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West Africa: Regional Implications of the Liberian Crisis

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West Africa: Regional Implications of the Liberian Crisis

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West Africa: Regional Implications of the Liberian Crisis






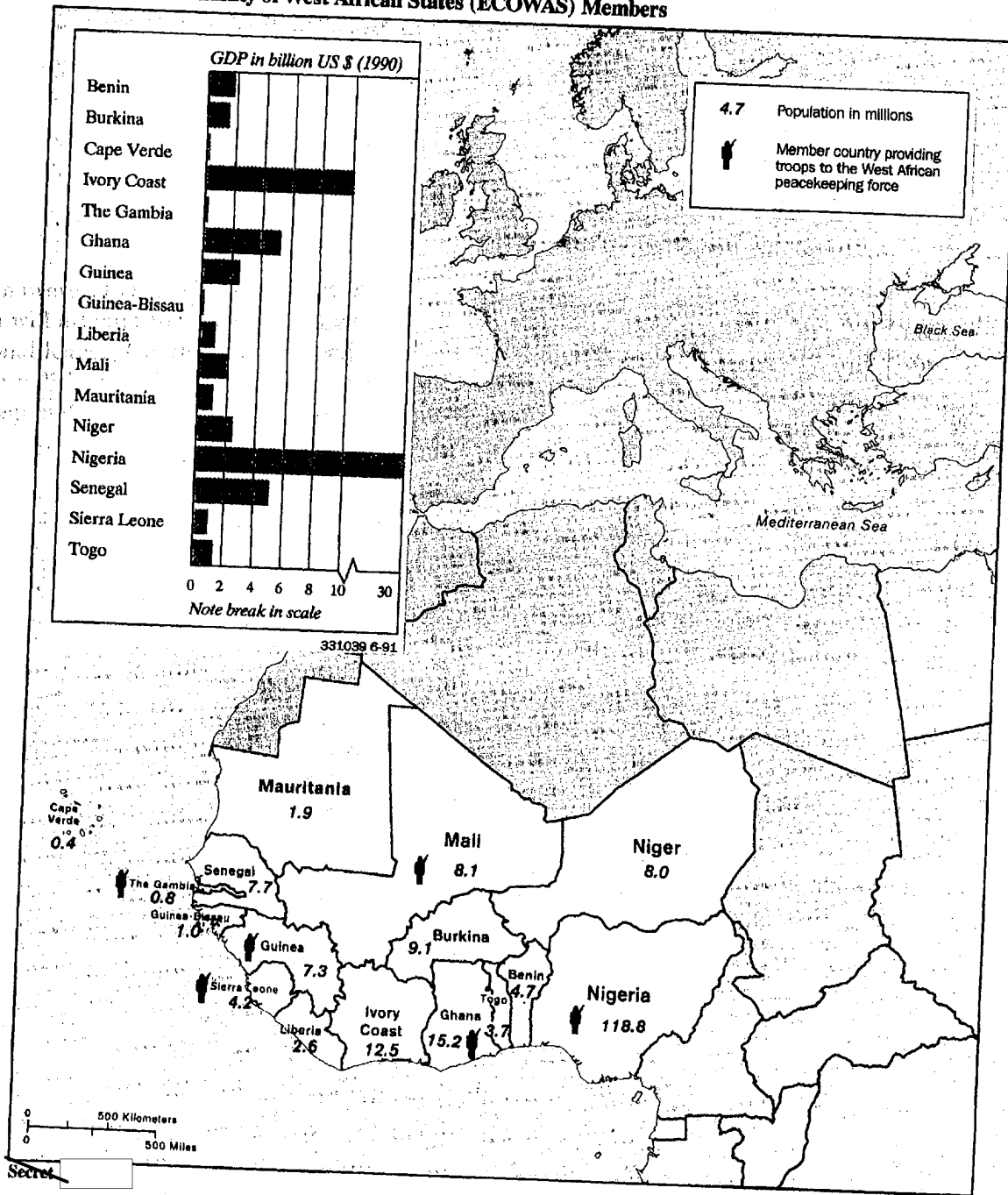
- Unless there is a decisive shift in the military balance that breaks the current political impasse, a negotiated settlement of the Liberian civil war is unlikely over the next year. 
- There is a growing likelihood, however, that the West African states that have intervened in Liberia will attempt to take a more assertive stance against the chief factional leader, Charles Taylor. Such an effort would raise chances of a political settlement, but failure would jeopardize the fragile regional consensus and heighten the threat of unrest in neighboring states. 
- As long as Liberia's future remains unsettled, its neighbors face the possibility that more fighting and refugees will spill across their borders from Liberia. The approximately 2 million refugees and displaced people—over three-quarters of Liberia's population—will remain a security and resource problem throughout this turbulent period. 
- The role the Economic Community of West African States (ECOWAS) has played in trying to mediate the dispute reflects some progress toward political cooperation in the region, but the organization is not yet united enough to become a long-term stabilizing influence. 
- The turmoil in Liberia has given Libyan leader Qadhafi opportunities he is almost certain to pursue to improve his standing in the region, particularly since he and many West African leaders perceive diminished US interest there. 

Figure 1
Economic Community of West African States (ECOWAS) Members



Key Judgments

In our judgment, Liberia will remain a major concern of many West African countries for some time regardless of how the current civil war ends:

- A political settlement probably will not be achieved over the next year: rebel leader Charles Taylor will continue to frustrate peace initiatives by stalling in negotiations and renegeing on agreements to try to outlast his opponents and gain control of the government. His removal would improve chances for a settlement but would not put an immediate end to instability in Liberia.
- The chaotic situation in the countryside and Taylor's undisciplined troops will continue to confront neighboring countries with the challenge of preventing cross-border incursions—such as have occurred in Sierra Leone—and dealing with the financial and logistic burdens of growing refugee populations.
- Unless Taylor unexpectedly loses out in the contest for power, his ties to Libya and to West African dissidents will continue to fuel fear that Liberia has become a base for efforts to destabilize the region.
- Many West African leaders will come under increasing pressure to adopt a more assertive strategy to resolve the crisis. But this will confront them with growing difficulties in financing the regional peacekeeping force in Liberia and maintaining political support for it.

