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*Journal of Asian and African Studies* 2003 38: 256

DOI: 10.1177/002190960303800207

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# TOWARD A THEORY OF PEACE AGREEMENT IMPLEMENTATION: THE CASE OF LIBERIA

Dorina A. Bekoe\*

## ABSTRACT

*The implementation of a peace agreement following a civil war is one of the most critical and uncertain processes of any post-war period. Many argue that promises of extensive power sharing arrangements in future governments and international intervention help advance the implementation of a peace process. While not doubting the importance of these factors, this paper argues that they do not sufficiently account for the incremental process of an implementation. Through an analysis of the numerous peace agreements of Liberia's first civil war, from 1989-1996, this paper presents the theory that the implementation of a peace agreement will advance if the level of vulnerability during the implementation period is equally balanced among the faction leaders. In other words, given that the concessions offered in a peace agreement will bring some change in military, economic, or political vulnerability among the factions, the implementation process advances when the faction leaders feel mutually vulnerable. Liberia's nearly decade-long conflict, interspersed with periods of fragile peace, provides an opportunity to observe the effects of changes in military and political vulnerability on the implementation process.*

## Introduction

As many cases confirm, the signing of a peace agreement does not mean that it will be implemented; recent studies show that only 50 percent of all negotiated settlements survive past five years (Licklider 1995:685). Reinforcing these findings, Hartzell, Hoddie, and Rothchild (2001:195) show that the average span of peace lasted three and a half years before conflict resumed. Examining the fragile post-accord period, this paper argues that the implementation of a peace agreement will advance only if the level of military, political, or economic vulnerability during the implementation period is equally balanced among the faction leaders (Lake and Rothchild 1996:48-53; Snyder and Jervis 1999:15-35). In other words, given that the concessions offered in a peace agreement will bring some change in vulnerability among the factions, it is only when the faction leaders feel

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This article is drawn from my doctoral thesis; I am grateful to Robert Bates, Monica Toft, and Jendayi Frazer for their guidance on the research project. I would also like to thank Paul Kaiser, Al-Hassan Conteh, Edward Kutsoati, Alexandra Novosseloff, and Chandra Sriram for useful comments. Any remaining errors are mine. Acronyms are listed in the appendix.

equally vulnerable that the implementation process will advance. Indeed, signatories to the peace accords deem the promises for concessions more *credible* if fulfilling them creates a degree of vulnerability to adverse actions by the other party (Schelling 1980; Kreps 1990; Fundenberg and Tirole 1991; Mas-Colell, Winston, and Green 1995).

Following a brief literature review, I outline the mechanism by which mutual vulnerability can advance an implementation process. I then review the implementation of fourteen of Liberia's sixteen peace agreements during the first civil war (1989-1996), to demonstrate the presence of mutual vulnerability in a successful implementation and its absence when peace implementations stall. I conclude with some policy recommendations for the international community as it works to resolve conflicts.

### *Common Prescriptions for the Post-Accord Period*

While a significant amount of work exists on the factors that induce parties to begin negotiations or to sign agreements, relatively little explores their implementation—the next step. The work that does exist, for the most part, places the onus on the international community to facilitate the implementation of a peace accord. Much of the literature concludes that the more the international community is involved, the higher the probability for a successful negotiated settlement. Specifically, Hampson (1996:208) lauds the involvement of the UN in activities such as demobilization, civil administration, political reform, and electoral monitoring. In a related argument, De Soto and Del Castillo (1994:7) advocate economic investment and coordination between different development agencies to solve military, economic, social, and environmental problems as the keys to successful implementation of peace accords. But, many examples contradict these arguments.<sup>1</sup> More pointedly, Walter (1997) states that the willingness and ability of a third party to forcefully enforce peace leads parties to sign agreements and ensures stable settlements. However, these findings still do not provide a satisfactory answer because signing a peace agreement and implementing one are not the same. Thus, the existing literature does not clarify how implementation occurs and what role the international community should play.

Other work emphasizes characterizing the warring factions correctly and creating power-sharing strategies. Provisions for power-sharing, such as governments of national unity, proportional representation, or territorial autonomy, are among the most common ways to manage the implementation period and threats to stability (Horowitz 1985; Lijphart 1977, 1990:491-510; Sisk 1996; Wippman 1998:211-241). In one of the few large-scale studies of these strategies, Hartzell (1999) finds that the institutionalization of power-sharing in economic, political, and territorial policies increases the possibility of stability. But power-sharing strategies do not hold the keys to the implementation of a peace agreement either. Some peace agreements, like Mozambique's, have been implemented even with-

out power-sharing agreements. On the other hand, even when the peace agreement contains promises of political inclusion, proportional representation, and territorial autonomy as recommended by the conflict management literature, conflict has resumed, as occurred in Liberia in 1993 and Angola in 1994. Moreover, as argued by Synder and Jervis (2001:15-35), power-sharing may, paradoxically, result in exacerbating the security dilemma felt by the warring factions. Therefore, even the widely accepted notion of power-sharing does not consistently result in peace.

More recent work examines the types of groups fighting in a civil war. Notably, Stedman (1997:5-7) presents a typology of “spoilers” to the peace process and outlines the means by which the international community may minimize their damage. Thus, by correctly identifying and attending to the spoilers of peace, international organizations can successfully manage a peace process (Stedman 1997:52-53). In other work, Stedman (2002) presents the additional argument that the international community must focus closely on demobilization and reintegration to ensure successful implementation of a peace plan. Attempting to account for existing conditions, Cousens and Kumar (2001:183-188) claim the international community should work within the framework of the political environment of the post-conflict state to develop processes by which needs are addressed and institutions developed. Cousens and Kumar argue that the international community must engage the local political community and thoroughly understand the political landscape.

This recent work on faction-types and post-conflict political environments gets closer to understanding the conditions in the post-accord period that affect the advancement of a peace process. Nevertheless, it leaves out the reactions of the faction leaders to those conditions and how they impede or advance the implementation of a peace agreement. I will look more closely at the context in which the faction leaders make decisions and react to their own environment.

### **Toward a Theory of a Successful Implementation**

A review of case studies shows that there is a gap between the concessions promised in the peace agreement and the smaller steps needed to realize those provisions. For example, while a provision of the peace agreement may be demobilization, the incremental decisions to implement it might include when and where to deploy observers or which party moves first. The fragile nature of implementing a peace process makes each of these steps prone to conflict. For this reason, in many respects, the promises of power-sharing may lie too far in the future for the resolution of conflict at early moments in the implementation process.<sup>2</sup> Similarly, intervention by external actors may focus too closely on the outcomes of the peace agreement rather than the intermediate steps. Drawing on concepts from contract theory, I suggest that in order for peace agreement signatories to follow through on promises, they must feel compelled to do so not only for positive gains from compliance, but also because of negative repercussions for reneging and the abil-

ity to sanction other parties for reneging.<sup>3</sup> The ability to sanction each other for non-compliance creates mutual vulnerability. This balance is upset and implementation stalls when, for instance, one party may take actions to diminish its vulnerability. Alternatively, the maintenance of this balance advances the implementation process.

### *The Peace Agreement as a Contract*

A great deal of uncertainty surrounds the implementation of a peace agreement and the probability of the faction leaders to honor commitments. A faction leader's decision to comply may be affected by unexpected changes in the political and military environment resulting from concessions or actions of external entities, the failure of resources and other supportive features to materialize, or events that indicate the other party will not follow through on promised actions. The common thread among these potential deal-breakers is not only the uncertainty they bring to the peace process, but the inability to fully know them *ex ante*. Importantly, unknown variables may also work to encourage compliance. These environmental changes or revelations about a faction leader's commitment bring a change in the balance of political and military power among factions. Multiple factions render peace agreements even more complicated and raise the degree of uncertainty, as not all factions share the same goals and some may take steps to undermine the implementation process—a situation evident with the eight factions that signed Liberia's final peace agreement. As peace agreements cannot fully anticipate the actions of a party after signing, the implementation process is fraught with additional bargaining and renegotiations between the faction leaders.

The unpredictability of external events and the actions of the signatories render peace agreements incomplete from the beginning. In this regard, the signatories to the peace agreements face problems similar to firms entering into contract with other firms or their employees. Upon signing a contract, firms must manage unanticipated events that could affect the contract, either positively or negatively, and mitigate the danger that the contracted firm will not follow through with agreed products. Because contracts are in reality incomplete in the beginning and affected by external contingencies, the parties commonly renegotiate the terms (Salanié 1997:176). Indeed, two main conditions threaten peace agreements and economic contracts alike: adverse selection and moral hazard. Adverse selection refers to the possibility that the other party has hidden information about itself that, if known, may alter its desirability as a partner. Moral hazard refers to the possibility of hidden actions by the partnering firm: there is a danger that once a contract is signed, the partnering firm may not perform as anticipated, in the absence of monitoring (Mas-Colell et al 1995, chap. 13-14; Salanié 1997). To conquer these uncertainties, firms can create a "mutual reliance relation" or "hostages" to provide an incentive for the contracted entities to comply with promises (Williamson 1985:190, 195-197; Salanié 1997:144).

