AN ASSESSMENT OF THE ROLE OF NIGERIA IN ECOWAS’ SECURITY ARCHITECTURE AND DEMOCRATISATION EFFORTS IN WEST AFRICA: FROM UNILATERALISM TO MULTILATERALISM, 1999-2018

Olukayode Dauda Bakare
University of Aberdeen, Aberdeen, Scotland, UK

ABSTRACT
This paper investigates the multilateral approach of Nigeria towards the promotion of democracy and security following its return to civil rule since 1999. The Nigerian-led ECOMOG interventions in West the African region before the return to civilian governance in 1999 rarely received the legitimacy of the international community. Before 1999, Nigeria appeared to lack the credibility and credentials to champion democratisation struggles in the region. Nigeria’s military intervention in the Liberian civil war (1990-1997) and the restoration of democracy in Sierra Leone in 1998 lacked international legitimacy and appeared not to be linked to the nurturing and advancement of democracy in West Africa, but rather for the parochial interests of the two Generals; Ibrahim Babangida and Sani Abacha. However, following the return of Nigerian to democracy in 1999, Nigeria’s military interventions in West African sub-region have been more multilateral than unilateral and appear to be linked to advancing stability and the democratisation process within the regional frameworks of ECOWAS, backed by the AU and the UN.

KEYWORDS
Regional security, Democracy, Foreign policy, Multilateralism, Unilateralism

1. INTRODUCTION
The return of Nigeria to democracy in 1999 led to a significant change in Nigeria’s foreign policy and military engagement abroad. The damage the ECOMOG missions had done to Nigeria’s credibility encouraged the former Nigerian president, Olusegun Obasanjo to re-appraise Nigeria’s peacekeeping missions abroad within the few months of his accession to power on 29 May 1999 (Bach, 2007: 310). In reality, there was no record of expenses incurred by the Babangida and
Abacha regimes concerning these peacekeeping adventures in both Liberia and Sierra Leone. It was estimated that in 1994, $4 billion had been incurred so far, and this was to have increased to $12 billion in 1999 when Olusegun Obasanjo took over power (Yoroms, 2004: 318). Persistent corruption had been present as the Nigerian senior military officers had transformed Nigerian-led ECOMOG peacekeeping missions in both Liberia and Sierra Leone into an avenue for enrichment. In 1988-1994, a total of $12.5 billion of Nigeria’s crude oil was not accounted for, a pattern of looting that continued through to the regime of General Abacha, who was allegedly personally noted for the looting of more than US $3 billion, stashed away in foreign banks. By 1999, the number of monies looted by Generals Babangida and Abacha represented roughly 50% of the country’s total foreign debt (Bach, 2007: 311).

After the transition to civilian rule in 1999, checks and balances, diplomacy and principles of multilateralism became the guiding principles of the country’s West African sub-regional security management. The end of Nigerian unilateralism in 1999 also led to the adoption of an institutional framework for the management of peace and security in the sub-region. There are three key organs created to promote peace, security and democracy in the West African sub-region. These include the Mediation and Security Council, the Defence and Security Commission and the Council of Elders. The ECOWAS Peace Plan provided for a regional defence force, trained and equipped armies, whose composition comprises all the fifteen ECOWAS countries. The new peace and security initiative has promoted a high level of performance, particularly in respect to the engagement of Nigerian troops in ECOWAS, AU and UN peacekeeping missions (Bach, 2007: 312).

From 1999, Nigeria has experienced a greater level of transformation and multilateralism anchored on West African security management, peace enforcement and promotion of democracy. For instance, as noted by David Leatherwood:

“From 1999 to the present, U.S. foreign policy in West Africa has been focused on Nigeria as the region’s key state. The idea behind this strategy is that limited foreign assistance resources are best spent on a state that understands its potential regional hegemony and, more importantly, is willing and able to assert itself” (Leatherwood, 2001: 22).

Nigeria as a potential regional hegemon and anchor state in ECOWAS since 1999 further explains the considerable level of foreign military assistance for ECOWAS from the international community. For example, the U.S on 1 April 2000, donated aid valued at $10 million and $4 million to upgrade its military (Leatherwood, 2001: 22). In addition, in July 2000, the U.S agreed to train the Nigerian armies for ten weeks training involving seven battalions- five Nigerians, one Senegalese and one Ghanaian (Leatherwood, 2001: 22).