We, nonetheless, see accumulating signs that Nigeria will attempt to lead the Economic Community of West African States (ECOWAS) into applying more political, economic, and military pressure on Taylor—short of a countrywide pacification campaign. Full implementation would be unlikely, but we believe Taylor would be weakened and more willing to compromise in such a scenario. On the other hand, should Taylor succeed

in outlasting and wearing down the peacekeepers, the implications for the region would be adverse, with heightened likelihood of:

- A permanently weakened ECOWAS.
- Discredited Nigerian regional leadership, with possible damage to President Babangida's domestic standing.
- A resurgent Taylor posing a greater threat to Liberia's immediate neighbors.
- A freer hand for Qadhafi in Liberia and the region, particularly if he perceived dwindling US involvement and concern.

West African leaders recognize the dominant role the United States has played in international humanitarian and refugee assistance and will continue to look to Washington's good offices in peace negotiations. But they have lowered their expectations of US contributions to Liberia's long-term reconstruction and Washington's willingness and ability to influence the Liberian factions. Washington's decision not to intervene forcefully in Liberia has reinforced perceptions of diminishing US interest in the region, which may complicate US ability to pursue its goals there.

The crisis and the US posture provided Nigeria an opportunity to expand its leadership role in the region and highlighted its importance to effective collective action. Nonetheless, Lagos' ability to translate even successful resolution of the Liberian crisis into enduring regional influence is limited. Fear of Nigerian hegemony, particularly among Francophone states, will work against Lagos' leadership aspirations, which may in fact become tempered by domestic preoccupations as civilian rule late in 1992 approaches.

Similarly, ECOWAS could emerge from the crisis as a strengthened regional institution, but its prospects for overcoming underlying rivalries among members and significantly improving their economic or security status in the foreseeable future are remote. The Liberian experience will probably not prompt a greater willingness to intervene collectively in internal conflicts.

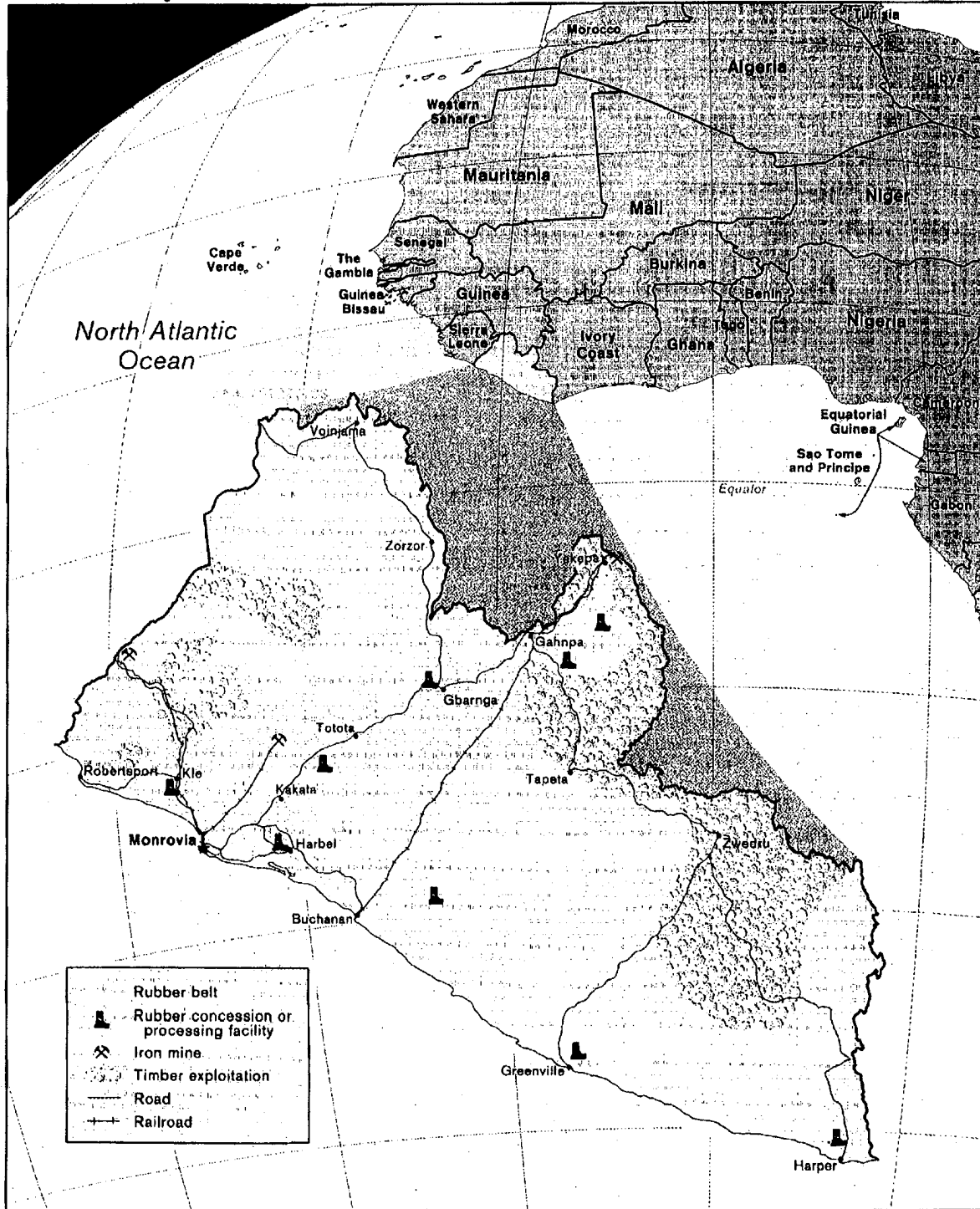
Qadhafi, probably in cooperation with Burkina, will stay active behind the scenes in Liberia, working to improve Taylor's chances for securing power. The prospect that Liberia will remain weak and unstable for years to come will afford Libya continuing opportunities to meddle and expand its influence in the region.

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Figure 2
Economic Activity in Liberia



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Discussion¹

The Liberian Crisis

The Liberian civil war, launched in late December 1989 by a poorly armed and organized dissident group led by Charles Taylor, quickly became the focus of West African concern as the conflict intensified and threatened to spread ethnic-based instability throughout the region. The growing number of refugees, the rebels' seizure of West African hostages, and failure of the belligerents to negotiate a political settlement prompted unprecedented intervention by members of ECOWAS. The region's leaders were also troubled by reports that Taylor received aid from Tripoli and that the fighting would encourage further Libyan inroads in West Africa.

The intervention of a regional peacekeeping force—the ECOWAS Monitoring Group (ECOMOG)—in August 1990 helped prevent Taylor from forcibly assuming total control of Liberia and achieved a cease-fire in December. But, despite intense negotiations, a political solution to the crisis has remained elusive. Neither ECOMOG nor Taylor appears capable of breaking the deadlock with their current levels of political support or military capabilities. Taylor holds the key to ending the political stalemate, but he has clearly demonstrated unwillingness to surrender his claim to the presidency. Despite his obstinance, however, there is as yet no regional consensus to order the peacekeeping force to expand its control into Taylor-held territory outside Monrovia.