The establishment of hostages creates a “mutual reliance relation” and compels the signatories to follow through on promised actions. Hostages refer to instruments or concessions that constrain the parties to a contract into complying with promises. Among firms, there are several examples of hostages. Salanié (1997:144) points to Apple Computer and the production of specific factories for the Macintosh computer to assure Apple customers that it would provide technical support for the computer. Macintosh owners and Apple Computer come to rely on each other for service and profitability, respectively—a “mutual reliance relation.” Alternatively, Williamson (1985:193-195) discusses the rationality of *rival* firms entering into a bilateral contract. Because of the low probability of such a partnership, rival firms will choose to enter into a bilateral relationship when they can be sure that the other will not renege on the agreement and when the contract will not expose them to great market risk. One way of ensuring that an agreement is honored lies in two rival firms agreeing to produce specialized and indispensable inputs for their final products. Should one firm renege; the firm can only dispose of the specialized good at below market prices, since it was specifically produced for sale to the rival firm. The firms are committed to each other to purchase the specialized input—it is a “mutual reliance relation.” By creating such constraints, parties to an agreement form expectations of responses and, hence, decrease the chance of a party acting adversely toward another. Thus, the contract makes parties in the contract mutually vulnerable to costs for reneging, ensuring that contracts are honored.

Like peace agreements with multiple signatories, firms have contracts with multiple entities or customers, who all have different expectations and goals. To manage this heterogeneity, firms often construct separating equilibriums, which amount to providing different customers with different products, prices, or wages when dealing with employees, according to their expectations and goals (Salanié 1997). Peace agreements have similar arrangements when contending with different factions. While they all sign onto the same agreement, they will derive different benefits from it according to their goals, expectations, and performances.

Thus, contract theory provides useful tools in understanding how to instill incentives for parties to honor their promises and subsequently implement the peace agreement. Specifically, it provides tools to solve the problems caused by adverse selection and moral hazard that introduce uncertainty into the course of a peace agreement's implementation. Peace agreements are threatened by the revelation of factions that have no intention of honoring promises, the presence of external factors and entities, and changing political and military positions. These unanticipated events change the level of vulnerability between the factions. Contract theory points to the establishment of a “mutual reliance relation” through the creation of hostages to establish mutual vulnerability, which in turn compels parties to honor agreements and punish defections.

### *Mutual Vulnerability*

Mutual vulnerability works to ensure that a party does not renege on an agreement through the incorporation of punishments and rewards. When both sides find themselves mutually vulnerable, due to the presence of penalties for reneging and the risks assumed by complying with the peace agreement, the agreement becomes self-enforcing. Thus, the presence of mutual vulnerabilities determines the probability that the warring factions will implement the peace agreement. Mutual vulnerability may be economic, political, or military in nature. In the discussion of the Liberia case, I specify the nature of the vulnerability that affected the factions.

Factions take steps to fulfill the required tasks of a peace agreement—such as selecting soldiers for demobilization or permitting a third party to verify compliance or deploy in the country. At the same time, each step taken by a faction changes the level of vulnerability that another faction senses and therefore affects the probability that it will respond with steps that either further or stall the implementation process. To progress, each step taken by a faction must induce the other factions to make moves toward fulfilling their political and military promises. I argue that mutual vulnerability between the factions helps to move implementation forward. As such, the essence of creating vulnerability lies in the timing of actions by the factions and events of the post-accord period, as they fulfill their requirements in the agreements.

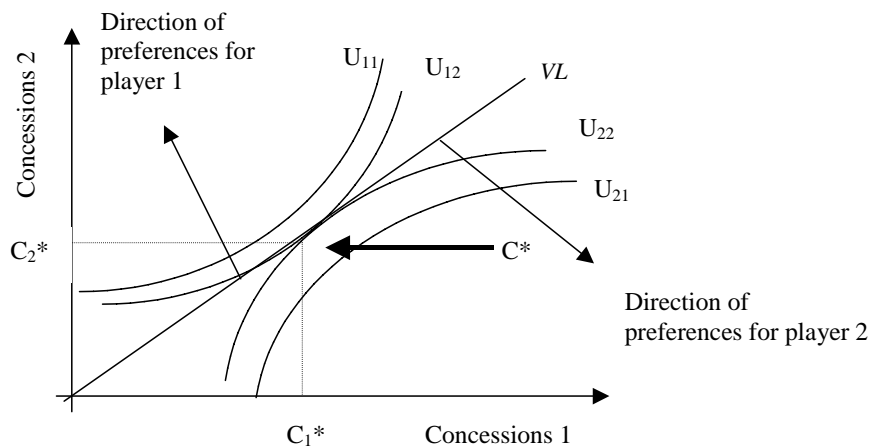
While factions in a peace process react to each other's moves, those moves are not always made in isolation. External states and institutions, either as a result of regional diplomatic pressures or more concrete influences such as resources, affect the actions of the domestic factions. External states and institutions can add to the level of uncertainty in the implementation process. Thus, external states and institutions impact the creation of mutual vulnerability between factions; they have the potential to act as an agent to facilitate choices made by the factions or renegotiate actions selected by the parties.

The importance of mutual vulnerability reveals the continuing bargaining between the factions in the post-accord period. To graphically depict this process, assume, for simplicity, there are two factions, player 1 and player 2.<sup>4</sup> Figure 1 below depicts the bargaining process between two players that eventually reveals the optimal set of concessions,  $C_1$  for player 1 and  $C_2$  for player 2, that leaves both players mutually vulnerable.<sup>5</sup> Players make concessions based on their relative strength or ability to protect themselves from adverse actions. This *vulnerability line* (VL) in Figure 1 reflects these relative strengths. For simplicity, in Figure 1, VL assumes that the players are equal in strength by placing the intercept at the origin. The equation of the line is  $C_1 = mC_2 + b$ ; in this case,  $b$ , the intercept, equals zero and  $m$ , the slope, equals one. In other words, an increase in concessions by player 1 by one unit is equal to one unit increase in concessions by player 2.



Since  $VL$  is the relationship of strength between the players, it acts as a boundary for both players. It holds the set of possible concessions available for each player. For player 1, all possible concessions lie northwest of  $VL$  and for player 2, all possible concessions lie southeast of  $VL$ . The utility curves,  $U_{1i}$  for player 1 and  $U_{2i}$  for player 2, where  $i$  indicates the number of the utility curve, show the preferences of the players.<sup>6</sup> For player 1, moving in the northwest direction is preferable because she can concede less, while player 2 concedes more:  $U_{11}$  is preferred to  $U_{12}$ . For player 2, moving in the southeast direction is preferable because he can concede less, while player 1 concedes more:  $U_{21}$  is preferred to  $U_{22}$ . The set of concessions for each player lies along their respective utility curves. In Figure 1,  $C^*$ , where both player's utility lines reach  $VL$ , indicates the optimal amount of concessions:  $C_1^*$  is the optimal amount of concessions for player 1 and  $C_2^*$  is the optimal amount of concessions for player 2. When both players reach  $VL$  their concessions are exactly equal to their strengths and, therefore, they are mutually vulnerable. Thus, for the implementation of a peace agreement to advance, concessions must lie on  $VL$ . Any point on  $VL$  suffices, as even small amounts of vulnerability can move a process ahead.

