreement on Liberia was signed (IRIN, 18 August 2003; FBIS, 2003p). It was acceptable for both LURD and MODEL to have the government of Liberia signing the peace agreement, without Taylor's presence. As such, the Comprehensive Peace Agreement proved to

be the culmination of the peace process in the Liberian conflict. At this point we could suggest that the safe haven brought the finality to the conflict in Liberia.

In the aftermath of Taylor's departure, Blah conducted several visits to neighboring countries in West Africa. From 21-22 August 2003 he traveled to Côté d'Ivoire to meet Gbagbo; followed by a visit to Nigeria to meet Obasanjo, and finally to Guinea to meet President Conte (FBIS, 2003q, 2003r). There had been no official statements on details of these meetings. What is most likely to be discussed was the prospect concerning the transitional government of Liberia. At the same time, Charles Gyude Bryant, a 54-year-old businessman and leader of the Liberian Action Party, was selected chairman of the transitional government by the Liberian government, the LURD, and MODEL (IRIN, 21 August 2003). The establishment of the transitional government of Liberia indicated the country's direction towards peace.

### **Chapter Summary**

The intensive diplomatic efforts to bring the warring factions in the Liberian conflict met its success with the Accra peace talks. However, an indictment from the Sierra Leone Special Court brought the negotiation fell into a breakdown. Taylor, on the other hand, had no choices left due to the indictment. He was cornered, and might face both the prosecution and the military defeat. The security situation deteriorated rapidly in Monrovia, thus risking the thousands of civilian sheltered there. All of these became the factors behind the decision to remove Taylor peacefully from Liberia. They sketched out the background to the complex and difficult situation in Monrovia.

The opportunity to escape the difficult situation emerged as Obasanjo threw a lifeline for Taylor. It was known as the safe haven arrangement. Within this invitation Taylor was promised to be protected and left untouched as he went to the asylum in Nigeria. The safe haven option was seen as the best solution; for Taylor, for LURD and MODEL, for the peace process, and the most important, for the civilian population in Monrovia.

Taylor's willingness to accept Obasanjo's offer finally opened up a solution to the Liberian crisis. It transformed the situation of deadlock into a new settlement. The

diplomatic arrangement that transported Taylor out of Liberia helped to resume the negotiation process. In my view, the safe haven arrangement provided the conflict settlement in Liberia. Thus, it was needed for Liberia to move on with the establishment the transitional government and later, the democratic election.

The arrangement showed the *ad hoc* character of the West African decision making process. This *ad hoc* manner was only possible due to the informal characteristic in the West African politics. In the safe haven arrangement, everything was highly personalized. It marked another significant characteristic in the West African diplomacy. The ability of Obasanjo to bypass the procedural regularities in ECOWAS turned out to save the peace talks in Accra. However, the emerging humanitarian crisis was the ultimate reason behind the provision of a safe haven for Taylor. From the practice of West African diplomacy, it was the notion of pragmatism that saved Liberia from a total humanitarian catastrophe.

## **V. THE POLITICAL DIMENSION OF DIPLOMACY IN WEST AFRICA**

The diplomacy in the Accra peace talks was the result of the ongoing diplomatic initiatives to bring the warring parties in Liberia to the negotiation. The set of diplomacy on the safe haven arrangement showed that the West African diplomacy was highly personalized. This personalized manner contributed to the adoption of pragmatism as the main characteristic in the diplomacy. Based on this, our discussion turns to the explanation of the personal role and the pragmatic characteristic in West African diplomacy. I will look at the elements from the regional security complex: the distribution of power and the pattern of amity and enmity and the aspects of the weak institutionalization of politics in Africa: the personalization of power and the importance of the vertical link; as the factors explaining the political dimension in the West African diplomacy.

### **View from the Regional Security Complex Theory**

By definition, regional security complex is “a group of states whose primary security concerns link together sufficiently closely that their national securities cannot realistically be considered apart from one another” (Buzan, 1991:23). It has significant security interdependence into each other. Its presence is distinguished by two basic elements: (1) the distribution of power between the states within a regional subsystem, and (2) patterns of amity and enmity among them. Returning to the research question of the thesis, this theory attempted to address the political factors that explain the character of the West African diplomacy. Thereby, it will examine the interaction among the states within the system.

### ***Power Relations: Weak Unipolarity in West Africa***

Power relations in a security complex operate through the concept of balance of power. Balance of power is defined as the situation where one or more states' power is used to balance another state or group of states. Henceforth, the distribution of power among states in the system becomes the most important characteristic of the international system.

The similar logic could also be applied when we try to assess the political dimension of the diplomacy in West Africa. Going through the literature on the Liberian conflict, one cannot leave out the role of Nigeria. In most analysis, Nigeria is claimed to be the most prominent actor, thus claimed the status as the regional hegemon in West Africa. It stands on the top of the hierarchy of power within the region. In order to maintain its status, often Nigeria initiated various political or military arrangements in the international affairs in West Africa.

Looking back, Nigeria's crucial role is clearly observable in the initial phase of ECOWAS' intervention to Liberia, as Nigeria was the country that initiated the involvement. Nigeria's initiative to establish and lead the ECOMOG was prompted by the ambition of its military leader to perform a leadership role in West Africa. The involvement continued, and Nigerian remained to perform as the backbone of the involvement. The military involvement of ECOWAS ended in the 1999, but ECOWAS remained involved diplomatically due to the engulfing tension in the Mano River areas.

Through this diplomatic involvement, Nigeria's hegemonic role was incorporated within the ECOWAS. Nigeria was not the sole actor of the initiatives. Other member states of ECOWAS, particularly the heads of state that assumed the position of chairman, also led the initiatives in the Mano River areas.

Buzan and Wæver (2003:239) claimed that the West African RSC comprises a set of weak states, most of which are also weak powers, dominated by a regional power that is also a weak state. Based on this, is it then justifiable to consider Nigeria as the only power in the region to take the burden of military and political intervention? I argue that Nigeria plays an important role in the region, particularly in the case of Liberia. However, the role of the other states in West Africa should also be taken into consideration.

A regional security complex, as noted by Buzan (1991) "should initially be characterized in terms of its power distribution," adding that "where this power is dominant, states pursue security primarily by establishing and maintaining a 'suitable' or stable distribution of power". Nigeria, being the Africa's most populous country and potentially one of its strongest in terms of exerting influence on

neighboring Africa states, plays a central role in shaping the emerging security architecture. Its high profile diplomacy and commitment of large human, logistical, and financial resources rendered Nigeria as the crucial force of ECOWAS (Bah, 2005:79).