Almost two decades after Nigeria’s return to democracy, Nigeria has turned into a key mediator in ECOWAS’s, UN’s and AU’s peacekeeping on the continent. Conversely, within the West African sub-region, Nigeria has incorporated and endorsed the UN’s, the ECOWAS’s and AU’s foreign interventions such as the British Special Forces in Sierra Leone (2000-2001) and France’s Licorne in Cote d’ Ivoire (2002) into its West African foreign policy initiative. Through ECOWAS, Nigeria has become a model and a mentor in efforts to promote and combine multilateralism and diplomacy in the areas of conflict resolution and peace enforcement through arbitration and the rule
of law in West Africa (Bach, 2007: 310). However, one of the challenges militating against Nigeria’s efforts towards the sub-regional security architecture within the ECOWAS and as a regional power in West African region, has been the unabated terrorist attacks in the north-east and the activities of the militants in the Niger Delta region. For Nigeria to continue to maintain its leadership role in the promotion of democracy, peace and security in the region, it must be able to overcome the various internal security challenges facing the country. This article investigates the role of the Nigerian state in West African security architecture, particularly from 1999. It discusses the dynamics of Nigerian foreign policy engagements from unilateralism to multilateralism in the pursuit of its national interests towards the maintenance of peace and stability in West African sub-region. The arguments in this article demonstrate the impact of the return of Nigeria to democracy in 1999 on Nigerian West African foreign policy and multilateralism in conflict resolution and promotion of democracy in West Africa through the ECOWAS, the African Union (AU) and the Union Nations (UN). The Liberian Civil War, 2002-2005: The Third Nigerian-led ECOMOG Military Intervention- Multilateralism and Democratisation

The peace in Liberia did not last for long: a new round of crises erupted in 1999 and increased until 2003 when ECOMOG, acting as a rapid reaction force, was dispatched to bring the situation under control. The deployment of Nigerian troops in Monrovia was supported by the U.S. Navy and Marines. The peacekeeping missions in Cote d’Ivoire and Liberia in 2002-2003 were also carried out in close co-operation (multilateralism) with the UN, France and the U.S (Ulriksen, 2010: 370). In this case, it may be valid to assert that the regional dimension was stronger in both mandates and operational practices (Ulriksen, 2010: 370), unlike the two previous Nigerian-led ECOMOG peacekeeping operations in Liberia and Sierra Leone (1990-1997) which were marred with rivalries, poor logistics, financial constraints, corruption of Nigerian troops, and lack of joint command and control.

In October 2003, however, the ECOMOG operations in Liberia turned into a multifunctional UN mission. It was made possible through the ‘rehatting’ of 3,500 troops from Benin, The Gambia, Ghana, Guinea-Bissau, Mali, Nigeria, Senegal and Togo as UN troops (Ulriksen, 2010: 370). The eventual emergence of the Comprehensive Peace Agreement (CPA) of August 8, 2003, signed by the warring factions and other major stakeholders in Liberia was largely negotiated by a Nigerian-led ECOWAS initiative. The peace agreement represented major elements of the supplementary protocol on democracy and good governance, including respect for human rights and the rule of law, freedom of association and credible democratic elections (Said, 2016: 222-223). While ensuring the need for a peaceful transition to democracy was guaranteed, a special mediator, General Abdulsalaam Abubakar, former military president of Nigeria, was appointed to mediate in the Liberian peace agreement. His role was significant in negotiating peace during the Liberian general elections of October and November 2005, respectively (Said, 2016: 222-223).