**Figure 1. Mutual Vulnerability as an Equilibrium Condition**



With the Liberia case, the paper tests the following hypotheses on mutual vulnerability's role in advancing implementation processes:

- Hypothesis 1: The implementation of the peace accord advances if concessions or tasks taken to fulfill requirements create mutual vulnerability.*
- Hypothesis 2: The international community's financial or diplomatic responses to a conflict can increase (decrease) mutual vulnerabilities*



*among the parties if it directly increases (decreases) the benefits of cooperating or the penalties of reneging with the peace agreement's provisions*

*Hypothesis 3: International actors can help to create mutual vulnerability when it is absent.*

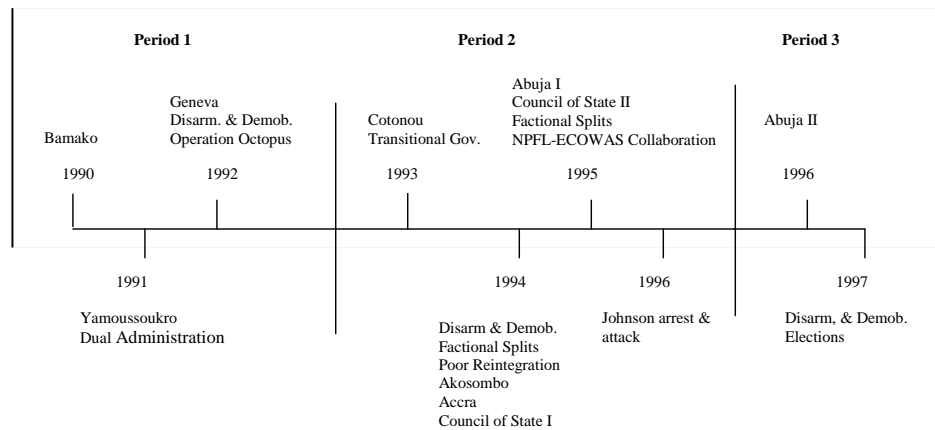
The remainder of this paper evaluates the existence of mutual vulnerability in the events and signatories' actions during the settlement of the Liberian civil war. The very incremental quality of the Liberian peace process, which contains both advances and setbacks, provides variability in the dependent variable—implementation of the peace accord—and independent variables—mutual vulnerability and external institutions and states. As new factions and alliances showed changing political and military strengths, they offer an insight into how and when mutual vulnerability (created between warring factions through governing and administrative structures, voting procedures, and security partnerships) moved the peace process forward. Similarly, it is possible to see where the creation of mutual vulnerabilities could not occur or became muted because of the influence of regional biases, resources, and organizational structures. In the absence of mutual vulnerability in the accord, the close interaction of the heads of state of the Economic Community of West African States (ECOWAS) helped move the peace process forward.<sup>7</sup>

### **Liberia's Piecemeal Peace**

Seven years and sixteen peace and cease-fire agreements after it began, with Charles Taylor's goal to oust President Samuel Doe, the Liberian civil war finally came to an end in 1996.<sup>8</sup> Eight warring parties—reflecting the fractionalization of Liberia's conflict—signed the last peace accord, the Abuja II Accord. I divide Liberia's civil war into three periods.<sup>9</sup> The first two periods chronicle the two periods of fragile peace in Liberia until major conflict returned: the first period covers the war from the Bamako Agreement in 1990 to the return to war following Operation Octopus in 1992; the second period extends from the 1993 Cotonou Accord until the 1996 Abuja-I Agreement, when the civil war resumed anew. The third period is the final agreement, Abuja-II, which was signed in 1996 and paved the way for elections in 1997. Figure 2 depicts a timeline with the major events and agreements.

#### ***Bamako to Operation Octopus (1990-1992)***

From the middle of 1990 until the middle of 1992, eleven agreements were signed: three Banjul Agreements (two in August 1990 and a third in October), the Bamako Agreement (November 1990), a fourth Banjul Agreement (December 1990), the Lomé Agreement (February 1991), four Yamoussoukro Agreements

**Figure 2. Timeline of Major Events and Agreements**

(June-October 1991), and the Geneva Agreement (April 1992). The Banjul Agreements set the platform of the agreements that followed. Specifically, these agreements proposed the formation of an intervention force, an interim government headed by Amos Sawyer, a cease-fire, and demobilization.

The literature places the unraveling of the cease-fire in this period on Taylor's perception of ECOMOG as both weak and biased, a growing threat from a new faction, the United Liberation Movement for Democracy in Liberia (ULIMO), which emerged in 1990 from Guinea under the leadership of Alhaji Kromah, and economic uncertainty at the time (Dunn 1998:76-105; Gershoni 1997:59). In September 1991, ULIMO launched Operation Jungle Fire and over the course of the preceding period, Taylor's National Patriotic Front of Liberia (NPFL) had lost territory (Aboagye 1999:102, 106; Olonisakin 2000:133). In addition to having worked with ECOMOG against the NPFL, ULIMO had the backing of the Nigerian, Sierra Leonean, and the Guinean ECOMOG members and was closely associated with Samuel Doe, further inciting Taylor (Ellis 1999:95; Dunn 1998:98). Equally important, Alao (1998:27) contends that Taylor believed that ECOMOG was relatively weak and, hence, Operation Octopus had a chance of success. Others claim that ECOMOG's preference of political negotiation over military force in the two years before Operation Octopus allowed Taylor to rebuild his army (Aboagye 1999:106; Olonisakin 2000:133). In fact, Huband (1998:211-212) notes that in December 1991, not only was it revealed that Taylor had been training troops in Burkina Faso, but also Libya's Moammar Gadaffi had been supplying him with weapons. While these events did occur, it has not been fully explained why the NPFL complied with an admittedly fragile cease-fire the previous two years. A fuller explanation considers the juxtaposition of events that created or erased vulnerability among the factions as keeping or undermining the peace. For a short period, mutual vulnerability helped to produce progress in the

implementation process, before outside warring factions and threats to the military, economic, and political viability of the NPFL stalled the implementation.

The NPFL did not recognize the interim government of Liberia (Huband 1990) or abide by the previous cease-fire agreements. Accordingly, the Bamako Agreement had only loose provisions for a cease-fire: it stated, “the modalities for the implementation of the cease-fire will be worked out later” (paragraph 1). Nor did the Bamako Agreement make concrete provisions for the interim government: it simply expressed the goal of “resolving their differences with regard to an Interim Government for Liberia as envisaged in the ECOWAS Peace Plan” (paragraph 2). As Aboagye (1999:94) notes, by taking this middle road, the Bamako Agreement recognized that Liberia had two governments. The Bamako Agreement created mutual political and military vulnerability through pairing the recognition of a dual administration with demobilization (Table 1). The Lomé and Banjul (December 1990) Agreements reinforced the Bamako Agreement.

**Table 1. Mutual Vulnerability in the Bamako Agreement**

Scheduled Tasks	Mutual Vulnerability
Recognition of dual administrations	<i>Vulnerability of NPFL</i> : Prevents NPFL from denying IGNU legitimacy. <i>Vulnerability of IGNU</i> : Prevents IGNU from denying NPFL legitimacy.
Disarmament	<i>Vulnerabilities of NPFL</i> : Surrender of most significant threat to the interim government.

### ***Recognition of Dual Administration***

By early 1991, Taylor controlled almost all of Liberia except Monrovia and had established rudimentary institutions (Reno 1998:92; Ellis 1999:88). Taylor had formed his own government in the portion of Liberian territory the NPFL controlled (*FBIS* 1990a) and set up a capital, a parliament, and other administrative structures under NPFL control (Outram 1997). The dual administration worked in Taylor’s favor financially, as he controlled territory that was rich in natural resources (Ellis 1998:89-92). As a result, Taylor granted contracts for mining diamonds and gold to French and German firms, accruing revenue that would have otherwise gone to the government in Monrovia (Noble 1992). Taylor also refused to recognize the new currency issued in Monrovia and threatened that anyone with the new notes would be arrested (*FBIS* 1992b).

To this point, Taylor did not recognize the interim government ECOWAS had established (*FBIS* 1991a). Finally, in June 1991, three months following the election of Amos Sawyer as president of the Interim Government of National Unity (IGNU), ECOWAS officially recognized the existence of a dual administration in the first of four Yamoussoukro Agreements, reinforcing the Bamako Agreement’s minimization of the IGNU. Additionally, the Yamoussoukro I Agreement allowed each party to provide the security in areas they controlled until the elections. Notably, the following week Taylor pointed out, “there was

nothing in the agreement accepting the Sawyer government as the only legitimate government of this country” (Dorbor 1991). The second and third Yamoussoukro Accords were essentially pledges to continue on the present course to resolve the conflict, to cooperate with ECOMOG and the interim administration, and the commencement of plans for elections.

### ***Disarmament and Demobilization***

The fourth Yamoussoukro Agreement called for the commencement of troop assembling and demobilization by November 15, 1991 (see also *FBIS* 1991b). On January 3, 1992, ECOMOG ventured into NPFL territory to begin deployment exercises but was stalled on January 7 due to the fighting between ULIMO and the NPFL along the Liberia-Sierra Leone Border (*FBIS* 1992a; *Africa Network Program* 1992). The Geneva Agreement in April offered a solution to the NPFL’s security fears. First, it called for the creation of a buffer zone along the Sierra Leonean-Liberian and the Guinean-Liberian borders, as well as supervised demobilization. Secondly, and perhaps most importantly, the Geneva Agreement allowed for Charles Taylor’s “Security Company” to continue bearing arms after disarmament of the troops (paragraphs 4-5, Annex). Indeed, earlier, Taylor had stated, “I will never disarm my security to a point where I will get my head blown off” (Hinne 1992). Moreover, the Geneva Agreement allowed monitoring; the NPFL could send unarmed security and administrative officers to the areas targeted for ECOMOG deployment. In addition, the NPFL was allowed to send in unarmed observers to the buffer zone set up between the Liberia and Sierra Leone border (paragraph 5). The arrangements from the Geneva Agreement not only further recognized the dual administration in Liberia, but also introduced mutual military vulnerability through monitoring and therefore increased the chance of the agreement’s implementation.