What is then the stable distribution of power in the diplomacy of the Liberian conflict? In the case of Liberia, Nigeria kept its status as the main leader in ECOWAS' various diplomatic initiatives. As the diplomacy was conducted within the institutional framework of ECOWAS, thereby Nigeria collaborates with the other member states of ECOWAS. As always occurred in the ECOWAS, the main actors of the most diplomatic initiatives were Nigeria and the chairman of ECOWAS.<sup>26</sup>

With regards to the Liberian crisis, ECOWAS was actively proposing peace talks for solving the tension in the Mano River areas. The ECOWAS diplomatic initiatives in March 2001 were led by the president of Nigeria, Obasanjo and the president of Mali, Konare, who was the chairman of ECOWAS at the time. The efforts that had been carried out were directed to ease the tension in Liberia.

Nigeria and Mali were the driving force behind the ECOWAS initiatives. The results of the initiatives were the meetings between the heads of state involved in the Mano River crisis. The meetings were held and organized throughout the capital cities in West Africa, notably Abuja, Dakar, Ouagadougou, and Accra. The decision to conduct these meetings reflected the stable distribution of power within the state members of ECOWAS. Role and initiatives were equally distributed within the multilateral framework of ECOWAS.

With regards to the involvement of ECOWAS in the Liberian conflict, the conflict became the major security concern for the other states in the region. During the first phase of the conflict, most of the fifteen member states of ECOWAS had contributed troops in ECOMOG. Some of them continued their involvement in the diplomatic initiatives during the period of Taylor's presidency, namely Nigeria, Ghana, Senegal, and Mali. Although these heads of state were in the position as the

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<sup>26</sup> The organizational structure of ECOWAS was primarily occupied by two top positions. First is the Authority of Heads of State and Government, led by a chairman. The second is the ECOWAS Executive Secretary that functions notably with the operational issues of ECOWAS as an institution. The position of the Executive Secretary is appointed by the Authority of Heads of State and Government.

chairman of ECOWAS, *de facto* command of the organization was in the hand of Nigeria.

Historically Ghana, Nigeria, Senegal, and Côte d'Ivoire were known as the West Africa's Big Four. It reflected the long established division between the Anglophone and the Francophone states in the region. Nigeria and Ghana represented the Anglophone states, while Senegal and Côte d'Ivoire represented the Francophone states. However, this division was evident during the involvement of the ECOMOG in the first phase of Liberian conflict. Côte d'Ivoire was completely against Nigeria in the deployment of ECOMOG. When Ghana joined the ECOMOG, its presence eased the tension between Nigeria and Côte d'Ivoire that stood against the deployment of the troops. The later involvement of Senegal in ECOMOG stabilized the balance of power at that time (Grant-Thomas & Taw, 1999:75).

The involvement of the other West African states in the diplomatic initiatives could be seen as an attempt to balance to dominance of Nigeria. However, during the second phase of the Liberian conflict, the friction between the Anglophone and the Francophone states was less evident. The most likely explanation to this was because the involvement was mainly done through the diplomatic manner, thus it was within the framework of ECOWAS. A clear attempt to balance the dominance of Nigeria in ECOWAS diplomatic initiatives was maintained by various states in West Africa, notably Ghana, Senegal, and Burkina Faso; hosted the meetings on the Liberian conflict.

Within the initiatives of the Liberian conflict, it was evident that the interactions among the ECOWAS member states were conducted through a cooperative multilateral manner. We could see that the diplomatic initiatives created a harmonious diplomatic front that worked together to find mutual solution for the Liberian conflict. The consent from the ECOWAS member states was evident as they all involved in this diplomatic initiatives. However, this was the case in the process of diplomacy until the indictment on Taylor from the Sierra Leone Special Court was announced.

With the indictment being announced, the Accra peace talks reached a deadlock. Consequently, the possibility of a complete breakdown of the peace



process was high. It was within this context that the safe haven arrangement for Taylor was prepared. Nigeria stood as architect of this arrangement. From this point on, the decision of the safe haven arrangement marked the shift in the character of diplomacy in West Africa. The safe haven arrangement was made with a strong unilateral dimension.

With the prompt shift in its diplomatic approach, Nigeria stood out its status as a regional hegemon in West Africa. Thus, the decision by Nigeria signified the unipolarity of the security system of West Africa. The decision was later supported by ECOWAS. However, another regional consent upon this new arrangement was necessary. It was the likely reason behind Nigeria's visits to various ECOWAS member states. The visits were intended to disseminate the condition upon which the safe haven arrangement was made. It did not take long until the new consent from the other ECOWAS member states towards the safe haven arrangement was achieved.

Although the safe haven arrangement implied the hierarchical of power in West Africa, I would argue that the unipolarity of Nigeria is considerably weak. Nigeria still needed to seek the political support and to take the other states into consideration. It was understandable that the political support and consensus were important for the stable distribution of power in the region. However, if Nigeria were a strong unipolar power in West Africa, it would not need any consent upon its unilateral decision in safe haven arrangement. Without adequate consultation with the other states in West Africa, a political tension might emerge, thus risk the position of Nigeria.

The support and endorsement from the international community was also needed by Nigeria. By securing the consent from the US and the AU, Nigeria had avoided any accusation against the safe haven arrangement. The backing from them provided a warranty that there would be no attempts to forcibly remove Taylor once he accepted the arrangement. Based on this, it might suggest one important factor in the balance of power in West Africa. Although Nigeria occupied the highest level of the hierarchy of power in West Africa, nonetheless, it has no sole position as the strong hegemonic power. Thus, by establishing a stable distribution of power, Nigeria needs the other states in the region to fill in the lower level in the hierarchy of power.

This is the function of the other states in West Africa, as the foundation that shaped the stable distribution of power in system. As such, their existence was also significant to balance the unipolarity of Nigeria.

There is another point that justifies Nigeria's central role in the region. It was the foreign policy orientation which was based on the concentric circle (Yoroms, 1993:85). This conception sees Africa as the heart of Nigerian foreign policy. Accordingly, this formulation of Nigeria's foreign policy "must be very closely connected with all things pertaining to the African continent", and conceptualized as follow:

... a pattern of concentric circles may be discernible in our attitude and response to foreign policy issues within the African continent and the world at large. At the epicenter of these circles are the national economic and economic interests of the Federal Republic of Nigeria, which are inextricably tied up with the security, stability, and economic and social well being of our immediate neighbors. One of our principal priorities is to put on more constructive footing relations with our neighbors with which we share identical stability and peace (*Ibid.*).