Ironically, after the adoption of the Supplementary Protocol on 20 August 2001 a military coup was carried out in Guinea-Bissau. The coup had led to the killings of President Joao Bernardo Vieira, on 2 March 2009 (Mendy and Lobban, 2013: 128). To ensure that constitutional legality was returned in Guinea-Bissau, Nigeria and other AU members suspended Guinea-Bissau in
December 2008, following the coup (Nigerian Report, 2010: 124). Before the military coup of Guinea-Bissau in 2008, Nigeria had taken a back seat in the conflict that earlier erupted in Guinea-Bissau in 1998. A committee was created comprising Burkina Faso, Cape Verde, Cote d’Ivoire, Ghana, Guinea, Senegal, The Gambia, Nigeria and Togo as well as the Community of Portuguese-speaking Countries – CPLP, including Brazil, Portugal, Cape Verde, Sao Tome and Principe, Mozambique and Angola. The committee formed a Memorandum of Understanding between the warring parties on 26 July 1998. The resolution of the peace agreement was the total withdrawal of Senegalese and Guinean troops out of Guinea-Bissau and their immediate replacement with contingents from Lusophone countries. The peace agreement did not go down well with ECOWAS and its members who viewed it as an attempt by outsiders to encroach in their own backyard or territory (Kabia, 2009: 138-139).

After a failed peace agreement and a cease-fire between the parties, the Abuja peace agreement was facilitated by CPLP and ECOWAS and was signed in November 1998 by both the warring parties. The Abuja peace accord called for a power-sharing agreement between the government and mutineers; a government of national unity should co-ordinate a transitional election, together with implementing the withdrawal of CPLP troops and their immediate replacement with ECOWAS troops. Amidst high levels of mistrust, in January 1999, heavy fighting erupted again with dire consequence for the civilian population. With the intervention of Togo’s Foreign Minister, Kokou Koffigoh, Vieira and Mane entered into another peace agreement in February 1999 which led to the inauguration of Government of National Unity (Kabia, 2009: 139).

The inability of the ECOMOG troops to bring lasting peace in Guinea-Bissau and Nigeria’s refusal to participate in the ECOMOG’s mission in 1999 meant that the warring parties were able to overpower the interposition force on 6-7 May 1999 (Mendy and Lobban, 2013: 129). The inability of ECOMOG’s troops to sustain effective peacekeeping led to the surrender of the loyalist forces and Joao Vieira’s exile in Portugal. Consequently, in the absence of a capable and strong interposition force, interim Prime Minister Francisco Jose Fadul had opted for an immediate withdrawal of ECOMOG’s troop's operations in Guinea-Bissau, which ended in June 1999 (Mendy and Lobban, 2013: 129). The refusal of Nigeria to contribute to the ECOMOG’s troops in the country, however, led to the complete failure of the ECOMOG peacekeeping operations in Guinea-Bissau. This demonstrates the indispensability of Nigeria in regional security management.

Nonetheless, ECOWAS continued to be active in Guinea-Bissau’s peace process. For example, on 14 September 2003, after President Koumba Yala was removed through a military coup, led by a chief of defence staff, Verissimo Correia Seabra, a delegation was led by the African Union chairperson, President Olusegun Obasanjo including the ECOWAS chairperson, John Kufuor (Ghanaian President), and President Abdoulaye Wade of Senegal to Guinea-Bissau to mediate between the parties. The efforts of Nigeria, Ghana and Senegal resulted in a deal with the mutineers to create a civilian-led transitional government, the immediate return of the military to barracks and the conduct of parliamentary and presidential elections within 6 and 18 months respectively (Mendy and Lobban, 2013: 129).

While acknowledging Nigeria as a regional hegemon and its role in the promotion of regional security and democracy, another military coup was carried out in Guinea-Bissau on 12 April 2012. The coup interrupted Guinea-Bissau’s presidential election and sent the country into another crisis. This led to the deployment of an ECOMOG standby force, which was led by Nigeria, with the
support of Burkina Faso and Senegal. Of the ECOMOG troops deployed for the mission, Nigeria deployed over 300 personnel including about 186 soldiers and 140 policemen (The Scoop, 2017). In view of this, the UN representative, Modibbo Toure, had asked Nigeria to use its influence in the regional bloc, ECOWAS, to return the country to a peaceful democracy after the coup (UN, 2016). Actually, the situation stabilised in 2012 but was not fully resolved and an ECOMOG presence has been in the country since. There was a recent deterioration, and therefore Buhari became involved after 2015. Nigerian president Buhari affirmed that:

“They must accept responsibility for leadership to stabilize their own country”, the President warned, adding that the country’s political leaders, not outsiders that can effectively resolve the political crisis in the country. President Buhari told the visiting envoy that Nigeria would welcome increased support from ECOWAS and the United Nations to stabilize the country and prevent the breakdown of law and order. President Buhari said Nigeria had a responsibility to the region and the rest of Africa and assured that we will not shirk on our responsibility, despite the hardship confronting us” (UN, 2016).