Soon, Taylor began to suspect ECOMOG of meeting with and assisting ULIMO, the group formed by Sierra Leone-based Doe supporters, NPFL’s opponents (Wippman 1998:172; Gershoni 1997:59). In mid-1992, ULIMO began to attack the NPFL in Lofa County, an area of diamond trade from Sierra Leone and Guinea that the NPFL had controlled since 1990 (Reno 1998:97, 102). Thus ULIMO posed a threat to the NPFL’s income and sovereignty. Therefore, at the point when ECOMOG began to make inroads into the NPFL’s territory, ULIMO and ECOMOG seemed to be collaborating against the NPFL. The mutual military vulnerability that had been created after the Geneva Agreement eroded because of ECOMOG’s apparent bias and role in exacerbating ULIMO’s economic and military threat to the NPFL.

Therefore, while the assembling and demobilization commenced, it was slow. In June 1992, only 600 former combatants had enrolled in reintegration (Weller 1994a). While part of the problem lay in the difficulty encountered by ECOMOG in planning and assessing the progress of demobilization due to the lit-

the amount of information known about the combatants (UN General Assembly 1992:paragraphs 49-51) the other reason that parties were not forthcoming may have rested in the increased military insecurity in the region. In reaction, ECOWAS announced sanctions against Taylor and NPFL territories, if NPFL demobilization did not occur within 30 days (Weller 1994b). On October 20, 1992, noting the incomplete disarmament and assembly of NPFL troops, the NPFL's thwarting of ECOMOG's attempts to create a buffer zone along the Sierra Leone-Liberia border, and failing to ensure conditions for holding elections, ECOWAS imposed sanctions on the NPFL and Taylor (UN Security Council 1992a:Art. 1-3). On October 22, 1992, the NPFL retaliated with Operation Octopus on Monrovia, restarting the civil war (UN Security Council 1993a:paragraph 37).

### *Detecting Mutual Vulnerability*

Between the Bamako Agreement and Operation Octopus the Liberian parties began demobilization and the deployment of ECOMOG inland. To arrive at demobilization, the agreements between the NPFL and the IGNU displayed the increasing presence of the dual administration in Liberia—forcing each group to acknowledge the other. The IGNU granted a further concession to the NPFL by allowing it to patrol jointly with ECOMOG. This balances some of the perceived asymmetry of military power the IGNU had over the NPFL. But the NPFL, which accompanied ECOMOG, was unarmed—ensuring that the IGNU retained some military capability. These arrangements made each side mutually militarily vulnerable and allowed the implementation process to proceed. The implementation process stalled when, concurrent with the new provisions to allow the NPFL to accompany ECOMOG, ULIMO's incursions near the diamond trade routes made the NPFL economically vulnerable; it decreased the power the NPFL had just secured militarily, eroding the existing mutual vulnerability.

### **Cotonou to Abuja-I (1993-1996)**

#### *The Cotonou Accord (1993-1994)*

Following Operation Octopus, ECOMOG decided “to defend itself decisively against armed attacks from any quarter” (UN Security Council 1992b:Annex, paragraph 9). ECOMOG re-assumed a peace enforcement role, nearly doubling its troops to 14,000 (Olonisakin 2000:137). The UN also became more involved. It dispatched Trevor Gordon-Somers to Liberia, the first of four special representatives of the secretary general, and formed the United Nations Observer Mission to Liberia (UN Security Council 1992c; UN Security Council 1993d). The negotiations facilitated by Gordon-Somers during a summit in July resulted in the Cotonou Accord in July 1993.<sup>10</sup>

By the time of the UN involvement, the NPFL controlled less of Liberia

than before. With three factions, the NPFL controlled ten of the thirteen counties in Liberia, ULIMO controlled two, and the IGNU controlled Monrovia.<sup>11</sup> Additionally, while areas administered by the NPFL and ULIMO contained the richest deposits of resources, including minerals and timber, ECOMOG's peace enforcement yielded control over Robertsfield International Airport, the port at Harbel, and the military base of Kakata, hurting the NPFL's ability to export (UN Security Council 1993a:paragraph 7; Olonisakin 2000:136).

The Cotonou Accord had the potential to create mutual political and military vulnerability among the factions. Militarily, the Cotonou Accord called for a cease-fire and the assembly and disarmament of ULIMO and NPFL troops. ECOMOG and UNOMIL were to observe and verify these tasks. Additionally, the Cotonou Accord allowed ECOMOG to undertake peace enforcement should cease fire violations occur (Part I Military Issues: Sect. B, Art. 3; sect. C, Art. 4; Sect. E, Art. 6; Sect. F, Art. 7; Sect. G, Art. 8). This provision had the potential to dissipate fears that demobilization would place one group at the mercy of the other. Additionally, addressing the mistrust between ECOMOG and the NPFL, Ugandan and Tanzanian troops joined to expand the peacekeeping force (UN Security Council 1993b:paragraph 7; UN Security Council 1994a:paragraph 24). Politically, the Cotonou Accord provided for the eventual dissolution of the IGNU's *and* for the NPFL's government, the NPRAG, in favor of the Liberia National Transitional Government (LNTG). Thus, neither entity would emerge with a more advantageous position. Additionally, the LNTG executive branch would be made up of a five-member Council of State, to include NPFL and ULIMO, IGNU, and two other jointly agreed members (Part II Political Issues: Sect. B, Art 14). The task required of each party depended on the others: the process for disarming the approximately 60,000 soldiers<sup>12</sup> and the installation of the LNTG would begin on the same day (Part II Political Issues: Sect. B, Art. 14(c)). As a result, the Cotonou Accord seemed to foreshadow mutual vulnerability: renegeing on the cease fire not only brought military retaliation, but also prevented the commencement of the political aspects of the Accord.

Some consider the Cotonou Accord just another one of Liberia's failed peace attempts. Alao, Mackinlay, and Olonisakin (1999) summarize that the Cotonou Accord failed because combatants' insecurity impeded demobilization, the negotiators failed to recognize the weak control faction leaders had over their organizations, and the time frame and the modalities for the tasks required were unrealistic and vague. Additionally, Alao et al. (1999:70-72) criticize the lack of commitment by donors and a biased ECOMOG. Similarly, while not explicitly referring to the Cotonou Accord, during this same period Olonisakin (2000:138) cites suspicion of bias in ECOMOG, because of its alleged use of the new Liberian factions to fight against Taylor. Correspondingly, Herbert Howe (1996:166) echoes many scholars when he criticizes that ECOMOG's tactic of looking the other way, when factions like the anti-NPFL Liberian Peace Council (LPC) formed, undermined the Cotonou Accord.<sup>13</sup>

Yet, I argue that because the Cotonou Accord paired demobilization with political accommodation and permitted the use of force by ECOMOG, the UN deployed in the NPFL territory, the implementation process moved forward (Table 2).

**Table 2. Mutual Vulnerability in the Cotonou Accord**

Scheduled Tasks	Mutual Vulnerability
Liberia National Transitional Government	<i>Vulnerability of NPFL</i> : The NPRAG dissolves upon LNTG formation; Disarmament reduces ability for self-defense. Loses control over own interests. <i>Vulnerability of IGNU</i> : The IGNU dissolves upon the formation of the LNTG; Loses control over own interests (Part II political issues: Sect. B, Art. 14). <i>Vulnerability of ULIMO</i> : Disarmament reduces ability for self-defense. Loses control over own interests.
Encampment and Disarmament	<i>Vulnerability of NPFL</i> : Loses ability for self-defense <i>Vulnerability of ULIMO</i> : Loses ability for self-defense.
Provision for Peace Enforcement	<i>Vulnerability of NPFL</i> : Peace enforcement provisions protected ULIMO in case the NPFL reneged. <i>Vulnerability of ULIMO</i> : Peace enforcement provisions protected NPFL in case the ULIMO reneged.

