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# Challenges of Regional Collective Security: A Look at Economic Community of West African States (Ecowas)

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## Abstract

The principle of collective security has formed the core goals and objectives of various international and regional organizations as they strive to ensure continuous global peace. Today, the situation of the world generally is chaotic has the world continues to witness various forms of conflict and extremism activities. The objective of this study was to determine the challenges of regional collective security in ECOWAS as well as examine the effectiveness of its collective security mechanism. Using qualitative analysis as a primary research methodology with interview as an instrument to elicit responses this study found some of the challenges to be poor public perception as a result of negative publicity received from press, absence of a clear agreement among the political leaders of the region regarding responsibilities and mandate of ESF, poor training and supply of obsolete equipment to missions providing peace in conflict zones, as well as the porous nature of the borders. The researcher recommended a number of ways to improve its security mechanism such as improving factors that impact on administration, finance and personnel as well as enhancing transparency in democratic state.

**Keywords:** Collective security, Economic Community of West African States (ECOWAS), Community, ECOWAS Stand by Force (ESF) Economic Community of West African States Monitoring Group (ECOMOG)

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**Introduction and Educational Importance of The Study**

        This study was conducted to discover the attendant challenges that are central to providing and ensuring regional security in the ECOWAS region in West Africa. Though the primary objective of this study was geared towards that purpose, it also plays a pivotal role in the domain of education for the reason that it will contribute to the wealth of knowledge in the subject area, particularly in helping future researchers, academicians, and students in educational institutions to understand those challenges that inhibit the performance of security and peace-keeping missions or forces in Africa, especially in West Africa.

        Also, due to the dearth of information and educational resources (or materials) on the subject of peace-keeping in West Africa, the relevance of this study can, therefore, be seen from its role in expanding the knowledge base in this domain.

        Due to the prevalence of issues bordering on breach of security across the world, which continues to grow, the importance of collective security among countries with close geographical proximity has become inevitable in order to create and maintain peace. Countries mostly feel more secure when they work together in a collective effort to control insecurity than when they work as individual entities. It is rather easier for nations to cooperate and form alliances in the fight against insurgency and various forms of conflicts, which cannot be fought individually.

        Former United Nations Secretary General, Kofi Anan, noted this in 1999 when he said, "Ours is a world in which no individual, and no country, exists in isolation". This has become the fundamental basis for which international organizations are formed as the quest for world peace continues to be inevitable," (UN, 1999).

        It became imperative, therefore, in a bid to address the present global security challenges for nations to source for more means and methods of preserving and ensuring peace. The importance the concept of collective security has been emphasised in its usefulness in helping create an enabling environment for international peace among states (Mays, 2003).

        It is widely regarded as a means of managing crisis in international relations, established to promote international peace against global wars since aggression or war is viewed as an impediment to global peace and security. Collective security hovers around the rationale for international organisations and agencies such as the United Nations, European Union, the Economic Community of West African States amongst others, to protect and uphold local, regional and international peace and security. Previous researches showed that efforts directed towards maintaining global peace and stability using traditional conflict resolution mechanisms do not provide adequate solutions to address conflicts and regional instability.

        1. The concept of collective security, therefore, is established through the effort of the global community to propose new ways in building mutual trust amongst states, resolving the issue of security problems or impasse through acceptable methods of cooperation. The view of most nations regarding collective security is that of a system that enables ease of achieving stability and strengthening mechanisms through the membership of different international organizations that addresses their security concerns; this however, does not restrict their interests in joining other international bodies.

        The need for a collective security system, therefore, is to guarantee that any act of aggression will be deterred through a collective effort in the event that any aggression eventually occurs. The principle of collective security is based on its collectiveness and not on the convergence of individual interests. The nature

of collective security works in such a way that it is applied generally on the system and followed through, regardless of the concerns and circumstances of its member states. The objective of a collective security system must be seen as multilateral rather than unilateral. If an action is carried out unilaterally, it cannot be said to be a collective system regardless of the involvement of multiple states or endorsement by an international organization.

The Economic Community of West African States (ECOWAS) had fifteen members comprising of former French, British and Portuguese colonies as at the time it was created. In 1975 Cape Verde joined bringing the membership to 16. This did not last long as Mauritania excluded herself from the membership in 2000. Currently ECOWAS has 15 member states namely Benin, Burkina Faso, Cape Verde, Cote d'Ivoire, The Gambia, Ghana, Guinea and Guinea-Bissau, Liberia, Mali, Niger, Nigeria, Senegal, Sierra Leone and Togo. Though the ECOWAS was established as an economic unit, its set objectives has not been fully achieved due to conflicts arising within its region thereby leading ECOWAS to include collective security as one of its goals to attain economic integration. ECOWAS morphed into a body that concerns itself with security in 1978 when it adopted the non-aggression treaty.