Based on this, it is evident that Nigeria perceived West Africa as the closest arena. By positioning Nigeria at the heart of the region, the conception subjectively views the other states in the region as being lower in the hierarchy of power. In understanding the unilateral dimension of Nigeria in the safe haven arrangement, it can thus be suggested that by being a weak unipolar power in West Africa, Nigeria secured the its decision by having the supports from the West African states and the international community.

### ***The Distorted Line of Amity and Enmity in West Africa***

The second element in the regional security complex is on the pattern of amity and enmity. The pattern of amity and enmity comes as the firm result of the power distribution in the region. It depicts the coherent patterns of security interdependence and may take the standard forms of rivalry, competition, or the alliance pattern among the main powers within the region (Buzan & Wæver, 2003:47). By amity, Buzan understood the relationships ranging from genuine friendship to expectation of protection and support. Meanwhile, enmity is understood as the relationship defined by suspicion and fear (p.189-190).

The discussion on the pattern of amity and enmity in West Africa will always refer to the long-standing rivalry between two main political blocs: the Anglophone and Francophone. The discussion on the distribution of power in West Africa has briefly touched upon this point. Being established during the colonization era, this delineation marked the distinction between the former British colonies from the French ones, and shaped the pattern of alliances in the region.

The complete story of this competition in West Africa goes far back in the history of the region. However, the immediate precursor marking the competition between these two blocks in the Liberian conflict emerged when NPFL launched its initial attack in 1989. Both Francophone states, Burkina Faso and Côte d'Ivoire, actively supported Taylor's revolt and set the enmity line against any ECOWAS involvements.

It was evident from the literature that most of the French-speaking states were less cooperative towards ECOWAS military engagement in Liberia. Côte d'Ivoire even brought about the competition to a larger arena. Côte d'Ivoire was a member of the UN Security Council when the Liberian conflict initially erupted in 1989. It then tried to dissuade the Liberian conflict to be incorporated on the council's agenda (Aning, 1994). The attempt succeeded and the states in West Africa were left alone to find a solution for Liberia.

The other Francophone states, such as Burkina Faso, reacted aggressively on ECOMOG's deployment and claimed that ECOWAS should not interfere with Liberia's domestic issue (Grant-Thomas & Taw, 1999:60). However, Senegal was the only Francophone state that persuasively announced its objection due to Nigeria's lacking of political consultation with other ECOWAS member states.

Sierra Leone and Guinea contributed troops in the first deployment of ECOMOG. Hence, they became the enemies of Taylor's NPFL. The hostility pattern was sustained even after Taylor assumed the presidency in Liberia. This was the reason to the tension along the Mano River area in sequence with Liberia's second phase of conflict.

Since 2001 the three countries in Mano River areas were trading accusations on cross-border attacks from each other's territory. Liberia intensified the tensions by

expelling the ambassadors Sierra Leone and Guinea out of Liberia. This caused a diplomatic tension within the region. The diplomatic initiatives by ECOWAS later eased the tension. Under the sponsorship of ECOWAS, the three heads of state in Mano River region agreed to meet and reduce the violence.

At this point, the process of diplomacy in West Africa was notably characterized by the shift from non-cooperative to cooperative behavior. It implied the shift in the pattern of enmity and enmity in the region. However, the weakening of Taylor's power due to the UN economic sanctions might also contribute to the shift towards a cooperative direction.

It is relevant to conclude that the relationship between the states in West Africa is not firmly embedded with the institution of state, rather depends on the head of state in power. Additionally, the regional divide does not always mean that the distinction among the different groups would eventually burst into an open hostility. It will go along the pendulum of competition or rivalry. As such, the hostility can also take form in the ignorance of the other states. Ignorance and non-cooperative behavior can also be understood as the reflection of enmity although the level is less intense than an open hostility.

The West African diplomatic process in the 2001 also marked a significant change in accordance with the pattern of amity and enmity. Burkina Faso, previously was a strong opponent of the ECOWAS intervention in Liberia, changed its political standing into a cooperative behavior along with the negotiation process in the Mano River area. An immediate effect of the shift in Burkina's political standing was marked by Obasanjo's first visit to Ouagadougou (FBIS, 2001b). The reason of visit was most likely to establish a bilateral economic cooperation. The presidential visit, thus, stood for a symbol of the good relationship among the West African heads of state (Anda, 2000:126). Any political consequences that followed, contributed to the shift of Burkina's position.

The visit was the easing of tension between the two countries that had always held divergent views on the conflicts in West Africa. With the reconciliation among the two states, they were on the same wavelength. The shift towards the cooperative behavior reflected the direction towards amity. The pattern of amity was shown

through Burkina's consent for hosting the Ouagadougou meeting in 2002. It was the meeting called for the establishment of the international contact group on Liberia. The so-called Ouagadougou-Abuja axis marked the new significant shift in the pattern on amity in West Africa.

The unstable pattern between the amity and enmity was shown by Côte d'Ivoire. As previously presented, Côte d'Ivoire showed a high level of hostility towards the ECOWAS' involvement in Liberia. At one point during the first phase of conflict, Nigeria and ECOWAS persuaded Côte d'Ivoire to become actively involved in the peace process (Francis, *et.al.*, 2005:124). This was seen by Côte d'Ivoire as a way to challenge Nigeria's dominance, and resulted in Côte d'Ivoire hosted the Yamoussoukro peace process in 1991.

To some extent, Côte d'Ivoire did not play any major role, nor showed any open hostility during the remaining involvement of the ECOWAS. However, at the end of 2002 Côte d'Ivoire returned to a less cooperative standing. The reason for this was the allegation of Taylor supported rebel group in Côte d'Ivoire. The returning of Côte d'Ivoire to the pattern of enmity implied that it was a reaction to a direct security threat posed by Taylor. However, it was rather difficult to categorize in which pattern Côte d'Ivoire belonged to. Nevertheless Côte d'Ivoire still took part in the part of any assessment mission to Liberia. The likely explanation for this is that Côte d'Ivoire differentiated the forum to which it presented its political standing. Bilaterally, it posed an open political opposition towards Liberia. Multilaterally, it maintained its involvement within ECOWAS. To discuss further, one needs to look at the conception of the Côte d'Ivoire's foreign policy.