### *Forming the Transitional Government*

Of all the branches of the transitional government, the Council of State held particular importance because it represented a collective presidency with members of all the factions. Notably, the Cotonou accord required that the Council of State make decisions by consensus (Part II political issues: Sect. B, Art. 14). The Cotonou Accord stipulated that the members of the transitional government had to be installed by August 1993—one month after signing the Accord (Part II political issues: Sect. D, Art. 16). At first, there were reasons for optimism as five members representing the IGNU (Bismarck Kuyon<sup>14</sup>), ULIMO (Mohammed Sheriff), NPFL (Dorothy Musuleng Cooper), and two independent members (David Kpomakpor and Thomas Ziah) were selected (*The Associated Press* 1993).<sup>15</sup> Moreover, in early November 1993, the parties arrived at some consensus concerning various governmental positions. The composition of the elections commission and the speaker of the legislative assembly, the Supreme Court justices, and thirteen of the seventeen members of the cabinet were selected by November 5, 1993 (UN Security Council 1993c:paragraph 7). According to Gordon-Somers, ULIMO conceded many positions to the NPFL in the hopes that the NPFL would concede the Finance, Justice, Defense, and Foreign Ministries to it (Interview 2001:Trevor Gordon-Somers). It did not turn out that way. Instead, the four posts remained unfilled until mid-April (*FBIS* 1994e; UN Security Council 1994e:paragraphs 5, 9).



*Disarmament and Demobilization*

During the decisions on the political posts, demobilization became imminent as UNOMIL began to reach its full military force of 303 military observers and began to deploy within Liberia (UN 1997:4). In December, the Joint Cease-fire Monitoring Committee, which was composed of the warring parties, ECOMOG, and UNOMIL began deployment toward the Sierra Leonean and the Ivorian borders, as well as Kakata and Buchanan along the Atlantic coast (UN Security Council 1993c:paragraph 13).<sup>16</sup> Additionally, the NPFL opened roads leading to Gbarnga, its headquarters, allowing for the deployment of UNOMIL to that area. By January 1994, UNOMIL had deployed in Tubmanburg, the headquarters of ULIMO (UN Security Council 1994a:paragraphs 8, 17). In January 1994, as UNOMIL reached its full deployment, the Liberian parties, ceased to be members of the Joint Cease-fire Monitoring Committee (UN Security Council 1994a:paragraph 15).

The full deployment of UNOMIL also signaled the commencement of disarmament and demobilization, which the Cotonou Accord stipulated would occur concomitantly with the installation of the transitional government (Part II political issues: Sect. D, Art. 16). However, the NPFL argued that the government had to be seated first, before demobilization could start (*FBIS* 1993b). The IGNU disagreed, preferring to stick to the Cotonou Accord's timetable (*FBIS* 1993a). But at UNOMIL's full deployment, the parties issued "The Monrovia Communiqué," on February 15, pledging to respond by installing the transitional government on March 7, 1994—giving the NPFL advance assurance that the transitional government would be seated (UN Security Council 1994b:Annex). After the installation of the transitional government, the commencement of demobilization of the warring parties began on March 7, 1994 (UN Security Council 1994c). The deployment into NPFL and ULIMO areas, removal of the rebel factions from the Joint Cease-fire Monitoring Committee, the commencement of disarmament, and joint political participation increased the military and political vulnerability of the parties to each other. They traded a measure of military security for political accommodation.

Demobilization proceeded slowly. On April 18, 1994 only 2,200 soldiers had demobilized (UN Security Council 1994d:paragraphs 24-25). By June 24, 1994, 3,192 combatants had demobilized (UN Security Council 1994g:paragraph 19). Two months later, only 3,612 combatants had demobilized (UN Security Council 1994i:paragraph 31). There were other signs of trouble as well. As a result of the internecine hostilities of the parties, which began in December 1993, the extension of administration by the LNTG could not get started, as required in the Accord (Part II political issues: Sect. B, Art. 14). After positive steps by the Cabinet members in early May 1994 to visit various municipalities and appoint local government officials by July, the extension of civil administration lagged behind schedule (UN Security Council 1994f; UN Security Council 1994h).

I suggest that disarmament stopped due to the unraveling of mutual vulnerability by the confluence of a weakened hold on the factions by the leaders and a poor response by the international community to financing the reintegration program during this time of political accommodation.

### *Factional Changes and International Responses*

In late 1993 and mid-1994, two anti-NPFL factions and one anti-ULIMO group emerged in Liberia. In December 1993, the Liberian Peace Council (LPC), led by George Boley, began to fight against the NPFL (FBIS 1994d). To make matters worse, ECOMOG was accused of not only supplying the LPC with logistical support and allowing the LPC to circumvent the arms embargo imposed on Liberia, but also of forming the LPC (UN 1997:8; Alao 1998:77; Gershoni 1998:60). The Mandingo and Krahn ethnic groups making up ULIMO began fighting in December 1993 when it seemed that the Krahns were being disarmed disproportionately—at the direction of Kromah, a Mandingo (*Focus on Africa* 1994a). Roosevelt Johnson, representing the Krahn members of ULIMO, then began a campaign to wrest Tubmanburg—the ULIMO headquarters—from Kromah. By March, ULIMO had split up into ULIMO-K (under Kromah) and ULIMO-J (under Johnson) (Alao 1998:39; *Focus on Africa* 1994a). In mid-1994, the NPFL split, with the formation of the NPFL-Central Revolutionary Council (NPFL-CRC) by Tom Woewiyu (Alao 1998:37). He split with Taylor, citing his atrocities and stating, “Taylor should be killed like a snake” (FBIS 1995c). Taylor had stated that since the NPFL did not get the Justice and Foreign Affairs ministries, it would not participate. However, the NPFL-CRC expressed its willingness to participate in the LNTG, regardless, and Woewiyu, Lavel Supuwood, Zaiye Dohkee, and Sam Dokie assumed their cabinet posts (Dunn 1998:37).

Resources for disarmament were also scarce. As of April 1994, the international community made no contributions to the trust fund established for reintegration services to demobilized soldiers (UN Security Council 1994d:paragraph 26). The National Volunteer Programme, a reintegration program that served 1,300 former combatants, consisted of repaying combatants with food for clearing roads and collecting rubbish as well as receiving agricultural, educational, and vocational training (Sesay 1996a:25; UN General Assembly 1994:paragraphs 15-16).<sup>17</sup>

Thus, by mid- to late 1994, when disarmament and the political process of the Cotonou Accord came to a standstill, the factions found themselves weaker, facing more adversaries, and unable to rationally choose disarmament, while at the same time, they had taken steps to accommodate each other politically. Mutual vulnerability entails not only the ability of a faction to retaliate, but also the prospect of advancing their own interests. In this instance, ULIMO, for example, had not obtained what it wanted politically and also faced an increased security threat. ULIMO faced an asymmetry of vulnerability. Similarly, while the NPFL

had obtained political benefits, it became increasingly unable to protect itself against others.

### *Akosombo Agreement*

With demobilization at a standstill and the continued hostilities between the NPFL and the LPC and the intra-ULIMO fighting, two agreements quickly emerged. However, they failed to account for the new factions that had unraveled the Cotonou Accord and did not provide any incentives for the warring factions to stop fighting. On September 7, 1994, Ghana's President, Jerry John Rawlings called a meeting of the NPFL, the Armed Forces of Liberia (AFL), and ULIMO, at Akosombo, Ghana, resulting in the September 12 Akosombo Agreement. While the major elements of the Akosombo Agreement mirrored the Cotonou Accord, there were some important differences. Namely, the Akosombo Agreement designated the AFL as a national army once it disarmed and included civil society on the Council of State through the Liberian National Conference (LNC) (Part I military issues: Sect. F, Art. 16, Part II political issues: Sect. B, Art. 14).

But the Akosombo Agreement did not account for some serious changes taking place in Liberia. Firstly, The LNC opposed the Akosombo Agreement for its semblance to a military junta (*FBIS* 1994b). Additionally, the national transitional government criticized that the Akosombo Agreement gave the warlords power—asserting that the warlords created jobs for themselves through the Akosombo Agreement (*Deutsche Presse-Agentur* 1994; *FBIS* 1994c). Secondly, during the parties' meeting at Akosombo, the NPFL continued to fight an ever-increasing number of dissident forces in Liberia. Involved in the anti-NPFL fighting during the Akosombo negotiations were the AFL, LPC, ULIMO-J, Lofa Defense Force (LDF), and NPFL-CRC. By September 23, it was confirmed that Gbarnga, the NPFL headquarters, had been taken over by a coalition of the AFL, dissident members of the NPFL, ULIMO, the LPC, and the LDF (*FBIS* 1994a). At the same time, Charles Julu attempted a coup d'état. In fact, the NPFL no longer controlled the ten counties it had during the implementation of the Cotonou Accord as the LPC controlled five of the thirteen counties by the middle of 1994. The inter-factional dispute in ULIMO continued. Earlier that year, in May, ULIMO-J actually controlled Tubmanburg, the headquarters for the original ULIMO—taking it from ULIMO-K (Aboagye 1999:118). After some NPFL combatants took forty-three UNOMIL military observers hostage on September 9, the UN started to withdraw. The UNOMIL military observers were released on September 18; however, a decision was made to evacuate all UNOMIL personnel as a safety precaution (UN Security Council 1994j:paragraphs 29-33).