According to Article 1 of the ECOWAS "Member States shall, in their relations with one another, refrain from the threat or use of force or aggression or from employing any other means inconsistent with the Charters of the United Nations and the Organization of African Unity against the territorial integrity of political independence of other Member States"(ECOWAS, 1978). Even though member states ratified the non-aggression treaty, there was an outbreak of war in West Africa, notably in Liberia and Sierra Leone in 1989 and 1991 respectively. This situation, therefore, required efforts to suppress the violence and ensure peace within the region. It was thus realized that the existing structures which was geared towards economic integration and inter-state conflicts were insufficient to address the complexity of the crises arising within the region. This influenced the Heads of State and Government in the ECOWAS region to carry out a review of the Treaty. By July 24, 1993, the treaty was endorsed in Cotonou, The Republic of Benin, to include maintenance of peace, stability and security within the region. The revised treaty made provision for regional security and contained the undertakings of member states to work to safeguard and consolidate relations conducive to the maintenance of peace, stability and security within the region.

**Objectives of the Research**

The rationale behind conducting a study that focuses on the challenges encountered in the course of providing and ensuring peace and security in the ECOWAS region is inseparable from the reasons necessitating the establishment of a security network (mechanism) across the region, which is to establish and maintain collective security in the region. To understand the objectives of this study is to first understand the goals and objectives behind the framework of the ECOWAS security mechanism.

In order to achieve the objective of collective security within the ECOWAS region, member states accepted the responsibility of cooperating within the community for the purpose of creating and firming the right mechanisms for prevention and resolution during conflicts. This further led to the establishment of the protocol on mechanism for conflict prevention, management and resolution, peace and security in Togo in December 1999 which formed the core principle of the establishment of collective security within the organization (Aja, 2007).

The need for inclusion of combating security issues in the region came about due to the widespread of conflicts and instability within the region, which members of the community believed impeded progress for economic growth and integration among member states.

In achieving its set goals of political stability and economic prosperity, ECOWAS has had to deal with a surge in ethnic conflicts, military coup d'états, and external aggression within the region. At some point, ECOWAS realized that progress and development in economic affairs could only be possible within a safe and secure region upon observation of the pockets of violence in member states. As such, involvement in ensuring peace within member states became imperative for economic activities to thrive within the region.

Despite the obvious security challenges, ECOWAS, through its inclusion of collective security as a major yardstick to achieve economic prosperity has been able to promote democracy within the region. Though the community has been able to achieve a measure of progress in peacekeeping, it still grapples with numerous challenges that militate against its integration drive and further poses risk of maintaining peace and security within the region. This is particularly important as ECOWAS is currently overshadowed with the daunting task of restoring peace and stability in several of its member states as issues of violent extremism, terrorism, transnational organized crime continues to scourge the region. These challenges have undermined the organization's achievements and have adversely affected ECOWAS prospects for sub regional security. These issues raised questions on the effectiveness of ECOWAS collective security mechanisms in tackling contemporary challenges of insurgency faced by the sub region as Nigeria, one of its key players who have been applauded by the international community for her leadership role in Economic Community of West African States Monitoring Group (ECOMOG) operations in Liberia and Sierra Leone, struggles with terrorism in and within its borders.

As a result of these, the objectives of this study, therefore, are:

i.   To examine ECOWAS collective security mechanisms
ii.  To highlight the lapses of ECOWAS collective security mechanisms
iii. To identify future prospects for sub-regional security

**Theoretical Framework**

The theoretical underpinning of the study notes that the concept of a state, which encapsulates characteristics such as sovereignty, territorial presence, and legitimacy, are all influential in the success (or otherwise) of the need for collective security in a given region.

Two concepts that look into the nature of government's vis-à-vis their theoretical leaning as it pertains to collective security were identified as the Realist Theory and the Liberalist Theory (Brown, 1998).

The state is widely regarded as the focal point of interaction in global politics. In other to be recognised as a state, it has to meet certain definite characteristics which include territorial presence, sovereignty, international boundaries, legitimacy bestowed by the populace and government bureaucracy (Drogus and Orvis, 2012). Baylis et. al. (2008) described a state as the joint will of its populace which gives it legitimacy to act with authority over its boundaries. As such, the state can exercise unilateral legitimate use of force to defend its territorial boundaries. Therefore, in other to thoroughly understand the relationship between a state and other states or group of states, within the global system, the theories through which a state operates should be examined.