Senegal poses a distinct pattern in the amity and enmity relations in West Africa. It belongs to the Francophone group, but does not pose any hostilities, notably in ECOWAS involvement in Liberia. The held firm perception that when one country belongs to the Francophone group, then it ought to show a pattern of enmity towards the Anglophone, is not present in the case of Senegal. However, Senegal does play a role in balancing the dominance of Nigeria. In the beginning Senegal balanced Nigeria by deploying additional troops to strengthen the ECOMOG forces already on

the ground. Senegal thus mended the allegation that Francophone states refused to join a Nigerian-dominated military mission.

In the West African diplomatic initiatives on the second phase of the Liberian conflict, Senegal continued to take an active role. In a likely attempt to balance Nigeria, Senegal also hosted the Dakar meeting for the Mano River crisis in 2001. However, in the aftermath of the indictment and notably when Nigeria took over the process by preparing the safe haven arrangement, at the same time Senegal held the responsibility to mediate the Ivorian crisis. Based on this, I tend to argue that Senegal posed a pattern of amity in the West African diplomacy. However, it is also important to notice that the distribution of tasks is a feature commonly accepted in West Africa. The affable rivalry between Nigeria and Senegal tends to show the pattern of amity among them. However, the delineation according to Francophone and Anglophone groups brought the two states into consensus on who should be in charge in taking the leadership in one particular issue in West Africa.

The discussion on the pattern of amity and enmity which was shown in the ECOWAS diplomatic initiatives in the Liberian conflict signified what I suggest as the obscure delineation bordering the amity and enmity poles in the region. Indeed, there existed suspicion and fear in the region, but most of the countries showed a cooperative attitude towards the efforts led by ECOWAS. The notion on peace and security in the region turned out to be common goal sought by all states in the region.

Based on the cooperative idea, some states in West Africa clearly made their political standing on Liberian conflict sound. The dependence of Guinea, Gambia, and Sierra Leone on Nigeria's subsidies encourages their willingness to follow Nigeria's lead (Grant-Thomas & Taw, 1999). Mali and Togo, both contributed on hosting peace talks concerning the Liberia crisis, was because their heads of state were in the position of the chairman of ECOWAS.

West Africa also witnessed the significance of Nigeria and Ghana that played central role, militarily and diplomatically, throughout the ECOWAS engagement in Liberia. Both Nigeria and Ghana are Anglophone states; and both have committed close ties with any peace processes in the region. Ghana, whose economic and

military capability in economy and military is below Nigeria, is also superior in comparison with the rest of the region.

Despite their being in the same alliance, according to Buzan and Wæver (2003), the relationship between Nigeria and Ghana was not purely amity. Date back to the first ECOMOG mission, the differences in their peacekeeping approach marked the tension that characterized the relations the two states (Grant-Thomas & Taw, 1999:66). To mediate the difference between the two states, it required frequent compromise within ECOWAS, particularly during the first phase of the conflict.

However, these differences do not separate Nigeria and Ghana to unite in an alliance throughout the involvement process. Notably with the diplomatic initiatives leading to the Accra peace talks, the president of Ghana, John Kufour was elected as the chairman of ECOWAS. Thus, engaged with Nigeria, Ghana continued the diplomatic initiatives that finally led to the Accra peace talks.

As the diplomatic activities intensified, a sense of pragmatism and compromise have become the common term in West Africa. The sudden urge to prevent the Accra peace talks into a complete breakdown made West African heads of state gave their immediate consent towards the safe haven arrangement. I argue that the key to such consent in a divided region with different political agenda is the incentive.

With regards to the Liberian conflict, the lasting peace was the primary incentive for the region. The stability and security of the region would be the main incentive for the diplomatic initiatives on the Liberian conflicts. Regardless any political standing, the desire for the incentive was sufficient to overcome even the strong, historical rivalry between the Francophone and Anglophone states. Thereby I argue that within the distorted line of the amity and enmity in West Africa it was the incentive on the lasting peace that became the compromising point of any diplomatic initiatives in the Liberian conflict. This was also the case with the safe haven option. Despite being resulted from a unilateral diplomatic arrangement, it was well accepted among the West African states. It was again the incentive that played an important role in reflecting the pragmatism as the evident characteristics in the West African diplomacy.

The explanation on the unipolarity of power and the distorted line of amity and enmity in West Africa depicts an exterior understanding behind the political factors within the state level that explains the character of diplomacy in West Africa. Moreover, in its claim on West Africa as a fairly weak security regime (p. 64) one might relate the weakness with the nature of African states. Security regime might be weak because of many reasons. One of those is that the states comprising the regime face challenges with regards to their power and capabilities.

However, if we return to each member state in the region of West Africa, another question might arise as one cannot dismiss the role of the head of state in West Africa. This is also the concern of the thesis that the interaction between units (the states) in the system (the West Africa region) could potentially be seen as the representation of the individuals in power. Regarding the personal role in African politics, thoughts from Chabal and Daloz would complement the analysis of the political dimension in the diplomacy. In general it posed the question whether the policy, preference, and interaction on the state level was genuinely based of the constituent that comprised the state, or merely the reflection of the leaders.

### **Weak Institutionalization of the Political Practices in Africa**

According to Chabal and Daloz (1999:31) power in Africa is weakly institutionalized and remains essentially personalized and particularistic. The legitimacy of the state is not automatically emancipated from the society and not constituted in the political institutions (p.5). Based on this main argument, the ECOWAS diplomacy in the Liberian conflict, instead of represented the interaction among states in West Africa; it reflected the interaction among the head of states. In the light of the role of the individuals, we gain deeper understanding concerning the political dimension in the process of diplomacy. The two central arguments that will be emphasized here are: (1) the personalization of power in West Africa, and (2) the overriding importance of vertical links within the political system.

### ***The Highly Personalized Power Relations in West Africa***

In West Africa, and much of the Africa, diplomacy has really been about the politics of personality (Aluko, 1977 in Adibe, 1997:482). Personalities played a significant



role in African diplomacy. It enhances the role of leader as the formulator of foreign policy (Anda, 2000:126). In assessing the involvement of ECOWAS in the Liberian conflict, there had been numerous personal interactions which were largely held among the head of states. Thus, it strengthened the dimension of the personal role in the process of diplomacy.