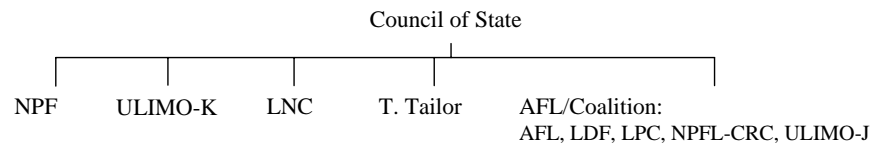
Others have asserted that Akosombo failed because it did not account for all factions (Sesay 1996a:76; Alao et al 1999:73). However, the changed balance of power also needs to be emphasized here. ULIMO-J, the dissident faction, now controlled Tubmanburg and the NPFL did not hold the majority of the counties. By

failing to account for the increased strength of the new factions, the agreement could not create mutual political and military vulnerabilities between the factions.

*The Accra Acceptance and Accession Agreement and the Accra Clarification*

On December 21, 1994, because of the reactions by the non-signatories to the Akosombo Agreement, the warring parties met in Ghana again to sign the Accra Acceptance and Accession Agreement and the Accra Clarification (hereafter referred to as the Accra Agreements). While the Accra Agreements generally re-affirmed the Akosombo Agreement, their main difference was to include the representatives of the LNC and the other splinter groups, which united to form an anti-NPFL coalition, the AFL/coalition (AFL, LDF, LPC, NPFL-CRC, ULIMO-J) in the Council of State. Hence, while the Council of State still comprised five people, in addition to ULIMO and the NPFL, the Council of State would also have one member each from the LNC and the AFL/coalition group. Finally, Tamba Tailor, a chief selected by the NPFL and ULIMO-K, would chair the Council of State (Part II political issues: Sect. A). Two other representatives would still serve as Vice-Chairs of the Council of State, unchanged from the Akosombo Agreement (Part

**Figure 3. The Council of State**



II political issues: Sect. B, Art. 14). The Council of State would resemble the diagram in Figure 3.

The Accra Agreements did not alter the requirement that the Council of State make decisions by majority vote. The requirement of majority rule did not foreshadow any predictable cooperation between the groups; the members of the executive Council of State were each mutually vulnerable:

- (1) The NPFL could not expect ULIMO-K to join together with the AFL/coalition as neither ULIMO-J nor the LPC supported the ULIMO-K (Alao 1998:39).
- (2) ULIMO-K could not expect cooperation between the AFL/coalition and the NPFL:
  - The NPFL-CRC had split from the NPFL.
  - The LPC had fought against the NPFL.
  - ULIMO-J had attacked the NPFL positions (Alao 1998:37-39).
- (3) ULIMO-K and the NPFL would not cooperate as ULIMO-K sponsored a

host of anti-NPFL groups: Bong Defense, Nimba Defense, Bassa Lofa Defense, and Congo Defense (Alao 1998:3-40).

- (4) Tamba Tailor had the support of both NPFL and ULIMO-K.
- (5) Civil society, represented by the LNC, would likely not join with the warlords.

### ***Forming Institutions: The Council of State***

The Council of State offers insights into the problems encountered in the formation of institutions. Disagreements within the formation of the Council of State surfaced in voting rules that would decide the representation of the AFL/coalition. Under consideration were Hezekiah Bowen for the AFL and George Boley for the coalition (*FBIS* 1995b). Facing a deadlock, ECOWAS members from Ghana, Burkina Faso, Nigeria, Guinea, and Côte d'Ivoire proposed an expansion of the Council of State to six members. But, Taylor stated that he would not serve on the Council of State as long as the proposed sixth member, Woewiyu (the NPFL dissident who formed the NPFL-CRC), served as well (*FBIS* 1995d). In addition to the personal animosity, under a system of majority voting, I argue that the addition of Woewiyu would favor the anti-NPFL group. If, in the previous construction, no group could form a foreseeable coalition, under this proposal the two members of the AFL/coalition could conceivably form an anti-NPFL block and the previous mutual vulnerability erodes. Indeed, no resolution on the Council of State occurred. At the end of January 1995, just one month after the last agreement, the peace talks were suspended (*FBIS* 1995a). By April, hostilities had resumed (UN Security Council 1995a).

### **The Abuja-I Accord (1995-1996)**

Only with the successful implementation of the Council of State could demobilization and elections occur. Unchanged from the last two agreements, disarmament was to take place “concomitantly” with the installation of the LNTG (*Cotonou Agreement*: Part II political issues: Sect. B, Art. 4). Thus, following the collapse of the Accra agreements, the subsequent Abuja Accord of August 19, 1995, while still proposing a Council of State of six members, nominated George Boley of the LPC as the sixth member. Reportedly, ECOWAS heads of state persuaded Woewiyu to cede his seat on the Council of State to George Boley of the LPC (Adebajo 2002a:60). The acceptance of Boley is not surprising; in the past, the LPC had battled against both ULIMO-K and the NPFL (Alao 1998:39). Hence, the addition of Boley would disadvantage neither ULIMO-K nor the NPFL. Indeed, in time, Boley would be at odds with Taylor and Kromah (*Africa Confidential* 1996a:2). Professor Wilton Sankawolo was selected as the Chairman, while the five other members—namely, Taylor for the NPFL, Lt.-Gen. Kromah for ULIMO, Boley for the coalition group, Quian for the LNC, and Chief Tamba Tailor—were

designated Vice-Chairmen, all with equal status. By all accounts, Sankawolo did not pose a political threat; he did not have a political following and, in fact, did not even know of his nomination as chair when it was announced in Abuja (*Africa Confidential* 1995c:8). The Abuja Agreement accommodated Johnson's ULIMO-J faction by the provision of several ministerial posts<sup>18</sup> (rather than a seat on the Council of State) and the AFL headed the ministry of defense (UN Security Council 1995c:paragraph 9).

### ***A Second Attempt at the Council of State***

The six-member Council of State did not create mutual political vulnerabilities between the parties. Placing ULIMO-J outside of the governing structure effectively eliminated them from the decision making process. While there were avenues by which ULIMO-J may have influenced governmental decisions, it remained that the Council of State, vested with executive power until the elections, held power over ULIMO-J. In December 1995, Johnson declared that differences in political power with the other ministers prompted him to threaten to pull out of the government. As only a Minister of Rural Development, Johnson had less power and influence than the other faction leaders who had obtained positions on the Council of State, and were thus empowered to call cabinet ministers meetings (*Africa Confidential* 1996b:2). As Council of State had not yet called a meeting of the cabinet ministers, Johnson's political participation depended on them (Nyenati 1995). I contend that not only did the present arrangement exclude ULIMO-J politically, but the Council of State also marginalized ULIMO-J at a time of increasing fractionalization in ULIMO-J, weakening command and control within the other warring parties and increasing cooperation between the NPFL and ULIMO-K. As a result of such an environment, vulnerability on the part of ULIMO-J increased.

### ***Intra-factional Dissent***

ULIMO-J began to have internal trouble with loyalty. As stated before, the split between ULIMO-J and ULIMO-K represented an ethnic split between the Krahns (ULIMO-J) and the Mandingos (ULIMO-K). However, the ethnic divisiveness did not end there. Other Krahn leaders suffered from a lack of cohesion. Notably, Johnson and Boley, both Krahn, began vying for a position on the Council of State (*Africa Confidential* 1996b:1-2). Therefore, Johnson not only felt marginalized by ECOMOG and the other warring factions, but by his fellow Krahns as well. In the months following the Abuja-I Accord, Johnson's control over ULIMO-J appeared tenuous. In early March, twenty-four ULIMO-J commanders unilaterally replaced Johnson with William Karyee. Following Johnson's dismissal, the Council of State removed Johnson from his post as Minister of Rural Development, citing his continued fighting, and ordered ECOMOG to search his home (*Deutsche Presse-*



*Agentur* 1996a). The marginalization of Johnson continued with the Council's attempt to charge him with murder of a fellow Krahn member of ULIMO-J (*Deutsche Presse-Agentur* 1996b). In March 1996, Taylor ordered Johnson's arrest for the murder of a Karyee loyalist. The Council of State then recognized Karyee as the leader of ULIMO-J (*Deutsche Presse-Agentur* 1996b,c).