The Realism Theory advocated by academics such as Carr and Niebuhr amongst others opined that the global community lacks a central authority whose duty is to direct the functions and activities of all states. Also they posited that there is a lack of morality with a tendency for jungle justice. Similarly, realists maintain an argument that due to a state's existence and partaker in the chaotic global community, war is often regarded as a legitimate means of policy, in such scenarios where the global community may not adequately guarantee a state's security, endangering its existence (Baylis, 2005). Inadvertently, the core mandate of a state, either big or small, is to survive, and this can be achieved by aligning with more powerful states for protection. Therefore, the survival of a state is based on its ability to guarantee its security; a necessary precondition for civic society to be established and will do all within its rights to seek power in other to protect self (Baylis,2008).

However, this situation puts states into a high uncertainty level about the interests, ambitions and military objectives of its neighbours, viewed as potential enemies, resulting in a security dilemma. Fear and lack of trust among states is the driving force for this security dilemma, with a renewed effort in building its military capabilities to ensure its survival, potentially increasing the likelihood of war. This theory suitably explains the cause of war within the global community. While it is widely agreed that the theory of realism has explained this conceptual global phenomena, the liberalists possesses a differing opinion.

The position of the liberalist is that the characteristics of each state differ. While some states pursue peace, other states are prone to wage war. Furthermore, the global community grants each states specific rights and do not interfere in states' domestic affairs. Although both set of realists and liberalists have a common agreement that war is inevitable, to public opinion and the concept of collective security will help minimise potential conflicts and war (Schneider, 1960). The liberalist believes that humans are rational and the possibilities of war can be prevented. The liberalist difference in opinion is based on the causal factors for war. Waltz argued that the undemocratic stance within international politics, most especially the balance of power and foreign policies are the major cause of war while also stating that a system of open governance sensitive views morality as the core of human survival and eliminating the idea of war can lead to higher human morality. The liberalists further argued that a mechanism in which states contributes resources and give up its sovereignty for the growth of the region is the most appropriate means of solving regional problems. This implies that states will be willing to cooperate and interact peacefully with its neighbours within their purview.

**Methods, Techniques or Modes Of Inquiry**

This study was conducted in West Africa, an area commonly referred to as the Economic Community of West Africa. The researcher adopted the qualitative methodology using the following to elicit and analyse information:

1. Interview
2. Library Research

The interview process comprised of people who have worked closely with ECOWAS or have in depth knowledge of its operations. A newspaper journalist who was stationed in the northeastern region of Nigeria for several months during and was able to observe the Boko Haram crisis was one of such interviewers that provided perspective on conflicts and peacekeeping missions by the armed forces in the restive zone. A retired general of the Nigerian army, who participated actively in the Nigerian Civil War (1967-1970), was another contributor to the

interview.  A secondary method, which relied on library research was also utilized from materials documented by other researchers was also instrumental to the qualitative study.

The area of the study, which is the ECOWAS region, is the major regional economic unit of Sub-Saharan Western Africa and the focus of the research. The region covers 15 nations – one of which is an island state. ECOWAS constitutes a total landmass of 5,112,903 square miles and a population of approximately 333,111,540 people with a combined gross domestic product of just over 342.5 Billion USD.

Along the West African coast line to the south is covered by dense tropical rain forests which is rich in timber, to the North the savannah belt further north wards is the Sahara desert. the sub region is richly endowed with best mineral deposit in Africa which includes amongst others gold, iron ore, copper, crude oil, diamond, chromium, bauxite, tin, phosphate, manganese and so on which makes up the bulk of the community export trade to the outside world. Although the sub region is rich in culture, mineral resources and history the region represent a people long plague with defining their place in a chaotic world.

**Research Conclusions**

The effectiveness of the Economic Community of West African States Monitoring Group (ECOMOG) was undermined for much of its early days of operation in Liberia due to the bad press it received from the media. This was, no doubt, also due to the inability and inadequacy of the ECOWAS to manage its information dissemination mechanism, which promptly undermined its public image and perception.

A major problem that the ECOWAS body faced in its early days of operations was the absence of a clear cut agreement amongst the political leaders in the region with regards to the responsibilities and mandate of ESF. For instance, some member states supported the Charles Taylor-led rebel group during the Liberian Civil War, which proved threatened the Economic Community of West African States Monitoring Group (ECOMOG) effectiveness and that of ECOWAS.