The personal relations during the Liberian conflict were present since the first phase of the conflict. The 1996 political agreement between Taylor and the Nigerian president at that time, Sani Abacha, showed this dimension of personal relations. Having united by mutual interests, both of them reached an agreement that brought Taylor into the presidential position in Liberia. Another example on how personalities played crucial point here was when the AU leadership tried to find solution to the Liberian conflict without involving the AU in the arrangement. Their persuasion to Nigeria's head of state, Ibrahim Babangida, was also conducted through a personal interaction. However, Nigeria's willingness to start a regional initiative on the Liberian conflict was very much based on Babangida's domestic political agenda.

At this point it is important to pose a question on whose interest that might be represented here. The national interest is thus entangled with the leader's interest. The consequence of this entanglement is to be found in the transformation of politics as being informal. The informalization of politics is conducted in the framework of personal rule. As such, it can be personalized because there is a lack of clear cut and legitimate separation between private and public domain.

Prior to the indictment most of the efforts to mediate the Liberian conflict were negotiated at the highest level at the regional forum, mostly through the summit meetings (Anda, 2000:126). The heads of state such as the president of Nigeria, Obasanjo; the president of Mali, Alpha Konare, later succeeded by Toumani Toure; the president of Ghana, John Kufour; the president of Senegal, Abdoulaye Wade, the president of Togo, Gnassingbe Eyadema, and the president of Burkina Faso, Blaise Compaore, rendered the consensus of the region sound by participating into the diplomatic initiatives.

Another point asserted by Chabal and Daloz (1999: 6) is on the various levels of social identification and loyalties which exist in the African societies that facilitate

the interaction and exchange in the personalization of power. The loyalty and the social identification within the safe haven arrangement could be found among the heads of state in West Africa. The decision of Ghana for not arresting Taylor as requested by the Sierra Leone Special Court could be seen as an illustration to this.

However, the loyalty and social identification is not merely addressed to the head of state as a personal, rather it is subjected to the institution of the head of state itself. The explanation to this is likely to be found in the neo-patrimonial state of Africa. Once an individual assume the position of a head of state, this individual will be respected. It is a shared understanding among the heads of state on their holding on to power. As a consequence, they grow loyalty among each other.

Based on this kind of loyalty, the issues that emanates in the region are to be solved according to the West African solution. By this I understand, that the regional sovereignty are not to be interfered with any external actors. With regards to the diplomatic initiatives in the Liberian conflict, I would argue that the diplomatic initiatives that had been orchestrated by the West African diplomatic community were not to be devastated by the Sierra Leone Special Court, as an external actor. Another kind of solution appropriate for the norms in the region could be arranged instead.

At this point, we could return to the issue of the distorted line that bordering the amity and enmity in the region. Despite the relative suspicion among them, the West African leaders performed a cooperative manner. The reason was again to be found in the incentive when the diplomatic initiatives succeeded. Thereby, in order to achieve the incentive, the approaches were conducted through the diplomatic initiatives. Additionally these initiatives were characterized by the high degree of personal role. Frequent personal interactions between the West African heads of state, undoubtedly marked the highly personalized power relations in the region (Anda, 2000:126).

The character of personal role was even more evident as the safe haven arrangement was initiated by Obasanjo. It was made within the framework of personal rule. This unilateral dimension also made Obasanjo ignored the domestic opposition against this arrangement. Based on this, Obasanjo added another

individualistic character into the process of diplomacy that had been personalized already.

This reflection of the personalization of power showed another point on the complexities in African politics. Whereas domestically the leaders must seek support from their clientele, what is taking place regionally reflected the similar notion. The leaders also need to seek support and alliance from its regional clients. The engagement of the other states within an alliance and the consequence emanating from it will be discussed in the following part.

### ***“Big Men” in West African Power Politics***

What is significant in Africa is the extent to which the vertical and personalized relations actually drive the logic of the political system. It is the ultimate ambitions of those who have power to establish their standing as Big Men (Chabal-Daloz, 1999:15). It is important for the leader to establish the status as the “Big Men”, because this status will entail the benefits and other privileges, including support and respect from the clients.

The logic exists in the domestic level is that the leaders seek support from their clients. This thesis attempts to apply the logic of the “Big Man” into the regional setting. However, it implies a correspondence with Buzan and Wæver’s term on balance of power. With Nigeria as the main polar in West African regional politics, it is thus necessary to perform the leadership regionally. It is also important to be recognized as the *primus inter pares* among all “Big Men”, the superior among the equals, and to be on the top of the hierarchical of power.

The conception of the importance of a vertical rule in West African politics explains the dominance and leadership of Nigeria. By returning to the concentric principle on Nigeria’s foreign policy, it reflects that in West Africa, Nigeria is seen as the main polar of power and grow political leverage from the other states. The reputation as one of the “Big Four”, for instance, showed the hegemony of Nigeria.

Turning to the larger concentric circle, we will find the continent of Africa. By briefly touching upon the role of AU and the other big powers in Africa, it was evident that Nigeria is considered to be one of the significant players in the continent.

By having the AU leader approached and encouraged Nigeria to take the lead in West Africa, it marked a broader conception on balance of power in the continent. The presence of the president of South Africa, Thabo Mbeki and the president of Mozambique, Joaquim Chissano in welcoming Taylor into exile in Nigeria also represented the continental support for the safe haven arrangement.

The endorsement from the international community, particularly from the US was an important remark on the justification needed by Nigeria. Moreover the US defended Nigeria's policy by saying that "President Obasanjo should not be asked to be unfaithful to the commitment he made to provide asylum to former Liberian President Charles Taylor in 2003" (Kramer, 2005). It is the reflection that the US, the global power in international level, supported the arrangement. Nonetheless it created a new international accreditation for Nigeria, to be one of the respective states, thus eliminating its previous pariah status. By offering the safe haven arrangement, the credibility and political leverage of Nigeria were enhanced regionally and internationally. Thus, it strengthened the status of Obasanjo as the "Big Man" in West Africa.

### **Chapter Summary**

Four factors were established in this chapter to discuss the political dimension of the conduct of diplomacy in Liberian conflict. These factors are: the weak unipolarity of power in West Africa, the distorted line of amity and enmity, the highly personalized power relations in West Africa, and the importance of the 'Big Men' status in West African politics.