Regional Dimensions of the Crisis

Taylor's inability to control his troops and the incursion by some into neighboring Sierra Leone in March 1991 underscored the continuing danger that instability will spread in the region. Moreover, rebel control of the Liberian countryside provides a safe haven for dissidents from other countries to train and prepare

¹ This Estimate assesses prospects for settling the Liberian conflict over the next year as well as implications of this for the wider West African region and for the United States.

ECOWAS at a Glance

The 16-member Economic Community of West African States was created in 1975 to unite the region into a single trade and customs union and foster economic development. Nigeria, which funds at least 30 percent of the ECOWAS budget, was the prime mover behind the establishment of the Community in an effort to assert greater leadership in the region and to reduce French influence. Ivorian President Houphouet-Boigny played a leading role in persuading the French-speaking states to join ECOWAS, however, and rivalries between West Africa's Francophone and Anglophone countries, particularly marked in the postindependence decade of the 1960s, were papered over.

Regional reluctance to cede power on national fiscal and monetary decisions and to reduce close economic ties to European patrons has hampered progress toward ECOWAS' primary goal of regional economic integration. Industrialized countries remain West Africa's primary commercial partners, and intracommunity trade is negligible—about 4 percent of total trade. Moreover, 11 different currencies and extensive smuggling across porous borders further complicate efforts to increase legitimate economic interaction within the region.

forces to launch similar insurgencies elsewhere in the region. ECOWAS members remain divided, however, over how to settle the civil war and whether to establish a permanent regional defense mechanism.

**The West African Peacekeeping Force—
ECOMOG**

Total Manpower: 7,700 to 8,400 ground, air, and naval forces, including 700 in Sierra Leone.

Nigeria: 5,200 to 5,700 ground, air, and naval forces in Liberia and Sierra Leone. Organized into three infantry battalions, an armored unit, and an artillery regiment. Ground forces equipment includes light tanks, armored vehicles, 105/122-mm howitzers, T-22-mm multiple rocket launchers, heavy mortars, recoilless rifles, antitank guns, and shoulder-fired surface-air-missiles; naval craft rotate but have included patrol combatants, a mine-sweeper, and a landing ship; Air Force assets include five ground attack and two transport aircraft and two transport helicopters. Nigerian forces are well trained and disciplined, respond well under fire, and have good leadership and adequate logistic support.

Ghana: 1,100 to 1,200 ground, air, and naval forces. Organized into an infantry battalion with support units. Equipment includes armored cars, heavy mortars, two patrol craft, three ground attack and one transport aircraft. Ghanaian troops are well trained and disciplined and have United Nations Interim Force in Lebanon (UNIFIL) experience but limited logistic support.

Sierra Leone: 650 to 750 ground forces. Organized into one infantry battalion with an engineer support unit. Equipment includes a few armored vehicles and mortars. Sierra Leonean troops are not prepared for combat and require logistic support.

Guinea: 600 ground forces. Organized into one composite battalion with two armor platoons and one airborne unit. Equipment includes armored vehicles and a multiple rocket launcher. Guineans are average in training and discipline, are the only Francophone contingent, and have Soviet equipment and doctrine. Guinea has about 200 troops on frontline in Sierra Leone.

The Gambia: 150 ground forces. Organized into one light infantry company. The Gambians are inadequately trained, not prepared for combat, have inexperienced leadership, and require logistic support.

Mali: Six officers assigned to ECOMOG Headquarters Staff.

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Border Strife. Rebel cross-border attacks like the one into Sierra Leone, which involved about 1,000 troops, would severely challenge the security forces of Liberia's neighbors. Even before the Sierra Leone incident—the most serious to date—the bordering states had augmented their frontier forces to prevent rebels from looting or establishing bases in sympathetic communities. But some military commanders of the ECOMOG member states are concerned that the open-ended participation of their forces in Liberia is proving costly and detrimental to defense capabilities

and resources that are already stretched thin. Moreover, as the Sierra Leonean Army response to the threat demonstrates, most of these regional militaries are poorly trained, equipped, and led for combating insurgents.

Refugees. About 1.2 million of the estimated 2.6 million citizens of Liberia have been displaced within the country and another 770,000 have fled to

External Support for the Rebels

Burkina, in cooperation with Libya, one of its principal benefactors, has consistently supported Charles Taylor's rebel faction throughout his insurgency. President Blaise Compaore, who maintains cordial relations with self-proclaimed revolutionary governments like Libya, North Korea, and Cuba, probably viewed Taylor as a "brother in arms" fighting against a corrupt and neocolonial system in Liberia. Compaore allowed the rebels to train extensively in Burkina before mounting the incursion, provided Burkinabe weapons, channeled Libyan military and financial assistance to Taylor, sent advisers to Liberia to support rebel military operations, and stockpiled material to replenish Taylor's arsenals. Although Compaore has publicly supported the ECOWAS peace efforts, has pressured Taylor to negotiate, and has promised to cut off arms supplies to him and to contribute a 300-man contingent to ECOMOG, we doubt that the flow of arms to the rebels through Burkina will completely cease.

Ivory Coast's support to Taylor, based more on the pull of cross-border ethnic ties and on President Houphouet-Boigny's personal animosity toward the late President Doe, has been drastically reduced. Early in the insurgency, the then Defense Minister and sympathetic—or bribed—officials allowed safe passage of Burkinabe arms shipments and the transit of unarmed rebels and political operatives to Liberia. After Doe's death, however, facing mounting international pressure, Houphouet-Boigny ordered the seizure of some Burkinabe arms shipments transiting Ivorian territory. Worried by the fighting in Sierra Leone, he recently further tightened border security. Houphouet's personal involvement in the Liberian conflict probably was redirected by a desire to avoid damage to his reputation as a senior African statesman. Local sympathy for Taylor's followers, the lure of kickbacks, and the porous frontier, however, make it difficult for Ivory Coast to interdict all military aid.

neighboring countries. Added to this refugee population are at least 160,000 people who either have been displaced from their homes in Sierra Leone or have sought refuge in neighboring Guinea. The financial and resource burden has overwhelmed local communities and further strained national governments. Although international humanitarian efforts are under way, poor roads and lack of vehicles have hampered operations in remote areas.

