

Background Guide Topic Two**Consolidating peace and political stability in Western Africa***Introduction*

The Security Council is consistently challenged with issues centralized within a region. The obvious ones that recur include the regional conflict in the Middle East as well as political conflict in Eastern Europe. Historically, the Security Council has risen to the challenge of resolving these matters through diplomatic tools that center around multi-lateral talks, using economic sanctions as the last resort in helping resolve disputes. In general, the UNSC has proved to be a vital organization in furthering peace efforts in the aforementioned regions.

The region typically overlooked in the UNSC's efforts is the Northern African region. Due to the Islamic influence in this region, recently, the UN as a whole has attempted to steer focus towards the "MENA" region (Middle East and Northern Africa). This is particularly true for the social and humanitarian committees in the UN. Obviously the Security Council is not an exception in expanding its roles in this overlooked region. However, an additional region is quickly garnering the attention of the UN and the public eye: the West African region. While political instability is a norm for the majority of the African population, West Africa shows a strong promise for leading the path to democracy and establishing democracy as the norm for the continent of Africa.

Fifteen nations occupy the region considered "West Africa" by the UN: Benin, Burkina Faso, Cape Verde, Cote d'Ivoire, Gambia, Ghana, Guinea, Guinea-Bissau, Liberia, Mali, Mauritania, Niger, Nigeria, Senegal, Sierra Leone, and Togo.¹ All of these nations face unique problems that must each be considered individually. For example, Senegal maintains excellent diplomatic relationships with western bloc nations such as France, the United States, etc. On the other hand, Sierra Leone has gained animosity from such nations due to its internal political conflicts, particularly with the blood diamond industry. Furthermore since the end of the colonial era in these nations (generally about half a century ago), many of the West Africa nations have undergone civil wars, including Nigeria, Sierra Leone, and Liberia to name a few key conflicts. Thus, it is clear that challenges affecting the West Africa region are unique to each nation and its neighbors.

Nonetheless, nations such as Senegal help set the standard for attaining political stability in the region.

¹ Map of West Africa: <http://www.un.org/Depts/Cartographic/map/profile/westafrica.pdf>

Senegal's excellent relations with the western, developed nations as well as democratically elected government represent a critical stride in spreading democracy within the region by example. Sharing a commonality with the MENA nations, Senegal is also predominantly Islamic and furthermore demonstrates an unique case study for examining democracy in Islamic nations, which is indeed the predominant religion in the North and West Africa regions.

Thus, the challenges posed to each nation in the West Africa are obviously unique, but maintaining strong relations within the region in addition to spreading democratic influence in the region represent excellent strides towards establishing a peaceful and stable region.

History

Like all regions in Africa, the West Africa sub-region carries a rich history tracing back to prehistoric times. The establishment of empires, though, is the first major milestone in examining the social, economic, and political history of the region. The West Africa region was ruled by a series of empires starting with the Ghana Empire. Other empires shared reign in the region, some collapsing and some being consolidated into other empires. The most significant outcome from the empirical era for West Africa was the spread of Islam as the predominant religion. Islam would become embedded in the culture and served as a unifying factor for the region. The empirical cycle continued until around the 1500s when European colonization would start to influence the region.

Starting in the 1400s and 1500s, European powers, primarily Great Britain, Spain, France, and Portugal, began colonizing much of Africa. A catalyst for colonization of Africa was the African slave trade. The West Africa region participated heavily in the slave trade, providing captured slaves in exchange for European firearms and resources. As demand for slaves increased due to colonial progression in the Americas, the rulers within West Africa began warring with neighbors in order to provide a steady supply of slaves. This marked the first major step in dividing the region. Up until this point, European influence was primarily in the trade, not necessarily in immediate colonization of West Africa. However, in the late 1800s, European nations sought to control territory as the slave trade had largely dissipated. By the start of the 20th century, Britain, France, Portugal, and Germany (until the end of World War I) held territorial claims in nearly all the nations that currently comprise the West Africa region excluding Liberia.