The above statements by President Buhari indicated that Nigeria remained committed to the promotion of peace, security and democracy in West Africa. It is indeed imperative that the international community recognise Nigeria as an anchor state in Africa which is capable of defending and safeguarding West Africa, in collaboration with other members of ECOWAS.

Nonetheless, Nigeria might be caught again in withdrawing its troops from Guinea-Bissau, a possibility that was connected to the country’s internal security challenges and economic crisis. According to the Nigerian Ministry of Foreign Affairs, Nigeria has spent $75,000,000 in Guinea Bissau since 2011. It also contributed US$63,000,000 to the ECOWAS fund for the Defence and Security Sector reform in 2011 and US$10,000,000 to enable the Interim Government to function effectively in 2012 (The Scoop, 2017). Nigerian military intervention in Guinea-Bissau (ECOMIB) was able to return the country to a democratic government under José Mario Vaz in May 2014 for a five-year term (ECOWAS, 2017).

Nevertheless, a sustainable peacekeeping mission is dependent on a strong defence force and financial capability. While acknowledging Nigeria’s success in the restoration of democracy in Guinea-Bissau in 2014, it is equally important to note that its ability to continue its peacekeeping operations in this country is seriously in doubt. For instance, in the face of various domestic challenges such as terrorism, kidnapping, and attacks and militia in the Niger Delta, the Nigerian president in 2016 announced an immediate withdrawal of Nigerian troops stationed in Guinea-Bissau to tackle current domestic security challenges. According to President Buhari, “We need our troops back home, and I hope the President of that country (Guinea-Bissau) would accept a constitutional way to resolve the situation there” (Adetayo, 2016).

A similar argument on Nigeria’s weariness in sub-regional peacekeeping emerged in 2012-2013, during the Malian crisis. Nigeria refused to mobilise its troops for the ECOMOG mission in Mali. Former Nigerian president (2010-2015), Goodluck Jonathan in his address to the UN General Assembly stated that “too much effort and resources on the military aspect of peace and security have been incurred at the expense of mediation and preventive diplomacy” (Brosig, 2015, 144). In the absence of Nigerian-led ECOMOG forces in Mali, the UN Security Council ordered the
deployment of ECOWAS contingents to Mali in reference to resolution 2085 on 20th December 2012 (Brosig, 2015, 144). The Nigerian leadership gap in Mali led to France to rapidly mobilise its troops to intervene in order to rescue the Malian government from the clutches of the Islamist militias and a Tuareg rebellion, a role that is usually the preserve of Nigeria in ECOMOG’s peacekeeping missions (Brosig, 2015: 144). The prospects of Nigerian future peace-keeping missions in West Africa, however, will depend largely on the country’s internal stability and financial strength.

3. MULTILATERALISM AND DEMOCRATISATION: THE CASE OF COTE D’IVOIRE

A similar pattern of events in the case of Cote d’Ivoire highlights another perspective which underpins Nigeria’s leadership role in the promotion of democracy in ECOWAS. In September 2002, a civil war erupted in Cote d’Ivoire. The cause of the crisis was an attempted coup against the government of Laurent Gbagbo. Following the failure of the attempted mutiny, Nigeria had refused to send its troops to Cote d’Ivoire for peacekeeping operations (Cyril, 2009: 128).