### ***Inter-factional coalitions***

In the last quarter of 1995, ULIMO-J found it difficult to exploit differences among Council members as the council members became united. A memorandum of an understanding to cease hostilities, agreed to by the NPFL and ULIMO-K and negotiated by LPC's leader, Boley, on November 30, 1995, paved the way for more ECOMOG deployment and the reopening of roads by the other factions. In particular, roads through Bong County were opened, linking Monrovia further inland to Lofa, Nimba, and Grand Gedeh counties. After the memorandum, the other factions withdrew claims of cease-fire violations and reaffirmed their commitment to the peace accord (UN Security Council 1995e:paragraphs 6-7). Additionally, ULIMO-K and NPFL partnered to patrol areas without ECOMOG deployment (*BBC Summary of World Broadcasts* 1995). Prior to the memorandum, ULIMO-J and ULIMO-K had clashed repeatedly in the Bong Mine area until mid-September. In fact, they refused to demobilize until more ECOMOG troops had deployed, due to their mutual distrust (UN Security Council 1995d:paragraphs 13, 18).

### ***International Collaboration***

Perhaps, the most significant change in this period was the cooperation between ECOMOG and NPFL. The improvement in the relationship between Taylor and Sani Abacha, Nigeria's Head of State, who replaced Babangida, began in June 1995. Various reports discuss secret agreements and closed-door meetings that resulted in a more cooperative relationship (Sesay 1996b:400; *Africa Confidential* 1997:2-3; Adebajo 2002a:59-60). Whatever the means, the fruits of the new relationship bloomed in the last stage of the peace process. There are differing accounts of the reasons for the Taylor-ECOMOG cooperation. One view states that Abacha's domestic and international problems left him little time to focus on Liberia (*Africa Confidential* 1995a:4). Because of the holding of Olusegun Obasanjo and thirty-nine others charged with plotting a coup and Moshood Abiola, who won the 1993 Presidential election, the international community began exploring ways to signal their discontent. The Commonwealth began to voice the possibility of keeping Nigeria away from the November 1995 Commonwealth meeting in Auckland. In addition, Nelson Mandela, Robert Mugabe, and Yoweri Museveni began to assert that Abacha should hand over power to civilians. Domestically, the National Coalition for Democracy also began to push for, among other things, more decentralization, the formation of new



political parties, and a reformation of the electoral system (*Africa Confidential* 1995b:1-3). News accounts also suggest that France's decision to purchase offshore oil fields in Nigeria, in the face of U.S. sanctions to protest Abacha's holding of Abiola, helped to improve relations between Abacha and Taylor, who drew support from the francophone countries. France also did not criticize Abacha's handing of Abiola and Obasanjo (*Africa Confidential* 1995c:8).

Ordering the arrest of Johnson also appears to be a culmination of the increased cooperation between the NPFL and ECOMOG. Johnson had already been charged for stealing ECOMOG equipment. However, reports suggest that in its investigation, ECOMOG chose to ignore the possibility that ULIMO-J and the NPFL had collaborated in a plot to steal ECOMOG equipment. Instead, ECOMOG seemed to single out ULIMO-J as a threat to the peace process and turned a blind eye while the NPFL and ULIMO-K engaged in fighting with ULIMO-J. As fighting erupted to stop Johnson's arrest, Johnson loyalists moved to the Barclay Training Center in Monrovia at which point all the factions engaged in fierce urban fighting for eleven days (*Africa Confidential* 1996a:2). It stalled the peace process until August 1996.

### ***Detecting Mutual Vulnerability***

Between 1993 and 1995, the transitional government was convened, UNOMIL commenced deployment into NPFL territory, and demobilization began. The warring parties and ECOMOG formed part of the Joint Cease-fire Monitoring Committee until UNOMIL reached its full deployment. Notably, by January 1994, UNOMIL had deployed in both NPFL and ULIMO areas—leaving neither party advantaged over the other. At the same time, the parties accepted each other's nominations for the transitional government. Demobilization occurred as stipulated at the full deployment of UNOMIL, but not before the NPFL elicited assurance that the transitional government would be seated. The NPFL explicitly traded military security for political security. Thus, in both deployment and demobilization, mutual vulnerability was established.

The voting procedure in the Council of State did not create mutual vulnerability. In the first attempt, having allowed UNOMIL access to its areas, the NPFL found itself politically and militarily vulnerable. In the second attempt, Johnson had less political influence relative to the other parties. Johnson's vulnerability was asymmetrical. Thus, when further threatened with intra-factional cooperation and marginalization, Johnson's reaction was predictable.

Multiple factions and changing coalitions among factions increase the difficulty of establishing mutual vulnerability. The response of the UN, reducing its force and failing to provide money for reintegration as the number of groups multiplied, stalled the implementation process. In addition to the lack of outlets for concessions, formulas for concessions among multiple groups are more complex. While the complexity certainly stems from the multiple demands, more specifically, parties have a greater difficulty making concessions because they

must reflect the relative differences in the ability to prevent adverse actions or self-protection.

### **The Abuja-II Accord (1996-1997)**

A cease-fire was eventually established in May 1996. It held until a meeting of the ECOWAS foreign ministers in August, where they amended the Abuja-I Accord to place the peace process back on track. Primarily, the second Abuja Accord (Abuja-II) reaffirmed and revised the timetable of the Abuja-I Accord: a cease-fire was to begin on August 31, 1996 and elections were to be held on May 30, 1997 (*Supplement to the Abuja Accord*; see also UN Security Council 1996a:paragraphs 2-3, 9-10). Significantly, Johnson, along with the other warring factions, took part in the discussions. The Abuja-II Accord also replaced the chair of the Council of State with Ruth Perry (UN Security Council 1996a:paragraph 14). As has been asserted, Nigeria played a key role through personal diplomacy in moving the peace process forward to demobilization and the holding of elections (Adebajo 2002a:67; James Jonah 2002:Interview).

### ***Demobilization***

Beyond allowing ECOMOG to retaliate for cease-fire violations, as in the Abuja-I Accord, no incentives existed for the parties to demobilize (UN Security Council 1996a:Annex; *FBIS* 1997e). One of the biggest obstacles was the persistent military insecurity. For example, as clearly stated by Boley, leader of the LPC, as long as the NPFL continued to clash with the LPC in Zwedru, one of the places with the slowest rates of demobilization and disarmament, the LPC would not demobilize (*FBIS* 1996). The under-funded reintegration programs did not provide incentives to demobilize either, as programs that were promised for the fighters never fully materialized (*FBIS* 1997e, 1997c). The flimsy reintegration program consisted of an identification card, agricultural tools, and transportation to the home community. In fact, Alao et al. (1999:94) state that by 1997 the low funds for demobilization only permitted the former combatants to remain in the demobilization camps for an average of twelve hours each. Logistical and operational shortfalls proved a final deterrent to effective demobilization.<sup>19</sup> As late as November 1996, ECOMOG's 7,500 force still remained just deployed in Monrovia and its surrounding areas and UNOMIL only had 23 observers (UN Security Council 1996b: paragraphs 14-15). Even in January 1997, the ECOMOG and UNOMIL's 78 observers, although more dispersed inland than in November, remained mainly along the coast (UN Security Council 1997a:paragraphs 8, 11). The military insecurity, poor reintegration programs, and thin peacekeeping force deployment did not create any incentives for the factions to voluntarily disarm. In essence, no mutual vulnerability existed among the factions to spur compliance: there were no provisions that would allow the factions to simultaneously benefit, prevent, and retaliate against adverse actions.

A new working relationship between Abacha and Taylor appears to have been the key to Taylor's decision to disarm (*Africa Confidential* 1997:3). At the end of the summit for the Abuja-II Accord Taylor announced that he would demobilize first (*Deutsche Presse-Agentur* 1996d). But, four months would pass before Taylor followed through on his promise. Criticizing the slow pace of demobilization, Tom Ikimi, Nigeria's Foreign Minister, who at an Abuja reception in 1996 introduced Taylor as Liberia's next president, traveled to Monrovia to meet with the faction leaders on January 17 (*Africa Confidential* 1997:3; *FBIS* 1997b). The next day, Ikimi warned that combatants still armed after the January 31 deadline would be considered criminals by ECOMOG and the factions themselves would cease to exist (*FBIS* 1997e). This marked one of two notable, personal interventions by Nigeria. On January 22, after the leader of smallest faction, the LDF, ordered it to disarm, Taylor ordered the NPFL to disarm. This was followed on January 24 by Boley's order for the LPC to disarm (*FBIS* 1997a). By January 26, 38 percent of combatants had disarmed—the NPFL and ULIMO led with 54 percent and 52 percent of combatants disarmed respectively (UN Security Council 1997a:Annex II). By the extended deadline of February 9, 62 percent of combatants had disarmed (UN Security Council 1997b:paragraph 13). In fact, ECOMOG arrested armed combatants after the deadline, including Alhaji Kromah, leader of ULIMO-K (*FBIS* 1997d).