Like with all of their colonies, the European nations sought resources from the African continent and in exchange provided some level of military protection while allowing limited self-rule within the colonies. One key outcome of the colonial era is the lack of development of industry within the West Africa region (which certainly holds true for other colonial nations as well). This meant the region itself would remain significantly underdeveloped by comparison with its parent nations, which is a key point in the understanding of where the nations are today on the development scale.

Following World War II, the European nations began to lose their strength over their colonies. In quick succession, colonies would gain their independence. This was spurred by the lack of financial strength of the European nations following the World War as well as by protests and uprisings from within the colonies. Ghana was the first nation to gain independence in 1957, and neighboring West African nations quickly followed until by 1974 all nations were independent. One critical artifact of the independence movements is the establishment of arbitrary boundaries by the European nations, as opposed to the African nations themselves deciding on their borders. The borders established by the European governments disregarded social and cultural commonalities and differences, leading to a disturbance in the balance of the population that was largely maintained during the empirical era. This is likely to be one factor in the unrest and instability within the region.

The challenge after attaining independence is the establishment of a sovereign government. The West Africa region largely did not have a model for government that revolved around the rule of law, which represents the biggest obstacle to establishing stable governments within the newly independent nations. Coupled with the arbitrary borders drawn by the European nations, a number of nations in the region underwent civil wars. Nigeria, Liberia, Cote d'Ivoire, Guinea, and Sierra Leone all went through civil wars. Furthermore, government power was held by corrupt officials who attempted to seize nearly dictatorial control of the nations. With a lack of transparency and rule of law, the governments remained unstable. This instability also hindered the economic growth of the newly independent nations.

Some nations in the West Africa region did manage to enjoy relative growth, including Ghana and Senegal. Indeed, Senegal is one of the more democratically progressed nations within the region today. However, until recent times, democratic governance was very limited, with countries such as Burkina Faso, Togo, Nigeria, and Sierra Leone, to list a few, being led by military or dictatorial heads of

government. Between 1960 and 1989, West Africa saw 60% of the total coup d'états and military interventions within the continent of Africa. The strong presence of a military influence leading the government is attributed to setting the tone for uncertainty and instability of democratic governance in West African nations today.

Until now, the historical focus has centered on democratic governance within West Africa and the lack thereof. This is due to the importance of establishing sovereign, stable governments practicing the rule of law as the key for peace within the region. Stable governments are a trigger for socio-economic development, which is strongly lacking in the region. The example of Sierra Leone's blood diamond industry is an excellent example of how a lack of economic development results in both socio-economic as well as political instability, demonstrating the interdependence between economic and political development. The nations, individually, have seen limited success in economic development. The importance of a regional effort was realized by the signing of the Treaty of Lagos, which founded the Economic Community of West African States (ECOWAS) in 1975.

The ECOWAS was established with the primary goal of economic self-sufficiency within the region and a secondary agenda for helping resolve disputes amongst its member states. However, it is clear from the unrest in the region through the 1970s and 1980s that the ECOWAS's goals were approached slowly or altogether unrealized. In 1993, the ECOWAS reassessed its goals in favor of a stronger economic focus, with three of its four primary objectives focusing on economic growth (the sole non-economic objective is towards peace and security). Nonetheless, the ECOWAS represents a successful organization in serving as a mediator and forum for the West African nations.

From the historical understanding of the nations' political and economic issues, it is now possible to have a solid foundation for tackling the topic at hand: consolidating peace and political stability. As mentioned previously, both peace and political stability are intertwined with economic development. Therefore, a reasonable approach would be to explore the economic history of the region as a whole as well as the individual nations. From this information, the Security Council can recommend economic measures from the appropriate economic bodies of the United Nations. This should not, however, be the primary focus of debate in the Security Council – rather, it is an element that helps build a comprehensive approach to the topic.

