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# Legality and legitimacy of military intervention in intra state conflicts: A case study of Ecowas intervention in Sierra Leone

**Simon, Okolo Benneth**

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*Abstract*

*The debate about the legality and legitimacy of third party intervention in the "domestic" affairs of sovereign states has been ongoing. This research focuses on the intervention by Economic Community of West African States (ECOWAS) in the Sierra Leone conflict. The research inquires into the legality and legitimacy of the intervention, against the backdrop of existing international law prohibition on the use of force, and the principle of non-intervention in the domestic affairs of sovereign states. An analysis of the emerging trend of humanitarian intervention and the current emphasis on human security is made in order to determine whether the intervention in Sierra Leone fits into this paradigm. While acknowledging the importance of states in international relations, this study inquires into the shift of security from "state centric" to "people centric".*

*This study makes a case for sustained efforts in the area of intervention on humanitarian grounds. It further argues that regional organizations should have a pre-emption right to intervene in conflicts that affect their regions of influence. However, the study also recognizes that this concept might be subject to abuse by powerful nations if not well managed. The study therefore recommends the importance of a well articulated framework that will serve as a standard for future interventions.*