As the war continued, several attempts were made by ECOWAS and France to bring peace and stability to Cote d’Ivoire. Unlike the previous peacekeeping missions of Nigeria in Liberia and Sierra Leone during the military regimes, the Nigerian civilian government under President Olusegun Obasanjo was absent from the Cote d’Ivoire peacekeeping mission, limiting itself to only a mediatory role (Cyril, 2009: 128). Similar to the political impasse of Guinea-Bissau, it is instructive to note that the ECOWAS peace mission to Cote d’Ivoire was largely carried out with French (ex-colonial master) and international community support (Cyril, 2009: 128), a situation that will continue to heighten the existing tensions and rivalries between Nigeria and France, particularly in the West African sub-region. Cyril noted that Nigeria as a regional power in West Africa would seem to have re-appraised and redirected its energy on conflict resolution through mediation and diplomacy rather than the employment of military instruments as a tool of diplomacy in conflict resolution (Cyril, 2009: 128). It is important to argue that Nigeria may have also learnt from its previous peacekeeping missions in Liberia and Sierra Leone before the return to democracy in 1999. Similar scenario in division between the ECOWAS as the case of Liberian and Sierra Leonean civil wars applied in Cote d’Ivoire, with Nigeria – the traditional rival of France in West Africa – seeking to wield its regional pre-eminence and influence in peace-making from within the AU (which it chaired in 2004 and 2005) and ECOWAS peace plans (Adekeye, 2008).


The recent ECOWAS’ intervention in the restoration of democracy in The Gambia has been a success story. This is a claim which is associated with the long-accumulated wealth of experience of the regional bloc, which proved valuable in successfully mediating The Gambia’s post-election impasse (Khadiagala, 2018: 15). The Gambia’s post-election crisis presented Nigeria an ample opportunity to convince the international community of its regional influence to mediate in political and security issues after eighteen years of stable internal. The disputed December 2016 presidential elections in The Gambia was the first case where Nigerian-led ECOWAS intervention successfully managed to “restore democracy” in the country by using the threat of force but without any use of
direct physical violence (Hartmann, 2017: 85). Nigeria’s previous peacekeeping operations in Liberia, Sierra Leone, and Guinea-Bissau had constantly involved both the use of threat of force and direct physical violence; however, the restoration of democracy in the country underscores an external intervention anchored on a collective mandate of the ECOWAS and the principle of multilateralism which embraced the collective participation of other regional blocs beyond West Africa. These regional blocs comprise the UN and AU.

President Yahya Jammeh’s reluctance to accept defeat in the presidential elections of December 2016 led to ECOWAS’s intervention to restore the legitimate mandate of the people of Gambia. A general expectation emerged after the polls that President Yahya Jammeh’s administration has come to an end after twenty-six years in power. It took everyone by surprise when on 2 December 2016 The Gambia Electoral Commission announced opposition candidate Adama Barrow as the winner of the presidential election (Hartmann, 2017: 85). Jammeh’s initial speech in a television address to the people of The Gambia after the release of the results was to accept defeat and congratulated Barrow on his electoral victory (Hartmann, 2017: 85). On December 9, however, Yahya Jammeh changed his mind and reiterated that he would challenge the results of the elections, citing “serious and unacceptable abnormalities.” Following his refusal to hand over power, on 12 and 17 December 2016, the African Union (AU) Peace and Security Council and the ECOWAS Heads of States resolved to a common position in strictly enforcing the results of the 1 December 2016 elections. Similarly, on 21 December 2016, the United Nations Security Council backed and endorsed the AU’s and ECOWAS’s stand to promote legitimate order in the Gambia (Williams, 2017).

ECOWAS, led by the Nigerian President Muhammadu Buhari, responded forcefully and quickly, demanding that Jammeh step aside by the constitutional inauguration day of 19 January 2017. After much diplomatic persuasion, negotiation and mediation failed, ECOWAS opted for a military intervention as a last resort and mechanism to restore democracy in the Gambia (Thurston, 2017). On January 18, Nigeria sent its military aircraft and personnel to Senegal to reinforce any military efforts. Nigeria also sent a warship off the coast, signalling a show of force and to evacuate Nigerians (Campbell, 2017).

Despite all the persuasions and threats mounted by the ECOWAS, the AU and the international community, Jammeh held firm and ECOWAS organised the inauguration of Barrow at the Gambian Embassy in Senegal and recognised Barrow as The Gambia’s president. ECOWAS began to send Senegalese troops into The Gambia and secured the backing and mandate of the African Union and the United Nations Security Council. In the face of tense military surveillance of ECOWAS in Banjul, Jammeh finally agreed to accept exile and left The Gambia on 21 January 2017 (Thurston, 2017).