Peace and political stability are the heart of the topic and should be the center of debate at the Security Council. Immediate measures relating to peace should be tackled in the resolutions passed by the Security Council. The Security Council has historically provided support via peacekeeping operations, including missions and security forces, to assist with troubled nations or regions. Specific examples involving the West Africa region will be provided in the Current Situation section of this background guide. Delegates should understand the purpose with which the Security Council instated these missions, as the purpose can serve to provide a guideline for future considering of peacekeeping missions. Peacekeeping missions have traditionally played an influential role in assisting transitional nations into the democratic process, such as helping enforce the rule of law or assist in the oversight of democratic elections. Security forces provide military assistance in areas of violence. The peacekeeping missions and forces are a powerful tool the Security Council can utilize, when exercised with caution. Delegates must be cognizant of the sovereignty of nations and the appropriate time for deploying peacekeeping missions or forces, since any extreme measures may face a potential veto vote by the Permanent Five.

Peacekeeping missions are not the sole tool available to the Security Council. Delegates should familiarize themselves with the UN Charter to fully understand what powers are vested in the Security Council. For example, the Security Council, when acting in a unified fashion, has the capability to reprimand nations for lack of cooperation with the United Nations. Economic sanctions are one mode of reprimand, but they would prove a large blow to this region as it is already struggling to develop, earning potential disdain from member-states. Multi-lateral actions are the most favorable, particularly when organized with regional organizations such as the ECOWAS or the African Union (AU). Thus, it is clear delegates have a variety of approaches to fostering peace and stability in the region, and delegates should research and plan their options in accord with their nations' policies and for the benefit of the region.

Current Situation

The Topic History introduced a variety of tools the Security Council has at its disposal and how delegates should better approach the topic with the historical perspective in mind. In this section, a number of events in the last two decades will be examined and how the international community responded to the events, both through the UN as well as other regional organizations such as the ECOWAS and the AU. This discussion should help provide a view as to how the Security Council can

work in a multi-lateral fashion. Multi-lateral action is particularly important when approaching regions as a whole, since the problems faced are both unique to each nation and unified to the region. No singular solution can be undertaken by a small bloc of nations in hopes of assisting the entire region.

Despite the post-colonial trend of military or dictatorial regimes, the 1990s saw a major turning point in the establishment of a politically stable Western Africa. During the last two decades, the West African nations began imposing constitutional limits on the number of terms presidents or prime ministers could be elected. Overall progress in political stability and rule of law is particularly visible in certain nations, such as Cape Verde and Ghana. The Ibrahim Index, a statistical measure of developmental progress in Africa run by the Mo Ibrahim Foundation, ranks Cape Verde as the leader in Safety and Rule of Law as well as second in Participation and Human Rights. Ghana's scores in the same categories compare well to that of South Africa's, a democratically progressed nation. Another statistical marker of democratic progress in West Africa is the Corruption Perception Index, a measure of the level of corruption in governments collected by Transparency International, a non-governmental organization (NGO). Countries are ranked out of 180 nations evaluated, with the lowest rank at 180 signifying the highest level of corruption. While nations such as Nigeria rank at high corruption, at rank 130, and Guinea at 168, the majority of the West African nations are ranked in the 70s to low 100s. Those rankings signify a "median" level of corruption, where democratically progressed nations such as India rank. (For comparison within the continent, South Africa ranks at 55). Thus, the evidence and markers of political stability as well as progress are present in West Africa.

The Ibrahim Index also ranks Sustainable Economic Opportunity for the African nations. In this metric, the West African nations falter. Out of the 53 nations ranked for Africa, the majority of West African nations ranks in the 20s or lower. When combined with another metric, the Human Development Index (HDI), published by the UN Development Programme, it is apparent that the West Africa region still ranks in the "Third World Nation" category, albeit the nations are considered developing (some, such as Cape Verde, are a rare exception). The West African nations generally rank in the "Low" category for the HDI. The bright upside to this, though, is that all nations are improving in their HDI score from the previous publication. As a reminder to delegates, these economic facts serve as a guide for understanding the topic at hand comprehensively. It is ultimately up to the delegates to combine the economic understanding with implications to peace and political stability during debate and resolution drafting.