Primarily, the major finding was on Nigeria's dominance in the region. It pursued stability and security in the region by initiating the negotiation and peace process regarding Liberian conflict. In its efforts there were also the involvements from other states in the region—whether in the direction of cooperative or non-cooperative—thus they could be seen as attempts to balance the dominance of Nigeria and preserving the stable distribution of power.

The degree of cooperation which was shown by the West African states could broadly be classified under the pattern of amity and enmity. Accordingly, one will

always refer to the long-standing rivalry between two main blocs: the Anglophone and Francophone in West Africa. The distinct line of amity and enmity in the first phase of Liberian conflict, turned into the less-hostile diplomatic initiatives which were employed heavily during Taylor's presidency. It reflected the obscure delineation between amity and enmity poles. The factor of incentive towards the common goal for peace and security in the region became the bond to overcome even the strong, historical rivalry between the Francophone and Anglophone states.

However, the exterior understanding which was provided by these political factors in the diplomacy was complemented by the other conceptions in African politics. Diplomacy in West Africa has been very much about the politics of personality. Numerous personal linkages and interactions were held among the head of states, and it enhanced the magnitude of personal role in the process. In the framework of personal rule, the national interest and the leader's personal interest might combine at the same time. This character of the personalization of power was even more apparent after Obasanjo offered safe haven to Taylor.

With Obasanjo being in the center of the decision, it came to the extent where the vertical and personalized relations actually drive the logic of the political system. By establishing the "Big Man" status for Nigeria, it is even more important to perform leadership and being recognized as the *primus inter pares* among all leaders in the region. Along with the notion of Nigeria as the heart of the West African security system, the logic on the concentric principle on Nigeria's foreign policy is being put forward. The concern over the vertical rule in West African politics, in African politics and in international politics, explains the dominance and leadership of Nigeria in the safe haven arrangement.

## VI. CONCLUSION

At the last part of the thesis we will now return to the research questions which inquired the West African diplomacy that brought about Taylor's safe departure to Nigeria. First, we asked on the factors that made the safe haven arrangement was agreed as a measure for ending the Liberian conflict. Secondly, we asked on how the diplomacy in West Africa was conducted with regard to Taylor's exit. Thirdly, we asked the political factors that explain the character of diplomacy in West Africa towards the safe haven arrangement as a strategy of conflict settlement in Liberia.

### **Looking through the Research Questions and Hypothesis**

The working hypothesis is that Taylor's exit was necessary to end the conflict in Liberia. In a condition where the peace talks had reached a deadlock and the possibility of a complete breakdown of the peace process was high, the *ad hoc* safe haven arrangement for Taylor was made. Taylor's exit was believed to break the deadlock and bring peace to Liberia. Thus, it was seen as the pre-requisite for transition and lasting peace. The discussion on the West African diplomacy provided two dimensions of the safe haven arrangement: the direct concerns for the safe haven arrangement and the political factors that explain the characters of the West African diplomacy.

### ***On the Direct Concerns for Taylor's Exit Arrangement***

Dated back to the first phase of the Liberian conflict, we viewed that the lack of viable international attention left the West African states to settle the problem in Liberia through the framework of the ECOWAS. Notably after Taylor assumed the presidency in the 1997 election, diplomatic engagement was highly employed by ECOWAS with regard to the continuation of the crisis in the Mano Rivers areas, along the border of Liberia, Sierra Leone, and Guinea.

The continuous diplomatic initiatives as presented in the chapter four led us to understand that ECOWAS remained in charge for the peace talks as the armed tension in the Mano River areas intensified. With regard to the obstacles in the Liberian conflict, ECOWAS had conducted quite a remarkable piece of regional

diplomacy when they convinced all major parties to negotiate in the Accra peace talks on in June 2003.

However, there were other actors involved with their own agendas. The indictment from the Sierra Leone Special Court went public on the same day when the negotiation started in Ghana. As the consequence of it, the negotiations broke down, LURD and MODEL switched to the military option, and the humanitarian crisis following the indictment became the direct concern over the preparation of the an *ad hoc* safe haven arrangement

The ill-timed announcement of the indictment triggered certain impediments that led to a crisis in Liberia. First, the indictment immediately bolstered the refusal of LURD and MODEL to negotiate and to pursue a military option instead. It led to the second consequence of the negotiation deadlock with the possibility of a complete breakdown was high. Efforts to uphold the ceasefire agreement, combined with the threat of the mediator to call off the peace talk proved ineffective as the rebel forces were advancing towards Monrovia with heavy artillery. Taylor, on the other hand, was determined to fight to the last. The armed escalation led to a humanitarian disaster for the thousands of inhabitants and internally displaced that sought refuge in Monrovia.

Trying to halt the disaster, the West African diplomatic community tried to create a solution to the crisis. It was clear that if the rebel force were confronted with force; it would be more damaging to the humanitarian situation. For the ultimate reason of halting the bloodbath in Monrovia, the safe haven arrangement was made.

### ***On the Diplomatic Path towards Accra Peace Process***

The thorough steps along the peace process in Liberian conflict reflected the success story of the West African diplomatic community in the conflict mediation in the region. The scope of this diplomatic effort was quite intensive. By then the region did not only witness the upsurge in Liberia, but also in Guinea and Sierra Leone. It made the task of bringing peace to the Mano River areas a big challenge. At this point ECOWAS did not only emphasize the regional diplomacy, but also sought support in

the continental level by engaging the AU as the important player in the continent; and primarily the international community.

The diplomatic initiatives within ECOWAS implied the importance of the personal factor, with the emphasis on the role of the heads of state in the region. It takes place in the numerous personal interactions and presidential visits. It is also of importance to mark that crucial issues in the region were discussed within the summit level of the regional forum.

However, the indictment towards Taylor created difficult situation in the peace process. The peace talks reached a deadlock and the possibility of a complete breakdown of the peace process was high. A breakout from this situation arose as the president of Nigeria, Obasanjo, offered a safe haven arrangement for Taylor. Safe haven is a diplomatic arrangement aimed to give protection towards a leader in a country for the purpose of terminating a crisis.

Taylor's willingness to accept this arrangement finally paved the way for the solution to the Liberian crisis. It created the conflict settlement and it was believed to bring an end to the crisis. I also conclude that Taylor's exit was needed by Liberia to resume with the next sequence of conflict management, by establishing the transitional government and democratic election.