Instability in Neighboring Countries. As the events in Sierra Leone have shown, Liberia's neighbors can do little to prevent warfare from spilling over the border and aggravating ethnic tensions and political unrest in their own societies. In addition, refugee communities have provided conduits for smuggling weapons and other contraband that, in turn, contribute to local instability. Ethnic rivalries have been particularly pronounced in Guinea, where many government officials, merchants, and town dwellers are

Malinke tribesmen who tend to oppose Taylor's rebels, but the Mano majority along the southeastern border is sympathetic to Taylor and has supported his troops' cross-border raids and atrocities.

The regional military intervention in Liberia has not aroused significant domestic discontent in the ECOWAS countries. As the impasse drags on, however, opposition groups may charge that governments are focusing on Liberia at the expense of domestic priorities or that the involvement will lead Liberian rebels to target the ECOMOG countries. Moreover, support for a democratic solution in Liberia risks adding to frustration with the pace of political reforms at home in countries such as Sierra Leone, Guinea, and Ghana.

Nervousness About Contagion. Regional leaders are aware that the Liberian rebels have been supplied by pro-Libya Burkina, and some fear that their own vulnerability to externally backed insurgencies will grow. Dissidents from The Gambia, Senegal, Sierra Leone, and Guinea already serve as mercenaries and train in rebel territory with Taylor's support and probably with Libyan assistance. What is more, [redacted]

[redacted] a Sierra Leonean dissident may have been involved in part of the March incursion from Liberia. In any event, Freetown has charged that Taylor is trying to destabilize Sierra Leone, a view shared by others such as Guinea and The Gambia. [redacted]

ECOWAS at a Turning Point. The threat of widening conflict and differences among ECOWAS members on the wisdom of intervening in Liberia have compelled them to evaluate the organization's performance and future role. The Liberian experience has demonstrated ECOWAS' ability to overcome initial divisions and cooperate in mediation efforts and military intervention. But the threat of a prolonged economic and military burden and the risk of reopening Francophone versus Anglophone rivalries will dampen enthusiasm for intervening elsewhere. Even ECOMOG's commitment to providing a safe environment in Monrovia is in danger of waning over time, particularly after the failure of the Liberian national conference in March and April to reach a political settlement supported by all parties. Other than symbolic participation, we do not anticipate additional countries joining the peacekeeping force. Moreover, Guinea and Nigeria are the only ECOWAS members likely to support Sierra Leone's efforts to drive the rebels back into Liberia. [redacted]

Nigerian Role. The Liberian crisis also has prompted Nigeria to reexamine its role as a regional power and its aspirations for regional leadership. These issues have immediate significance because President Babangida became chairman this month of the Organization of African Unity (OAU) and will become president of ECOWAS in July. In addition, Lagos is bearing the brunt of ECOWAS financial obligations to help alleviate the economic burden on other members. Lagos has been careful not to overplay its prominence in the Liberian military operation to

The Nigerian Military

Overwhelmingly larger than any in West Africa, the Nigerian military numbers about 118,000 personnel. It is well equipped with tanks, armored cars, artillery, jet fighters, surface-to-surface missiles, and guided missile ships. Despite its impressive size, the military has undertaken few exercises or operations since the end of the Nigerian civil war in 1970 and suffers from a litany of weaknesses. Except for the brief interlude of civilian rule during 1979-83, senior members of the officer corps have been occupied in governing the country and acquiring lucrative political positions. Nonetheless, the military has recently proved in Liberia that it can deploy and support an enhanced brigade-sized unit beyond its borders. [redacted]

The Army in particular is likely to remain a major military and political actor even after next year's transition to civilian rule. President Babangida will carefully weigh any additional military initiatives in Liberia to minimize chances for a debacle that would focus Army disgruntlement on him or would cause neighbors to become alarmed at the demonstration of an increasing power projection capability. On the other hand, he wants to avoid a lingering commitment as an "occupation" force that bleeds morale and encourages corruption. [redacted]

avoid antagonizing Taylor's backers and enflaming other ECOMOG members' nationalist sensitivities. The rebels' incursion into Sierra Leone and Freetown's request for Nigerian assistance, however, inevitably highlight the importance of Nigeria's leadership and Army. [redacted]

Libyan Meddling

The military assistance Libya has provided to Taylor, first by training him and several of his supporters and then by sending arms and funds through Burkina, has



been a low-risk, low-cost attempt to influence the Liberian conflict and boost Tripoli's regional leverage. In our view, Qadhafi's support for Taylor demonstrates his determination to install a sympathetic regime in Monrovia and to establish a more influential political role for himself in West Africa. Tripoli has pressured Ghana to limit its support for the peacekeeping operation, and Libyan representatives have met with ECOWAS leaders to discuss the

Liberian situation. A high-level delegation attended the Lome summit in February and met with rebel faction leader Prince Johnson. Tripoli subsequently offered to help resolve the crisis, emphasizing that an African solution must be found that excludes any Western influence. Qadhafi is no doubt prepared to deal with other factions should Taylor falter.