To shift focus to the peace and stability element of the topic, the UN Peacekeeping operations in West Africa will now be examined. Currently, the UN maintains the UN Operation in Cote d'Ivoire (UNOCI) to facilitate ceasefire agreements arising from partition within the nation. This operation evolved from the UN Mission in Cote d'Ivoire (MINUCI) established in 2003 in conjunction with ECOWAS forces. This current operation is an excellent example of multi-lateral action coordinated with peacekeeping operations authorized by the Security Council. In particular, the mandate to UNOCI is clearly outlined to ensure only the upholding of ceasefire agreements and protection of the UN staff and civilians. When drafting peacekeeping operations, the language selection is critical in dictating the role of the operation.

Another nation in which the UN has maintained a strong presence is Liberia. Civil war in Liberia has wreaked significant havoc and breakdown in the nation, and the ECOWAS stepped in to assist the region by deploying a Military Observer Group (ECOMOG). In conjunction, the UN imposed an arms embargo in Liberia to alleviate fighting in the region. With coordination between ECOWAS, the Security Council called upon a UN Observer Mission in Liberia (UNOMIL) to support the ECOMOG in its functions. In 1993, UNOMIL marked the first such peacekeeping mission deployed in conjunction with another inter-governmental organization. UNOMIL contributed a significant role in supporting ECOMOG until 2003 when the Security Council reevaluated its mandate with an update on its goals. This is yet another example of the Security Council's successful efforts in brokering peace and stability in the region.

Through the 1990s, the UN also deployed peacekeeping missions and operations in Sierra Leone, though currently they are not active. In conjunction with Cote d'Ivoire and Liberia, the UN's efforts in these three nations reflect the level of flexibility the Security Council has in assisting and fostering stability in the region. Coupled with other measures such as arms embargos, the UN can apply significant pressure to militant organizations while supporting efforts to uphold rule of law.

The topic of peace consolidation in West Africa has been brought to the floor in the Security Council since 2006. During the initial proceedings from 2006, the Secretary-General stressed the importance of "a holistic approach...to address the different but interconnected conflicts in West Africa." It was recognized that the ECOWAS needed stronger resources and a better institutional framework in order

to more effectively meet its objectives for the region; nonetheless, the UN was in support of the ECOWAS's operations in the region, particularly with regards to peace consolidation, good governance, and increasing respect for the rule of law.

The ECOWAS and UN are not the only intergovernmental organizations in support of peace efforts in West Africa. In 2006, a representative speaking on behalf of the European Union (EU) commended peace efforts in and strengthening security in Liberia and Sierra Leone. However, the statement cast light on the takeover by a military junta in Guinea as a major hindrance to peace efforts in the region. The statement also reflected upon meetings between the EU and the ECOWAS. The significance from this statement is two-fold. Firstly, the target of peace consolidation and stability in West Africa is a reachable with multi-lateral effort. Second, with the support of multiple intergovernmental organizations, peace consolidation in West Africa is indeed seen as a major topic for advancing development. The presence of multi-lateral support is a positive step in helping the region develop economically, politically, and in consolidating peace and stability.

In any discussion of Africa, non-governmental organizations (NGOs) always play a crucial role. NGOs differ from previously-discussed IGOs (such as the UN, International Monetary Fund [IMF], World Bank, EU, ECOWAS, and AU) in that NGOs do not carry an affiliation with any government. Rather, their purpose is embedded purely for the benefit of the region they are serving. A classic example of a successful NGO is the Red Cross, which readily provides support in disaster zones and conflict zones. NGOs exclusively provide humanitarian support, whereas IGOs more readily provide financial and military support to regions. In West Africa, NGOs continue to play a critical role in humanitarian development. In many of the developing and Third World countries in West Africa, NGOs provide shelter and food and clean water. This is particularly important in West Africa due to the relatively large number of internal conflicts many of the nations have faced, with civil wars and military takeovers. An outcome of these conflicts has been a large number of refugees seeking shelter in neighboring countries. NGOs are often the key in providing assistance to refugees since the governments are struggling to often maintain their own citizens' infrastructure. Finally, within the last decade, food crises and famines have plagued some of the nations of West Africa, particularly Niger. Once again, NGOs are the lifeline for citizens.