Obasanjo's decision on the safe haven arrangement showed that the notion of personal role was more dominant in comparison with the pre-indictment diplomatic initiatives. However, by overcoming any regularity within ECOWAS, Obasanjo's option was conducted and implemented in an *ad hoc* manner. To conclude, the safe haven arrangement was a pragmatic solution to an emerging humanitarian crisis that avoided Liberia from the total humanitarian catastrophe.

### ***On the Explanation of the Characters of West African Diplomacy***

The characters of the diplomatic initiatives that led to the safe haven arrangement could be concluded as pragmatic and personal. However, I have discussed in Chapter V the four political factors that explain the political dimension in the diplomatic practice in West Africa.

By looking at the unipolarity of power in the regional politics, the first factor is on Nigeria's dominance in the region. The dominance is exercised through the



diplomatic initiatives within ECOWAS, but it became more evident when Nigeria proposed a safe haven arrangement for Taylor. Being the dominant power in the region, Nigeria is entitled to a status of regional hegemon. Thereby, it could take a pragmatic unilateral decision by providing an *ad hoc* safe haven arrangement. Nigeria's unipolarity is considerably weak as it still needs to secure support from the regional, continental, and international community on its decision.

Subsequent to the first factor, there is a degree of interaction among the states that could be categorized as the pattern of amity and enmity in West Africa. Accordingly, one will always refer to the long-standing rivalry between the Anglophone and Francophone in West Africa. The clear delineation between amity and enmity in the first phase of Liberian conflict turned to distorted line during Taylor's presidency. It is the second political factor that shaped the character of the diplomacy. The less-hostile diplomacy was heavily employed in this period. Based on the distorted line, the delineating line was somewhat indistinct on whether a state posed a strong amity or enmity towards the diplomatic initiatives in the Liberian conflict. Most of the states tended to perform along the cooperative manner towards the process in Liberia. The most important, it was the incentives on peace and security in the region that made all states cooperated, thus overcoming the strong, historical rivalry in the region.

The first two factors explaining the character of diplomacy are based on the interaction among the states in West Africa. However, it is also important to mark that the states in (West) Africa had a particular character concerning the power embodied in the state. As argued by Chabal and Daloz (1999) power in Africa is weakly institutionalized and remains essentially personalized and particularistic. Based on this, it is important to note that the diplomacy which was held during ECOWAS' involvement in Liberian conflict, instead of representing the interaction among states in West Africa; could be perceived as the reflection of the interaction among the head of states.

The consequence of the intermingling notions on the national interest and the leader's interest made the transformation of politics as being informal and personal. This became the third factor in shaping the diplomacy in West Africa. By conducting

the policy in the framework of personal rule, it explained the lack of clear cut and legitimate separation between the private and public domain. However, the diplomatic initiatives in Liberian conflict involved various personalized relations among the head of states in West Africa. With the indictment was made public, Obasanjo's decision marked another personal dimension in West African diplomacy. From that point on personal rule is proved to be a significant factor played in the process of diplomacy.

The reflection of the personalization of power showed another point of complexities in African politics. As happened in the domestic politics, the leaders also need to seek support and alliance from their regional counterparts. Supports were obtained through similar kind of personal interaction, thus were materialized into the regional consent towards the safe haven arrangement.

With Obasanjo being closely associated with the safe haven arrangement it signified the dominance and leadership of Nigeria in the region. However, the dominance of Nigeria marked the importance of the vertical rule in West African politics. I put this as the fourth factor that shapes the diplomacy in West Africa. As Nigeria saw the importance of vertical rule in West African politics, it was essential to establish an image of the hierarchy of power with Nigeria on the top of it. The so-called "Big Man" status for Nigeria is a highly important notion to perform leadership and to be recognized as the strongest among all leaders in the region.

Seemingly these four factors create an intertwined pattern in the explanation of the character of diplomacy. Both the factor of the weak unipolarity of power and the importance of vertical rule, have underlined the importance of the notion of 'power' and 'status' in establishing a stable hierarchy of power in the region. Being on the top of the hierarchy of power is something ultimately sought by the nature of the politics and by the ambition of the personal rule.

On the other hand, the pattern of amity and enmity which places all the states in West Africa along the pendulum of friendship and hostility is directly intermingled with the issue of personalization of power. This concept pointed out the needs of the leader to gather support and alliance, in order to establish a firm legitimacy in the region. There are several conditions within which the decision on Taylor's exit was

made. But the ultimate motive behind the safe haven arrangement was to halt the humanitarian disaster in Liberia.

With regards to the approach of thesis, this discussion could not provide any deduction whether this arrangement might have a side political agenda; whether it is intended to seek a regional supremacy or the regime survival. On the other hand it was also difficult to verify the validity of the whole claim. Since the data for this thesis did not include interviews with the actors directly involved in the diplomacy, it is difficult to draw firm conclusion.

### ***Return to the Hypothesis***

The answers to the research questions seem to strengthen our working hypotheses. The hypothesis I put forward are (1) that Taylor's exit is necessary to end the conflict in Liberia. (2) It was the humanitarian rationale which concerned the safe haven arrangement that facilitated Taylor's exit from Liberia. (3) The main feature of Taylor's exit rest on its *ad hoc* manner that bypassed the ECOWAS bureaucratic channel. It brought implication on the pragmatism of the West African political practices, and the importance of personal role, which is very much present in the African politics. (4) The distribution of power in West Africa shaped the unilateral dimension in the safe haven arrangement in West African diplomacy.

Taylor's departure provided new settlement in the Liberian conflict. It was the pre-requisite condition for transition and for lasting peace. Despite the controversy and criticism along with his departure, the ultimate goal underlying this decision was reached. The departure of Taylor from the domestic Liberian politics and the West African regional politics paved the way to the continuation of the peace process. As necessitated from the measure of conflict settlement, the arrangement brought finality to the conflict. The signing of the comprehensive peace agreement and the establishment of the transitional government led Liberia in the transitional period after the conflict.

### **Theoretical and Methodological Implications**

By using a theoretical framework from Buzan and Wæver we have established the point of departure in discussing the research questions. The focus on the process of

diplomacy is thereby seen as the interactions among the states in West Africa. It leads us to the conception of the regional security which Buzan and Wæver treat extensively in the regional security complex theory.

By revealing the pattern and logics as asserted by Buzan and Wæver we managed to outline the factors behind the diplomacy. However, their conception did not clearly specify the type and classification of states. With the kind of interaction concerned are mostly in political and military areas, what Buzan and Wæver saw in their conception of states are variations over the Weberian, legal-rational state. They therefore ignored that some states have distinct character that distinguish them from the Weberian state.

