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**Collective Insecurity: The Liberian Crisis, Unilateralism, & Global Order.** Ikechi Mgbeoji. Vancouver: University of British Columbia Press, 2003. 186 pp.

At the end of World War II, the founders of the United Nations had hoped that this newly established organization would stabilize the international order and would help maintain worldwide peace. Hampered by the Cold War, however, the UN never fulfilled the high hopes of its creators. After the end of the Cold War it seemed as if the UN at last could effectively intervene into the devastating conflicts that followed so many state failures. But again, the UN Security Council was blocked by national egoism and rivalries. As a consequence, regional coalitions and unilaterally-acting great powers seized the initiative and intervened in humanitarian crises.

Ikechi Mgbeoji, who is a professor of law at York University, takes a look at the implications that this development has on the future role of the UN and the evolving global order. Mgbeoji uses the Liberian Crisis of 1991-1996 as a case study to point out why a regional organization found it necessary to intervene and why the UN only half-heartedly took on a limited role in the peace building initiative in Liberia.

The book begins with a detailed account of the Liberian Civil War up to the 1996 elections. Mgbeoji does not restrict himself to simply narrating the relevant events, but also gives a broader, conclusive analysis of the causes of many state failures and civil wars in Sub-Saharan Africa. According to the author, bad governance and the fact that the borders of African states were arbitrarily drawn by European powers with no regard for ethnic and national cohesion account for the instability in many African nations.

Mgbeoji convincingly shows that these causes lie at the root of the Liberian conflict. The government of Samuel Doe favored his ethnic kin and discriminated against members of other ethnicities. In addition, Doe rigged elections and installed a patrimonial system in which he and his cronies pocketed the scarce state revenues. When the economic situation of Liberia worsened due to a cutback in American subsidies, Charles Taylor easily instigated an insurrection among disaffected Liberians. Soon Liberia was divided along ethnic and cultural fault lines and descended into a protracted civil war.

In the second chapter, Mgbeoji analyzes the intervention of the Economic Community of West African States (ECOWAS) in the Liberian civil war. The ECOWAS member states quickly recognized that the Liberian crisis had the potential to destabilize the entire region. They therefore tried to broker a cease-fire through the ECOWAS Cease-fire Monitoring Group (ECOMOG), but the attempt to build peace in Liberia was undermined by several problems. First, ECOWAS was deeply divided between a Francophone and an Anglophone block. Second, ECOWAS was notoriously short on resources badly needed for effective peacekeeping. Third, ECOMOG was sent to Monrovia before a cease-fire had been brokered that all parties to the conflict had accepted. In the subsequent chapters, Mgbeoji examines the legality of the ECOWAS intervention under current international law, arguing that Chapter VIII of the UN Charter allows

for peacekeeping measures by regional arrangements or agencies. He holds the opinion that the Security Council at least implicitly acknowledged the legality of the ECOWAS intervention and consequently the enforcement actions of ECOMOG. The UN itself made only a minimal effort to get involved in the Liberian crisis (weapons embargo, creation of UNOMIL, resolutions urging members to help ECOWAS establish a fund for Liberia) and seemed satisfied with leaving the resolution of the conflict to ECOWAS. Mgbeoji correctly notes that the Security Council practically abdicated its monopoly on mandating peace enforcement actions with serious results for the global order.

In the last chapter Mgbeoji discusses how the African nations can reconfigure collective security for the continent. His first suggestion is to re-think African statehood and governance. Hitherto, he claims, there has been a taboo on discussing the present borders that were drawn up during colonial times. African states, he urges, should find ways to overcome the artificial separation of ethnic and cultural groups. Furthermore, the style of governance has to change in order to create governments that have political legitimacy in the eyes of their own citizens. Mgbeoji's second point concerns the relationship between regional organizations and the UN. At present, the decisions of the Security Council more often than not reflect the interests of greater world powers. To change this, Mgbeoji recommends the creation of a unified UN military force, but admits that such a ground breaking reform of the UN is not in sight. Therefore, he posits that at least the relationship between regional arrangements and the UN, especially the Security Council, should be clarified and that the UN should make better use of regional arrangements to prevent them from undermining the Charter regime. He also argues for giving regional arrangements a more pronounced voice in the Security Council's deliberations and decision-making processes.

Mgbeoji's book clearly demonstrates the many problems of peace enforcement in present-day Africa. His case study of the Liberian crisis is highly informative and elucidates the difficulties that beset many African states. Likewise, his discussion of international law and the present global order shows an in-depth familiarity with this complex subject. His book will not only be useful for scholars of international law and international relations, but is also a valuable resource for the general public.

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