

Peace-keeping in africa: ecomog in liberia

Literature



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The oceans surrounding the African Continent remain as turbulent as ever. The new millennium has brought to this continent of many Nations, anything but peace. Illiteracy and poverty are dancing the death-dance in many areas with nobody to listen to and care for. News relating to military coups and ethnic conflicts no more creates sensation in the minds of African people; they have become indivisible part of African life.

Some of the issues are so challenging, they can not be handled by the internal leadership, without the external help. Since some issues have international implications, intervention by the Powers whose interest are in jeopardy, becomes essential according to them. However, the past experiences of concerned Nations, and the international organizations like UN, are bitter and their attempts proved failures, with loss of manpower.

Sometimes, the situation and the issues are so complicated; the intervention was half-hearted, so tangible results could not be achieved. So, what is the best mechanism of achieving the permanent peace objective in the African Continent in the era of globalization along with the ultimate aim of humanity, that the world is one family?

The concept that politics needs to be spiritualized sounds premature, but not too in the distance future, the world polity will realize that there is no other alternative for survival of human race including all living beings and natural flora and fauna!

Peace-keeping in Africa-Ecomog in Liberia: Summary

Some of the topics covered in the book under review are: Introduction:

Adapting Peace-Making Mechanism in an Era of Global Change, International Organizations and Peacekeeping in Africa.

The Politics and Diplomacy of the Liberian Peace Process, ECOMOG's Operations: Lessons for Peacekeeping, Liberia's Internal Responses to ECOMOG's Interventionist Efforts, Nigerian Foreign Policy and its Participation in ECOMOG, Senegal's Role in ECOMOG, The Francophone Dimension in the Liberian Crisis, Sierra Leone's Response to ECOMOG: The Imperative of Geographic Proximity, Extra-Africa Interests in the Liberian Conflict, Conclusion: Liberia's Peacekeeping Lessons for Africa.

A cursory glance of the subjects covered gives sufficient indication for the complicated peace process alternatives experimented on the African soil, without much success. The subject of peacekeeping is easy to pronounce and discuss but difficult to achieve at the ground level. Every group, every State wants peace, but on its terms.

The future looks so perilous to the peace-negotiating agencies and they wish to achieve success in the peace process by the argumentative skills and with hidden selfish agendas. Therefore, the peace process fails and the negotiating parties are back to square one. The ultimate objective of a newly initiated peace process is the same—compelling the fighting sides to cease hostilities and to sit across the table to negotiate peace.

The authors discuss about the various terms related to peacekeeping. Rolling out many definitions is also the delight of authors of the peace literature. Peacekeeping, peacemaking, peace-building, peace enforcement, wider peacekeeping, multifunctional peacekeeping—they all mean more or less the

same; the soldiers in uniform with the latest weapons are present in every situation.

They are either UN forces or forces belonging to neutral parties. In such a situation the intervening party will not hesitate to use force to achieve the larger objective-to make the fighting parties revert to negotiations.

The author/editors of the book highlight the limitations of the UN peace keeping operations in Africa. Generally, the conflicts in Africa have several angles, and solutions to all the issues will have to be found simultaneously, in one package, as otherwise the peace process will not last. Its collapse renders the fresh peace process more difficult. It is observed that every conflict in Africa has the ethnical angle, over which the intervening parties have very little control, as this is a deep-rooted historical belief amongst the African tribes.

Under such circumstances it becomes difficult for the intervening party to come to specific conclusions about the security environment. In a broad settlement it is not possible to please every section of the parties involved in the conflict. Weapon smuggling goes on in an unabated scale in most of the African States, and this encourages internal conflicts.

Such rebels or insurgents have no extensive military means or economic back-up to engage the intervening forces in a decisive battle. But they do enough damage to the poor economy, cause immense suffering to the local people, as they can not engage themselves in agriculture or vegetation.

If they offer slightest resistance, they are massacred. Such incidents have happened in the past on an unprecedented scale. In Rwandan crisis that

lasted for three months in 1994, took the toll of 800000 people. So, not all African problems can be solved through an internal African mechanism. External intervention is necessary from the perspective of world-peace.

But the external forces can not remain present on the African soil with a permanent agenda. Such powers can also misinterpret the situation or interpret the state of affairs to their own economic and political advantage. This position may again give rise to fresh national and international problems. This has happened in African States in the past.