Figure 3
National Patriotic Front of Liberia (NPFL) Military Disposition

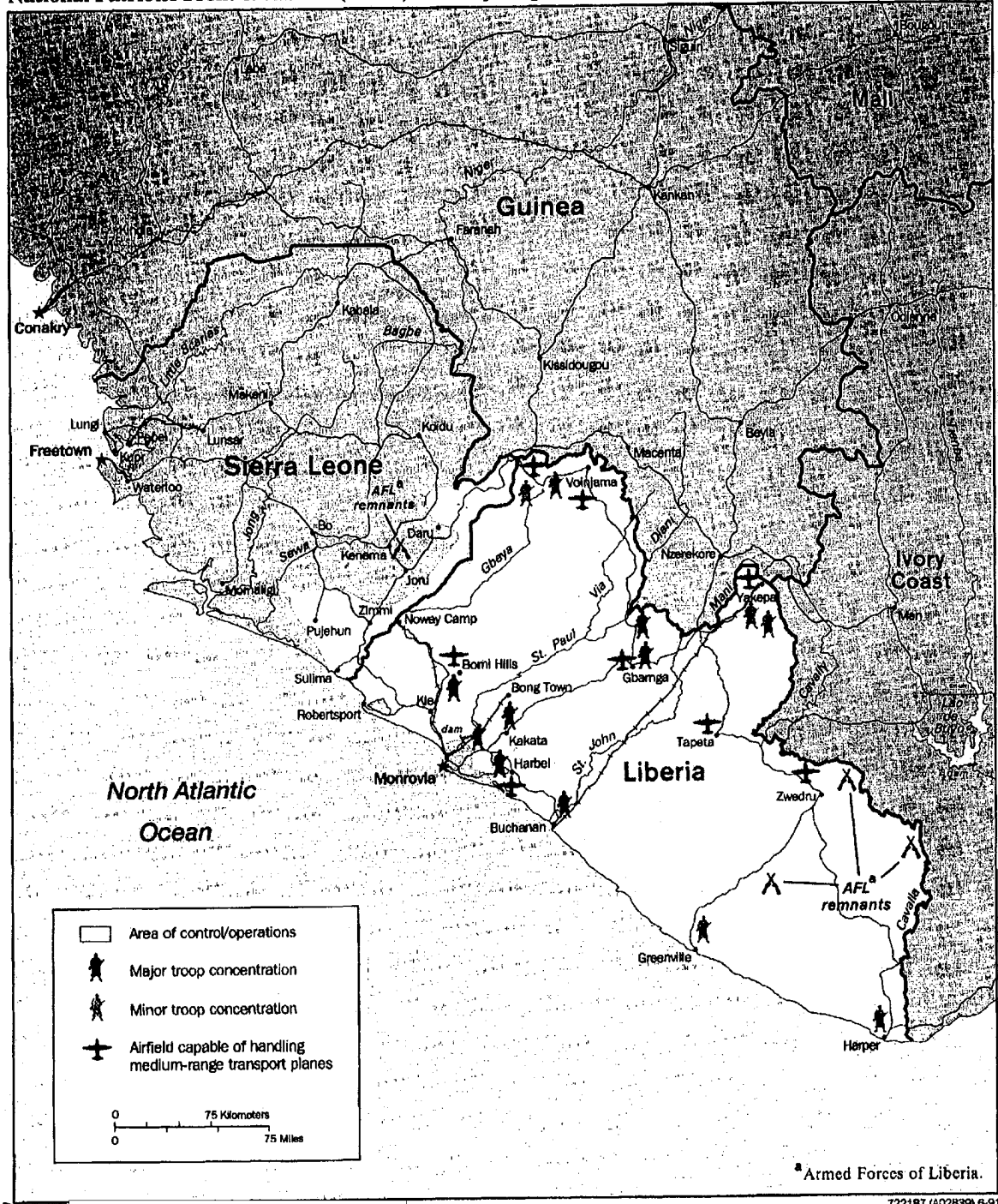
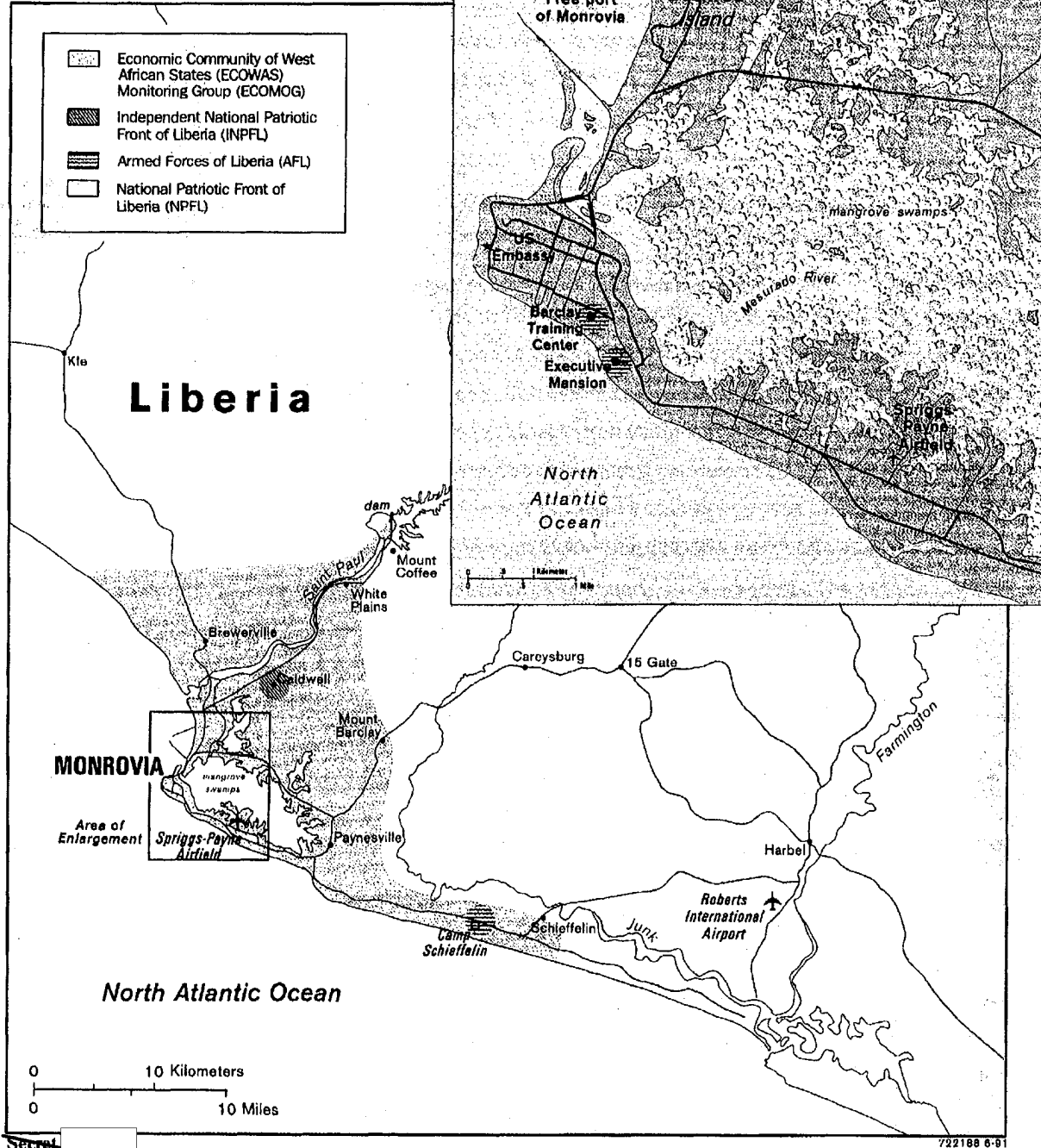


Figure 4
Deployment of Various Factions in
Monrovia and Environs, Mid-1991





Perhaps encouraged by the course of events in Liberia, Libya also has increased its efforts to make inroads elsewhere in the region. In addition to supporting other dissident groups operating with the rebels in Liberia, Tripoli has continued its two-track strategy in the region by extending its diplomatic,

cultural, and commercial presence while preparing to use subversion when Qadhafi deems it useful.²