As the states in Africa are very weakly institutionalized, we needed theoretical contributions that could account also for the contextual process and interaction. Chabal and Daloz have given a valuable addition to Buzan and Wæver, providing us with a theoretical frame for what we initially assume would be the case, and which later seems to be confirmed through the process of recorded and official statements along the series of the diplomacy in the Liberian conflict.

Both approaches have given us understanding on how political process governed in West Africa are based on a pragmatic and personal relations, and why the process could happen as such. In one way the conception of Buzan and Wæver fits with the conception from Chabal and Daloz. The factor of the distribution of power in the region, share the similar notion on 'power' with the factor the importance of vertical rule in African politics. Having the similar logic to reach the highest position in the hierarchy of power, both factors assert the needs of power that stem from the state and the head of state. At the same time, the pattern of amity and enmity that divide and differentiate the states into groups in the region, is a result from the personalized network that support and connect each actors in the region

The research questions and the eclectically chosen theoretical framework appear to be well suited to each other. The choice of the case in relation to the research questions and the theoretical framework has caused few problems during the analysis. By choosing to focus on the process within the diplomacy, we were given only the possibility to consider the short-term impact of the diplomacy. The objective

of the conflict settlement, as in the case of safe haven arrangement for Taylor, is to bring any armed conflicts into an end. Therefore, I argue that it is within a short period of time to assess and evaluate the application of this settlement. This is only one episode of the whole event in the Liberian conflict. However, the greater question which would be more relevant on a long term basis is in relation with the findings that have been assessed in the chapter two. It was the greater question on the reconstruction of the identity of Liberian polity in the post-conflict peace building and how the state acquired the legitimacy from its constituent. Assumably this kind of reconstruction would provide a sustained peace in the country of conflicts.

Regarding the methodological design, an evident problem is the fact that the research questions ask how the West African diplomatic community has undergone the process of diplomacy that resulted in the safe haven arrangement. The best ideas I have presented here is by using secondary source on the recorded and official statements throughout the process. This can give hints and image about the diplomacy taking place, but they cannot give us the precise insights that we would have gained from interviews with key actors directly involved in the region. Furthermore, these interview may give additional information to draw a firmer conclusion as we believe that the decision making process was personalized and could have been to a greater extent informal thus undocumented. It is therefore hard to claim that what I have deduced for my data can accurately answer the research questions.

The data validity is weaker than one would have preferred due to this issue. The problem is acute where the information gained from the news excerpts and official statements only revealed what was allowed to be informed to public. A series of interview with the central decision makers would needed to get their perception of what happened, although it did not guarantee to give us the accurate information as well. However, the research questions and the methodological framework is probably the best and the closest we can get in this thesis, considering that the ideal solution is impossible to get for the time being.

### **Lesson learnt and Directions for Further Research**

To conclude the thesis I would like to return to the West African diplomacy in Liberian conflict. We have seen that the assessment of the political factors on the diplomacy was interpreted according to the theoretical framework that I have established. However, there are indications in the thesis suggesting the crucial point to get as close as possible to the factors behind the decision of Taylor's exit. How should one proceed in order to draw firmer and a more empiric conclusion?

In order to get a good enough empirical basis a broad approach is necessary. With the new political situation in Liberia several possibilities present themselves. Qualitative interviews with a wide range of persons would be needed, including the diplomats in ECOWAS, as well as the bureaucrats in the administration of Nigeria or Ghana.

With regards to the prospect of lasting peace in Liberia, the presence of the UN Mission in Liberia (UNMIL) which was deployed shortly after the comprehensive peace agreement was signed strengthened the peace process in Liberia. The fact that UNMIL was the largest UN peacekeeping mission that consisted of up to 15.000 military personnel showed the expectation that UNMIL would be able to contribute in a major way towards the resolution of conflict in Liberia. Later, the scheduled election took two rounds on the 11 October and 8 November 2005. The final round resulted in the victory of Ellen Johnson Sirleaf as the president of Liberia with 59.4 percent vote in defeating her competitor, George Weah with 40.6 percent vote. Up to this point, the situation after Taylor went to asylum showed the indications towards lasting peace in Liberia. By not taking part in the diplomatic arrangement, it is likely that UNMIL will maintain a long term presence of Liberia.

The most recent event marked another episode in the safe haven arrangement. Johnson Sirleaf, in March 2006, formally requested the Nigerian government to give up Taylor to the Sierra Leone Special Court. Subsequent to her request, pressure also came from the international community on Obasanjo. Despite the critical three days of Taylor's escape, later he was taken into custody. Obasanjo decided the extradition of Taylor and transported him to Sierra Leone where he would face prosecution.

These recent event drew a larger question on the puzzlement of the whole process bringing Taylor to exile dated back in August 2003. Regarding the fact that now he could no longer escape prosecution as he was promised for, a different conclusion and analysis might emerge here. Was this part of a long term plan or simply a shift in political agenda of the regional actors? Regardless the answers, this diplomatic settlement should later be renamed as the (un)secure safe haven option for any troubled big men in the region. The unsecured diplomatic arrangement poses another question whether the safe haven arrangement could be repeated or not. Was this a one-time scenario? Could it be applied in other different cases? What can be suggested is that the credibility of the safe haven option has been weakened by the case of Taylor. A different situation, setting, and conditionality might be warranted to orchestrate another kind of diplomatic arrangement should similar cases happen in the future.

Another point of question also comes up with the question concerning the commitment from the international community, namely the US. It was the US that endorsed Obasanjo to harbor Taylor, and apparently now it was the one throwing the accusation on Obasanjo's decision. Was this merely another shift in their policy agenda? The possible explanation could be found in the emerging political stability in Liberia after the 2005 election. Different approach and consideration from the US administration might come along with the new ruling administration in Liberia. However, the political shift and new policy orientation is likely to be found in this case.

Held together, the complete picture of Taylor's exit since the beginning to the very end would hopefully reveal more of the political process in the region. Nevertheless, the ultimate objective that one struggled to achieve: the conflict settlement in Liberia, was fulfilled. It implies the importance of pragmatism and the regional consensus among the important players in the regional politics. A strengthening of the assumption from this thesis in a new and more thorough project would have bearings on how we understand the regional dynamics of the security complex. In the prospect of such findings, a revision to the existing literature is warranted.

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