### ***The Election***

As the date of elections drew near, assessments by election observers and the parties themselves began to question the preparedness of the country for elections. Consequently, the political parties, with the exception of the NPFL, began to call for a postponement of the elections until October 1997 (Carter Center:22-24). Taylor, who assumed victory, did not want to change the date. He threatened that he would not feel the need to comply with the Abuja Agreement should elections not occur in May. ECOWAS also agreed with Taylor. Moreover, Ikimi stated that the decision to postpone the elections rested with ECOWAS and not the Liberian political parties. Further bolstering Taylor, some ECOMOG contributing countries threatened to leave Liberia if the elections were postponed (Lyons 1999:48-49). To resolve the situation, the ECOWAS heads of state met in mid-May. As a compromise, the ECOWAS Heads of State decided to postpone the elections until July 19, but not until October. While it allowed the other parties more time to prepare, the parties still considered it a tight schedule (*Agence France Presse* 1997), thus not hindering Taylor too much.

### ***Detecting Mutual Vulnerability***

The accomplishments of demobilization and the holding of elections illustrated the influence of Nigeria and ECOWAS. Nothing else built into the process could bind the parties to commence disarmament on their own or seek to resolve the election date concerns. More specifically, it suggests that outside parties can move

the domestic factions toward a point of mutual vulnerability when it otherwise does not exist. In resolving the electoral impasse, Taylor's concession, facilitated by Nigeria, of moving the date back was not sufficient to weaken his prospects, while also giving the other parties more time. Thus, the candidates were mutually politically vulnerable. Furthermore, Liberia's demobilization suggests that, once the largest force demobilizes, the remaining factions, except the Lofa Defense Force, which is the smallest, will also likely demobilize as the military threat lessens.

### **Conclusions and Recommendations**

Although peace agreements lay out the conditions under which war should cease, it is the incremental steps along the way that determine if those agreements will be implemented. Each step taken by a warring faction to implement the peace agreement is a concession that must be matched by other parties in order for the process to stay on track. The Liberian case showed, for example, that when political accommodation coincides with suspicions of military or financial threats to the factions, the peace process stalls. On the other hand, as hypothesized, in the presence of mutual vulnerability, the implementation process advances.

One case cannot provide generalizations for policy recommendations, but the Liberian experience offers a number of suggestions for further consideration, research, and policy work, as international and sub-regional organizations undertake implementation missions. Whereas, existing work that addresses implementation tends to focus on tasks rather than the factors that lead up to the tasks being accomplished, the interactive processes and bargaining strategies between the parties are just as important. Conceptualizing implementation as a function of mutual vulnerability shifts the focus to the process of compliance rather than particular tasks. Process is important because if the tasks remain uncompleted, the peace agreement risks unraveling. It therefore makes sense to understand the mechanisms that provide incentives to complete agreed tasks. It is not enough to focus on the accomplishment of demobilization or a transitional government, for example. Rather, scholars and practitioners should understand the incremental steps and interactive strategies between the parties and how the signatories renegotiate and calibrate their responses to changing balances of power that result in each party demobilizing or participating in a transitional government. In short, factions' trade-offs carry consequences for mutual vulnerability.

Finally, international or sub-regional organizations that facilitate the implementation of peace agreements may also create mutual vulnerability. In particular, these external entities may use their relationships with factions to compel them to undertake agreed tasks and make these concessions. Examples of contributions by the international and sub-regional community that can affect mutual vulnerability include designing and funding robust reintegration programs, using diplomatic means to persuade signatories to comply with particular measures, or

taking steps not to compromise their role as mediators. Still, the effect of international and sub-regional organizations is ambiguous; they may help generate mutual vulnerability or impede it. This effect has special implications for the sub-regional organizations that have assumed an increasingly important role in conflict resolution. The experience of ECOWAS in Liberia shows that the involvement of neighboring states is clearly a double-edged sword. At different points, ECOWAS was both a party to the conflict and a mediator. After Operation Octopus, ECOWAS was distrusted by the NPFL, as it seemed to side with the government. However, toward the end, it was instrumental in ensuring the holding of elections, as it seemed to side with the NPFL.

### Appendix: List of Abbreviations

AFL. *Armed Forces of Liberia*

AFL/Coalition. *At the signing of the Abuja Accords this comprised the AFL, LDF, LPC, NPFL-CRC.*

ECOMOG. *ECOWAS Cease-Fire Monitoring Group (the ECOWAS peacekeeping force)*

ECOWAS. *Economic Community of West African States*

IGNU. *Interim Government of National Unity*

INPFL. *Independent National Patriotic Front of Liberia*

LDF. *Lofa Defense Force*

LNC. *Liberian National Conference*

LNTG. *Liberian National Transitional Government*

LPC. *Liberian Peace Council*

NPFL. *National Patriotic Front of Liberia*

NPFL-CRC. *National Patriotic Front of Liberia - Central Revolutionary Council*

NPRAG. *National Patriotic Reconstruction Assembly Government*

ULIMO. *United Liberation Movement for Democracy in Liberia*

ULIMO – J. *United Liberation Movement for Democracy in Liberia-Johnson*

ULIMO – K. *United Liberation Movement for Democracy in Liberia-Kromah*

UNOMIL. *United National Observer Mission in Liberia*

### Key Faction Leaders

George Boley - LPC

Roosevelt Johnson - ULIMO-J

Alhaji Kromah - ULIMO-K

Charles Taylor - NPFL

**NOTES**

- 1 For example, while the resolution of the Cambodian civil war is noted for the transition administration established by the UN—arguably a deep involvement by the agency—its postaccord period was less stable than that of Mozambique, which did not have such a degree of involvement by the international community. Similarly, the two UN missions in Angola, the UN Angola Verification Mission (UNAVEM) II and III, failed despite the fact that UNAVEM III was consciously constructed to include a significant involvement by the UN in an answer to criticisms of a paltry UN presence during UNAVEM II. Alternatively, the civil war in Nicaragua ended without a significant involvement of outside organizations.
- 2 This is not an unusual occurrence. In the context of legislative cooperation, Weingast and Marshall (1988:138-143) discuss the difficulties encountered by representatives in contracting for votes, under the promise of future cooperation.
- 3 These ideas come from the literature in game theory. Axelrod (1990); Kreps (1990); Bates (1991:24-27); Fudenberg and Tirole (1991).
- 4 I thank Edward Kutsoati for his help in this section.
- 5 For more on bargaining see Schelling (1980).
- 6 More detailed information on utility curves can be found in any microeconomic theory textbook. A particularly useful text is Varian (1992).
- 7 Adekeye Adebajo (2002b) also presents this conclusion in an argument that contingencies, due to the absence of strong institutions, explain the progress and resolution of the Liberian civil war.
- 8 In August 2003, under pressure from an insurgency that had been raging since 2000 and the international community, Taylor stepped down as president and relocated to Nigeria in exile. In this paper, however, I focus on the implementation of the peace agreements of the first Liberian civil war (1989-1996).
- 9 Others have also divided the Liberian period into three phases. Alao (1998) divides the Liberian civil war into three war periods, while Outram (1997) divides the Liberian period into three peace periods.
- 10 The text of the “Peace talks on Liberia” that took place in Geneva during July 1993 are reproduced in Weller (1994c).

- 11 In truth, the IGNU did not have a military; it was protected by ECOMOG.
- 12 Originally, a figure of 60,000 was used. But the number of combatants was revised to 30,000 in March 1994 (*FBIS* 1994f).
- 13 See also Vogt (1996:354).
- 14 Later replaced with Phillip A. Z. Banks (UN Security Council 1994b).
- 15 Notably, Ziah was a member of the Krahn ethnic group; he was replaced in March 1994 by Dex Tawoyo, also a Krahn (*Focus on Africa* 1994b).
- 16 For additional information on the composition of the Joint Cease-fire Monitoring Committee see the Cotonou Accord (Part I military issues: Sect.B, Art. 3). Notably, Buchanan was used by the NPFL to exports goods (Reno 1998) and Kakata was the headquarters of Roosevelt Johnson, who would form a dissident faction of ULIMO (*Focus on Africa* 1994a).
- 17 While Sesay uses a figure of 1,500 combatants, I elect to use the 1,300 figure given in the UN Report.
- 18 A listing of ULIMO-J appointments can be found in UN Security Council (1995b). See also the Abuja Agreement ( Part II Political Issues: Sect. A).
- 19 I thank Adekeye Adebajo for pointing this out to me.

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