[Redacted]

[Redacted]

West African leaders are wary of Qadhafi's intentions, and Nigerian concern about Libyan activities in the region was a factor in Lagos' decision to intervene through ECOMOG. Nonetheless, some governments in the region have sought to accommodate Qadhafi. Mali's new transitional government has accepted Libyan aid, and President Saibou of Niger has continued his good-neighbor policy, including expanded diplomatic and commercial ties to Tripoli. []

Implications Over the Next Year: Three Liberian Scenarios

Scenario 1: Deadlock Continues. Decreasing likelihood over time as pressures grow within Liberia and the region for a resolution. West African leaders increasingly realize that a peaceful resolution of the Liberian conflict will not occur as long as the faction leaders lack incentives to compromise. No faction is strong enough to win outright:

- Taylor considers the territory under his control as having enough resources to sustain his forces indefinitely. He probably feels confident that his rebels are sufficiently well armed and supported by Libya and Burkina to maintain its current position, but, given ECOMOG's demonstrated ability to repulse his forces, he is unlikely to launch an offensive against the peacekeepers to gain power militarily.
- Although Prince Johnson lacks a significant political base, he probably believes he has enough leverage to remain a key player and will continue to align himself with any group that best supports his interests at the moment. Neither Taylor nor Johnson will agree unconditionally to disarmament.
- Amos Sawyer's reelection in April as interim president by a national conference of Liberia's political factions somewhat strengthened his legitimacy and that of the interim government. But his fledgling regime still depends totally on ECOWAS for financial backing and protection, and diplomatic recognition of his government remains problematic despite being officially seated at the June OAU conference. []

The conference's failure to forge a political accommodation with Taylor portends continued political standoff and instability in Liberia. A prolonged stalemate

would further test ECOWAS patience with the Liberians, especially with Taylor. Although Ghana has decided to reduce its contingent, we believe the member states are resolved to maintain the peacekeeper's presence in Monrovia at least for the remainder of this year. The cost of the operation, already a persistent issue, is unlikely to become critical as long as Nigeria continues to subsidize most of it. After bearing considerable cost and putting its reputation on the line, Babangida is unlikely to risk the embarrassment of abandoning the interim government in Monrovia without alternative arrangements. Moreover, as ECOWAS president, Babangida will not want to preside over a failure of the peacekeeping effort. []

As long as the de facto cease-fire holds and negotiations continue, however futile they may seem, Babangida probably will not risk a countrywide offensive to defeat Taylor. Even among ECOMOG's more committed participants, there is little interest in undertaking widespread military operations in the Liberian countryside, where the force probably would become overextended in a costly and protracted counterinsurgency campaign against Taylor's rebels. Instead, in this scenario, we would expect ECOMOG to continue to provide buffer zones between the factions and security in Monrovia to protect the interim government while it attempts to restore essential services in the capital. []

Taylor almost certainly will try to exploit the additional strain the incursion into Sierra Leone has placed on ECOMOG and may tacitly, if not actively, support future attacks. In our view, Taylor will continue to stall in negotiations and renege on agreements in an effort to outlast his opponents and gain control over the government. We believe he has no intention of submitting himself to a free and fair test of his popularity at the polls out of fear that he would lose. In addition, he would be unwilling to allow the disarming of his forces before an election because they are the source of his power. []

There is a growing chance of fresh fighting as one of the factions, most conspicuously Johnson's, loses patience with the standoff and provokes armed clashes.

Charles Taylor's National Patriotic Front of Liberia

Strength: 5,000-to-6,000 man force composed of six battalions, some 1,000 of them presently operating in Sierra Leone.

Equipment: Four armored vehicles, three to six multiple rocket launchers, a few machineguns, possibly a few shoulder-fired SAMs, fewer than ten 105-mm howitzers, some assorted mortars, a few recoilless rifles, grenade launchers, grenades and small arms, one 65-foot patrol boat (armed with 81-mm mortar and twin 7.6-mm machineguns), two to three trawlers (one armed with B-10 recoilless rifle).

Capabilities: Operates freely throughout most of the Liberian countryside, from which many people have fled. . . depends on Libya, Burkina, and Ivory Coast for resupply. . . command and control strongest in Gbarnga-Kakata corridor; weak in outlying areas, particularly Voinjama and Bomi Hills. . . constant recruiting required because of numerous desertions. . . effectively uses psychological operations—warns villages in advance of pending attack, then moves into vacated villages.

Economic activity: Taylor exploiting control over the country's exportable natural resources. . . negotiating agreements with foreign investors to restart mining concessions and rubber plantations, from which he receives royalties. . . NPFL warlords also have exported timber, rubber, gold, and other products through front company at Buchanan. . . railroad between Yekepa and Buchanan facilitates transportation of these products to the port.

their own in combat, especially to avoid defeat by Taylor. ECOMOG is capable of containing such skirmishing in the Monrovia area, however.

Prolonged deadlock would have profound effects on Liberia's neighbors, and regional leaders are becoming more acutely aware of the longer run dangers and costs of impasse. Sierra Leone, Guinea, and Ivory Coast are already hard pressed to assist refugees, and we can anticipate increasing requests for international assistance. As the deadlock extends, refugees will look to permanent relocation as their only option, and local backlash against them—to include skirmishes and cross-border raids—is a growing danger. Such conditions would be conducive to increased Libyan meddling in the region. In addition, if deadlock persists, the economic costs of ECOMOG will no doubt become an issue in Nigerian politics as campaigning intensifies in 1992. A significant decline in Nigerian funding would probably mean the collapse of the peacekeeping effort, almost certainly plunging Liberia back into uncontrolled factional fighting and ethnic retribution.

Scenario 2: ECOMOG Turns Up the Heat. Increasing likelihood as Nigeria draws the conclusion that Taylor must be pressured. Accumulating evidence suggests Nigeria is formulating a strategy that, although not intended to pacify Taylor's territory, is designed to pressure him politically and economically as well as militarily by:

- Pressing for widespread diplomatic recognition of Sawyer's interim government. Babangida may also urge ECOWAS to accept its credentials at the July summit, when he will assume the presidency.
- Choking off Taylor's access to outside funds and supplies. Nigerian combatants are already searching ships calling at Buchanan, and contingency plans for a full-scale blockade of all National Patriotic Front of Liberia (NPFL)-controlled ports are in place. The interim government is threatening legal action against foreign firms doing business with Taylor.