5. NIGERIA AND ECOWAS: COUNTER-TERRORISM INITIATIVES

Terrorism has taken on more profound significance in the contemporary global system. Africa has its own peculiar domestic causes of ideologically-induced violent non-state insurgents that are responsible for periodic attacks on the government’s institutions and the public (Forest and Giroux, 2011). For example, the cases of the Lord’s Resistance Army in Uganda, al-Shabaab in Somalia or Al-Qaeda in the Islamic Maghreb in North Africa have all attracted media and global attention. In addition to the domestic collection of ideologically-inspired violent non-state actors, some
irresponsible governments also often employ terrorist tactics to crack down on their oppositions, as in Zimbabwe, or the Eritrean government’s support (according to a recent UN report) for terrorist plots against African leaders gathering in Ethiopia (Forest and Giroux, 2011).

Similarly, poverty, socio-economic conflicts and corruption in most West African states underline the vulnerability of the region to terrorism (Cyril, 2006: 88). Of particular note is the case of ‘networked wars’ that engulfed Liberia and Sierra Leone in 1990s, which spread across the neighbouring countries and the subsequent outbursts of civil war in Guinea-Bissau between 1998 and 1999 and in Côte d’Ivoire in 2002 (Cyril, 2006: 88). Porous borders, ungoverned spaces, the untrained and ill-equipped military have also contributed to the relative success of Islamic sects in recent times (Ray, 2016: 2). Nigeria is not left out from this global threat of terrorism, however, as the country continues to face continuous insurgency, especially in the north-east of Nigeria.

In the midst of economic growth and natural resources, the country has been faced with increased activities of the Islamist sect called Boko Haram in north-eastern Nigeria since 2010 (Ray, 2016: 2). Boko Haram activities and other terrorist attacks in Nigeria in the past decade have been a national and regional security challenge for the Nigerian state and the entire West African sub-region. On 16 June 2011, a suicide bomber belonging to Boko Haram attacked the headquarters of the Nigerian Police Force, Abuja, targeting the inspector general of police who narrowly escaped death. On 25 August 2011, a group of terrorists launched an attack on the United Nations building located in Abuja, Nigeria, killing about 23 people, including 18 UN officials (Ismail, 2013: 235). Attacks on oil installations, the kidnapping of oil workers and stealing of oil from pipelines in the Niger Delta region by militant groups have continued to attract international attention in recent times (Cyril, 2006: 88).

As a result, the US and other Western allies have become more responsive and committed to the anti-terrorist war as the West African region becomes a new frontline in the Global War on Terror (GWOT). This strategic approach led to the creation of the Pan-Sahel Initiative (PSI), targeting Mali, Mauritania, Chad and Niger, in 2002. In 2005, the Pan-Sahel Initiative was transformed into the Trans-Sahara Counter Terrorism Partnership (TSCTP), covering Nigeria and other countries in Africa (Alli, 2012: 62).

Nonetheless, these and other counter-terrorist initiatives have not adequately addressed and curtailed terrorism. ECOWAS, therefore, took a more proactive measure in February 2013 at the 42nd Ordinary Session of the Authority of Heads of State and Government in February 2013 and adopted a Counterterrorism Strategy and Implementation Plan to eradicate terrorism in West Africa (Salihu, 2015: 3).