In conclusion, the challenges facing West Africa in consolidating peace and political stability are

numerous. The topic as a whole is multi-faceted and complicated by the struggles posed to these developing nations. Furthermore, the challenges facing the individual nations are shared by many of its neighbors, reflecting the need for a regional approach to the challenges faced. Delegates are encouraged to study the topics mentioned in this background guide in further detail to gain a deep understanding of how to approach peace consolidation and stability in West Africa. Finally, delegates are once again reminded to emphasize the peace and security matters of the topic, although a fundamental understanding of the history, economy, and culture is important to approaching a solution to the topic.

Directive

The West Africa region poses an interesting challenge due to the wide range of diversity in the region. For instance, most of the nations practice some form of a democratic republic government. However, the type varies from a semi-presidential republic to some countries practicing federal republics, and so on. This is certainly to be expected in any region since each nation should practice a sovereign government befitting their nation. Nonetheless this example serves to demonstrate the diversity and range of practices in the region.

The government type was a simple example of the gamut of ideologies in the region. Other examples include economy (all are developing nations rating in the lower end of the Human Development Index [HDI]); religion (the region is predominantly Islamic); and environment (the Sahara desert poses a major geographic presence in the region). These examples serve to illustrate that despite the differences in the nations, the region as a whole has many unifying qualities. These unifying qualities can be used as the trigger for establishing peace and stability in the region. For instance, the UN will generally provide similar economic assistance in the region due to their low HDI. Delegates should examine closely what other factors unify the region and how those factors can serve as a catalyst for establishing strong ties within the region as well as how they can be utilized to promote growth (economic and political) for the region as a whole.

The economic growth will certainly be a focus of debate as this is crucial for helping establish civil stability in the region. The larger issue of political stability must also be closely examined by delegates. The link between economic growth and political stability is undeniable for many a nation, and the West Africa region is likely to be no exception. Since the two factors go hand-in-hand, attention must also be

paid to how delegates can further political stability in the region. One question that might come up is the matter of strengthening democracy in the region. Nations such as Burkina Faso, Senegal, Liberia, Ghana, etc. are ranked by Transparency International in the 70-100s range in terms of government corruption, which represents a “median” range of corruption (1 being the least corrupt). On the flip side, Nigeria ranks at 130 while Guinea is ranked near the end of the list at 168 out of 180 ranked nations which represents high to extremely high corruption. With these numbers in mind, how can delegates help progress democracy for the lowest ranked nations while helping maintain and strengthen democracy in the median ranked nations?

Finally, the question of peace is tied to both the economic and political matters listed previously. Sierra Leone, for example, has historically been in a state of unrest due to the volatility of military conflict within the nation that arises from the blood diamond trade. While promoting economic diversity as a source of income for its citizens could help reduce this instability, establishing a stable government is also important. Finally, the next big questions for ensuring that the economic and political stability do not weaken or dissipate must be explored. Delegates could then draw the conclusion that regulating weapons trades or illicit drugs or diamonds in the region are the next big item for Sierra Leone. Taking this a step further, what are the major factors that should be resolved for the region as a whole? Perhaps the regulation of the weapons trade in Sierra Leone could apply to nations such as Nigeria or Liberia as well, thereby helping promote and strengthen peace efforts in the region as a whole.

With these specific examples in mind, delegates should focus on the economic and political questions posed to the region as a whole. After building consensus within the committee, the next big ticket question includes promoting and strengthening peace within the region. The weapons trade in Sierra Leone was merely one valid example; delegates should explore other issues for the region as a whole and how to tackle them to help promote peace in the region.