Johnson and remnants of late President Doe's forces have enough arms to initiate more fighting, drawing in Taylor. In view of Johnson's past success with limited manpower and weapons, his forces might hold

- Pressuring Burkina to honor its promise to cease military support for the NPFL.
- Stepping up military assistance to Sierra Leone.
- Aggressively enforcing provisions of the cease-fire and asserting ECOMOG's authority over Taylor's strongholds near Monrovia and Roberts International Airfield.
- Conducting selective airstrikes, if necessary, against rebel enclaves further inland—while avoiding any prolonged ground action far outside the Monrovia area. [redacted]

Should Nigeria overcome regional misgivings and gain enough support among ECOWAS members to implement such a strategy, Taylor would probably resist militarily. He demonstrated last year that he can attack the peacekeeping force with effect. Although full implementation of such steps would be unlikely, the outcome would hinge on Babangida's ability to sustain the ECOWAS effort versus Taylor's staying power:

- The key to implementation would be Babangida's willingness to devote the attention and resources required to stiffen the determination of his ECOWAS partners. Although he is under no domestic pressure to act more aggressively, the Nigerian political scene now allows him about 12 months to attempt this, in our view. As campaigning for a new government heats up, however, he will have to concentrate more on internal matters and take smaller risks regionally. In addition, he no doubt wants to take advantage of his somewhat greater diplomatic influence before the expiration of his one-year terms as head of ECOWAS and the OAU.
- Renewed warfare, however, would jeopardize the precarious ECOWAS consensus and step up pressure on financially strapped Ghana, Guinea, and Sierra Leone to withdraw from the peacekeeping force. For Nigeria to act virtually alone in Liberia would probably not be politically sustainable for Babangida, both domestically and regionally. Moreover, Taylor would threaten harm to Ghanaian and Nigerian hostages we believe he is still holding.

Economic Costs of ECOMOG

Expenses for deploying and operating the peacekeeping force in Liberia have imposed a substantial burden on participating countries. Although they originally estimated operational costs to be \$50 million, Nigeria alone has spent roughly \$180 million to date. Costs of the expedition had not been included in the countries' respective defense budgets and must now be covered at the expense of domestic programs. Governments are sensitive about these expenditures and have not made them public. Financial stringency is the main reason for Ghana's recent decision to withdraw one of its two infantry battalions assigned to ECOMOG. [redacted]

Only Nigeria has the manpower to support ECOMOG without degrading capabilities at home; the other participants, with much smaller militaries, have contributed a proportionately greater number of military personnel and are straining to meet perceived domestic requirements. [redacted]

- The cohesion of Taylor's group, already suffering from defections and eroding command and control, would further weaken under sustained pressure from a disciplined and well-armed opponent. The ties that bind Taylor's followers to him would probably wither should he suffer setbacks that undermine his aura of success, control of territory, and ability to provide food, arms, and opportunities to loot. [redacted]

On balance, we believe that Taylor would be weakened and more willing to compromise in such a scenario, but the risks to ECOWAS and Nigeria would be high. Should Taylor outlast and wear down the peacekeepers, ECOWAS would probably be permanently weakened and Nigerian regional leadership discredited, at least for a while. The repercussions

could extend to Nigerian domestic politics, opening Babangida to criticism, especially from Army officers embarrassed by setbacks in Liberia and displeased with his plans to turn power over to civilians. []

Moreover, a resurgent Taylor would pose a greater threat to Liberia's immediate neighbors, including Ivory Coast, through his ability to foment border unrest. A receding ECOWAS would also give Libya a freer hand in Liberia and the region. While, on his own, Taylor's ability to export instability is limited by logistic realities to the countries bordering Liberia, the non-Liberian dissidents and mercenaries in the NPFL could reach further afield with Libyan assistance. In our view, Qadhafi would seize the opportunity under these circumstances to make Liberia a base for extending Libya's regional influence, particularly if he perceived dwindling US involvement and concern. []

Scenario 3: Negotiated Settlement. *Unlikely because of inadequate pressure to compromise.* In our estimation, unless there is a decisive shift in the military balance to break the current impasse, a negotiated settlement is unlikely. Should ECOWAS manage to force necessary concessions from Taylor, as in scenario 2, talks could produce a compromise solution among the contending factions. Even then, serious obstacles to stability would remain, and the presence of an international peacekeeping force would still be needed:

- Because government services are virtually nonexistent, large-scale financial and humanitarian assistance would be critical.
- Elections in the near future would be very difficult to run, especially outside the Monrovia area. Election logistics and monitoring would be complicated by the dispersion of Liberia's population caused by the civil war; most refugees will not return without credible guarantees of their security and continued relief assistance.
- New security forces would have to be created from the rival factions. In doing so, any Liberian regime would remain dependent on an international force to help it demobilize or integrate the factional armies

that had fought one another. In addition, some warlords in Taylor's group might go their own way; banditry and lawlessness would be widespread; and disaffected ethnic groups, some well armed, would remain a serious problem.

- Taylor would strive to dominate the political process and undermine initiatives that did not directly enhance his own power and election prospects. []

Taylor's removal by assassination—Johnson is probably seeking the opportunity—or incapacitation would improve chances for an overall accommodation. Should he leave the scene, NPFL cohesion would most likely falter altogether, unravelling the small coterie of leaders now around him. Some NPFL leaders would probably come to terms with the interim government, providing the basis for at least a limited settlement. Others, however, would no doubt carry on their resistance campaign in the countryside, finding warlordism more profitable and promising than the politics of compromise in Monrovia. []

While pacification of the Liberian countryside will be a long time in coming no matter what the makeup of a peace settlement, a compromise solution would set the stage for dealing with the difficult regional problems brought by the crisis. Without a settlement, these problems will worsen. []

Outlook

Regardless of the outcome of the current standoff, Liberia will remain a regional concern for some time. Its porous frontiers will continue to confront neighboring countries with security challenges—especially if Taylor comes to power in Monrovia and provides Libya and West African dissidents with a base for further adventurism. Moreover, the physical and social damage of the civil war—and the prospect of continued ethnic friction—probably will discourage most displaced Liberians from returning home soon. The plight of these people will present host countries and Western donors with continuing security and resource burdens. []

Several West African countries are likely to place greater emphasis on counterinsurgency skills for their militaries. The West can expect requests for counterinsurgency training, equipment, and advice at a time when willingness to provide military assistance is decreasing. []