Nigeria’s efforts to combat terrorism can be noted in various multilateral approaches and engagements with its neighbouring states, to assist in the policing of its porous borders and to prevent Boko Haram from launching attacks from across the borders. The counter-terrorist initiative was Nigeria’s attempt to secure international support for the war against terrorism (Falode, 2016). In effect, the Nigerian government in 2012 signed a multi-lateral security pact with its neighbours and with selected strategic partners beyond the West African region (Falode, 2016). The U.S. has also been supportive in this direction. In 2014, Washington provided logistical support such as counter-Improvised Explosive Device training and forensics training for the Nigerian military (The White House, 2014).
It is, however, imperative that Nigeria, as a regional leader in West Africa, must continue to live up to the expectation of its neighbours in sub-regional security architecture. Western powers, believing that Nigeria has a crucial role to play, have continued to exert pressure on it to put in more effort in the fight against terrorism in West Africa (Alli, 2011: 62). The failure or incapacitation of a state to protect its territory against internal or external threats is also a major challenge to the realisation of Nigeria’s promotion of democracy in its sub-region. The country thus solely relies on the collective efforts of its neighbouring states and Western allies in the fight against terrorism within its territory, therefore Nigerian ability to maintain in regional security by itself has been clearly weakened in recent years, faced with the constant challenge of internal attacks by Boko Haram and the Niger Delta militants, who have continuously unleashed attacks on civilians and government officials.

6. CONCLUSION

This article has examined the role of Nigeria in the promotion of security and democracy in the West African sub-region, as well as its engagement with the Economic Community of West African States (ECOWAS) since the return to democracy in 1999. The current environment of Nigeria’s West Africa foreign policy since 1999, however, demonstrates a commitment to promoting sub-regional peace, security and democracy through multilateralism, diplomacy and mediation. For instance, unlike the Nigerian-led ECOMOG’s peacekeeping missions in Liberia and Sierra Leone, which lacked the support of the UN and the U.S., the third Nigerian-led ECOMOG military intervention in Liberia from 1999-2003 was carried out under close UN military supervision and supported by U.S. navy and marines. The Nigerian-led ECOMOG peacekeeping missions in Cote d’Ivoire in 2002-2003 were also carried out with close military co-operation with the UN, France and the U.S.A (Ulriksen, 2010: 370). Similarly, Nigeria was also instrumental to the success of the Liberian presidential elections which were conducted in November and December 2005. There is no doubt that rapid deployment of ECOWAS’s troops in the restoration of peace, security and democracy in Liberia in 2003 led to the subsequent rapid deployment of the UN peacekeepers (Ulriksen, 2010: 370). In fact, Nigeria’s diplomatic and multilateral engagement in the international community towards the promotion of peace and security in West Africa since 1999 would seem particularly promising for Nigeria to continue to pursue its historic leadership ambitions in the sub-region.

It should also be noted that Nigeria’s neo-conservatism in West Africa since 1999 may be linked to the propagation and promotion of democracy in the region. The type of operation carried out in The Gambia is unique in the history of ECOWAS’s military interventions in the internal affairs of member states. Only on a few cases has a joint-multinational task force, led by Nigeria, intervened promptly with the express purpose of restoring a democratically elected government and with the assistance of the United Nations Security Council. However, there are challenges militating against Nigeria’s effective leadership in ECOWAS. First, ECOWAS’ and Nigeria’s over-dependence on the UN and key global powers, such as the US, France and Britain for military intervention and restoration of democracy in West Africa has serious implications for Nigeria’s West African leadership and legitimacy of the mission (Iwilade and Agbo, 2012: 364). Second, ECOWAS’ tradition of relying on the “big brother role” and willingness of its regional hegemon (Nigeria) to shoulder the military, economic and political implications of all the peace missions in the region (Iwilade and Agbo, 2012: 364).
In the final analysis, Nigeria’s role in the promotion of peace, security and democracy ECOWAS since its return to civilian rule in 1999 is largely uncontested. Through Nigerian leadership, ECOWAS has kept the pace, gained the collective muscle to root out dictators through a broad range of interventions (Khadiagala, 2018: 16) approved and backed by the African Union (AU) and the United Nations. The application of sanctions applied by ECOWAS in almost two decades since the adoption of the 2001 Protocol for Democracy and Good Governance have also had tremendous and self-reinforcing effects, such that only four out of fifteen countries in West African states, including Benin, Cape Verde, Ghana, and Nigeria have managed to endure relative internal democratic stability (Khadiagala, 2018: 16).

REFERENCES


4. Alex Thurston (2017) “Was ECOWAS’ Intervention in the Gambia a Sign of Things to Come in


© 2017 by the authors. Submitted for possible open access publication under the terms and conditions of the Creative Commons Attribution (CC BY) license (http://creativecommons.org/licenses/by/4.0/).