Although an ECOWAS-negotiated resolution of the conflict would be an encouraging sign of progress toward regional cooperation, the experience would not necessarily presage new collective interventions in members' internal conflicts. Involvement in Liberia has been costly for ECOMOG participants, and the apparent consensus on the group's peace plan and diplomatic efforts to implement it was achieved only by papering over underlying rivalries and suspicions. ECOWAS' unwillingness to intercede in Sierra Leone is a further indication that the Liberian experience has not set a precedent for regional activism. []

Because of fear in the region of Nigerian hegemony, particularly among Francophone states, a settlement in Liberia achieved under Babangida's leadership of ECOWAS and the OAU—whether peacefully or by force—would increase Nigeria's influence only marginally. The main impact would be on Babangida's stature at home and the removal of a potential unsettling issue within the military as the country approaches its transition to civilian rule at the end of 1992. After 1992 a new, elected regime would probably be preoccupied with consolidating its own domestic support and therefore less likely than the Babangida regime to play an assertive role in the region. But we see no other ECOWAS player able or willing to compete for regional leadership. []

Implications for the United States

West African leaders view the United States' modest involvement in Liberia's civil war and its limited response to Sierra Leone's request for assistance as evidence of the region's increasingly marginal position in US foreign policy. US refusal to send military forces to restore order and protect US facilities in a country seen to have a "special" relationship with the United States has probably led regional leaders to conclude that Washington will most likely not invest money or effort in rebuilding Liberia's economy or restore US commitments to the country. Moreover, they probably have become more pessimistic about

US Interests in Liberia and West Africa

US commitments in Liberia are now limited, consisting mostly of humanitarian relief. While VOA and US diplomatic communications facilities in the Monrovia area were a significant aspect of our past interest in Liberia, they suffered serious damage in last year's fighting and it is problematic whether they will be used in the future. US private investment, once extensive, is now on hold. []

Primary US interests in West Africa generally are bilateral relationships with oil-rich Nigeria and a few other states of regional importance, such as Senegal and Ivory Coast—as well as several regionwide concerns:

- *Conflict resolution. Regional conflicts and civil wars prevent development, create humanitarian disasters, and invite external intervention. Most regional and other countries concerned with the Liberian crisis expect the United States to take a leading role in helping to resolve it.*
- *Stability with political liberalization. The colonial legacy, the problems of nation-building, and one-party rule have left many African states weak and unstable. The United States has an interest in stability while promoting human rights and political liberalization. The United States also works with West African states to counter interventionist outsiders such as Libya.*
- *Economic liberalization and regional integration. The United States is interested in seeing the widest possible adoption of market-oriented economic policies by African governments to promote self-sustaining growth. The United States also encourages greater regional economic integration and regional institutions such as ECOWAS. US private investment in West African economies is minimal, however, except for Nigeria's oil sector. []*

The Future of Regional Cooperation in Africa

ECOWAS' involvement in Liberia is, for Africa, unprecedented in scale and duration. Its success or failure will influence future efforts to act collectively in the region. Success would encourage nascent impulses to strengthen existing organizations. Failure would deflate expectations for their greater role. African regional organizations in the past have not been particularly effective in addressing the continent's difficult issues. Limited resources and capabilities, unresolved questions about infringement on state sovereignty, and differing ideologies and agendas by individual member states have all contributed to the limited effectiveness of these organizations. Some, such as the East African Community, even collapsed due to disputes among constituent members.

But regional entities may be on the verge of contributing more in the 1990s as Africans seek indigenous remedies to their problems. As states confront the dual challenges of political liberalization and economic reform, with attendant instability, African leaders will likely place more emphasis on the need for closer cooperation. Moreover, these decisionmakers—fearing marginalization in world events as superpower rivalry wanes and international investors look to opportunities elsewhere—are beginning to realize that it may be only through regional cooperation that Africa can compete. With an eye toward the European Community, Sub-Saharan states are forming a similar organization for intra-African trade and economic integration. For military purposes, the Organization of African Unity might even create a force—modeled on ECOMOG—for peacekeeping continentwide. Nonetheless, such organizations would continue to face severe limitations, as well as the suspicions of governments sensitive about state sovereignty, and no "quick fix" for Africa's worsening problems through regional organizations is in sight.

obtaining additional US military assistance for their own countries. West African leaders will nonetheless still view the reliability of US commitments to them primarily on the basis of bilateral relationships.

Despite their lowered expectations of US support in the peace process or Liberia's reconstruction, ECOWAS members will continue to look to the United States to exert pressure on the belligerents to negotiate. They realize, however, that Washington has limited influence, especially with NPFL leaders, who have been increasingly antagonistic toward US officials. ECOWAS members also believe US financial and other contributions to the peacekeeping effort have been minimal, and they probably will grow resentful as their own resources are strained by the continuing deadlock.

Leaders in the region recognize the dominant US role in international humanitarian and refugee assistance, however, and generally expect Washington to continue to provide relief to Liberia. The bordering countries also expect continued US assistance in supporting the large refugee communities until they can be repatriated to Liberia and Sierra Leone.

Other Western powers, facing economic constraints and growing reluctance to provide financial and military assistance to their former West African colonies, are unlikely to take a more active role in the region. The Francophone countries, for example, already perceive a growing gap between their needs and Paris's ability to help. As a result, West African leaders—although suspicious of Qadhafi's motives—may become less resistant to Tripoli's blandishments. Libya will continue to exploit the perception of limited Western interest in Liberia in an attempt to strengthen its position there and in the region. Tripoli also will take advantage of Taylor's perception of US bias against him to encourage his long-term dependence and susceptibility to Libyan influence.

Annex

West African Military Balance

	Military Manpower (1,000s)	Tanks and Armored Vehicles	Artillery Over 100 mm	Naval Combatants	Patrol Craft	Combat Aircraft
Benin	5.1	XXX	X		X	
Burkina	7.8	XX	X			XX
Cameroon *	28.6	XX	XX	X	XX	XX
Chad *	30.0	XXX	XX			XX
The Gambia	88				X	
Ghana	8.0	XX			X	XX
Guinea	12.8	XXX	X		X	X
Ivory Coast	8.0	XX	X		X	X
Mali	8.0	XXX+	X			XX
Mauritania	13.0	XX	XXX		X	
Niger	3.7	XX				
Nigeria	118.0	XXXX	XXX+	X	XX	XX
Senegal	11.5	XX	X		X	X
Sierra Leone	3.4	XX	X		X	
Togo	8.1	XX	X		X	X

Note:
X = fewer than 10
XX = 10 to 99
XXX = 100 to 499
XXX+ = 499 to 999
XXXX = 1,000+

* Non-ECOWAS country.

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