Another problem was noticed in the area of inter-contingent differences regarding training, capability and resources. Owing to the Economic Community of West African States Monitoring Group (ECOMOG) troop's different background, some troops from some member state are reasonably trained and well equipped while others are far less prepared. However, the internal political upheavals most of its members have faced including crippling civil wars that have wrought havoc to some member countries (Elbadawi & Sambanis, 2000). Even though the coups that were regular distractions to political institutional building in ECOWAS member states have subsided, the military predisposition to take power from civilian governments remains an existential threat.

While the opening of borders was meant as a means for encouraging economic activities among member states in West Africa, it has, however, been the bane of security in the region due to the fact that it enables uncontrollable movement of people across national borders.

This was discovered to be an issue of security concern for governments. People have seized that opportunity to perpetrate heinous crimes against the state. The issue of terrorism and insurgency readily comes to mind. Perhaps, the biggest challenge to the solidarity of ECOWAS members has been internal and comes from the cultural divide between its Francophone and Anglophone members. Both have suspicion about the administrative competencies of one another in managing the affairs of ECOWAS.

The challenges of regional collective security within the ECOWAS region were also discovered to be the inability to completely prevent the occurrences of conflicts, which were found to be rooted in political rivalries, tribalism and ethnic differences, religious differences as well as poverty (Collier & Bannon, 2003).

While those are the root causes, they have, however, resulted in political upheavals, civil wars, piracy, oil militancy, internal insurrection, terrorism, human trafficking as well as gun-running in the region. These challenges are complicated and continue to impose threats to peace in West Africa, particularly with regard to concerted efforts by the different governments in combating them. In recent times, the prime security challenge in the West African region, which is religious fundamentalism and terrorism, has not only threatened the peace in northern Nigeria, but also made it a volatile region, thereby causing a retrogression in social and economic activity there. Terrorists have not only continued their onslaught in northern Nigeria, killing both civilians and military forces but they have also grounded economic activities to a halt, making it impossible for people to live normally in the region. These acts of terrorism, which has spilled into neighbouring countries like Chad, Niger, and Cameroon, has also had similar effects in those countries, though not to the same degree as it is in Nigeria.

Though states in West Africa practice democracy nowadays, the influences of the long years of military administration still impacts on governance as democratic governments, in some cases, conduct affairs in an autocratic manner. The adverse effect of this is that members of the civil society do not have a cordial relationship with the military class and security agencies. Due to the brutalization members of the civil society suffered in the hands of the military during the years of military rule, members of the armed forces are often perceived with morbid fear and disdain, while the latter considers the former to be somewhat inferior due to their civilian status.

An interview with a retired army general in Nigeria revealed that a major challenge with security in the ECOWAS region is due to the poor relationship between security agencies and civilians – an effect of the years of military rule. The interview also noted that this is in particular a vital challenge to preventing conflicts and security problems. He cited the incidences of religious extremism as well as kidnappings, noting that the actors of those heinous acts live within common people who are usually aware of what they do. To effectively police a state, he explained, requires joint efforts of prevention by both armed forces and civilians. He said explained that what Nigeria and many other West African countries often do is to engage the civilians in joint efforts after the outbreak of conflicts instead of before. If the relationship between the military and civilians is of a cordial nature, then an early warning system will promptly prepare security agencies to effectively forestall activities such as kidnappings, terrorism, gunrunning, and other vile acts before they are carried out.

Besides the political instability in the ECOWAS region, which is a causative challenge for collective security, another challenge is that of finance. Financial power to provide the necessary resources to prevent as well as combat security issues have been cited as a challenge for collective security in the region. This was echoed by the former Deputy Force Commander of the United Nations Assistance Mission in Sierra Leone, Major General Martin Luther Agwai, who cited finance as one of the reasons African states are unable to provide peacekeeping assistance to neighbouring states.

Though solving politically-related uprisings such as wave of violence clashes arising from coup d'états and restoring peace to war-torn states has been its predominant occupation in the area of conflict resolution in its early years, ECOWAS has had to deal with additional security issues of a different kind in the past two

decades, which are kidnappings, human trafficking, and religious extremism (or terrorism). Forty-two years after its creation, ECOWAS continues to deal with security issues at the expense of its original objective, which is the economic cooperation among member states. This is considered a huge distraction towards economic progress in the region. Government corruption among West African states continues to multiply poverty rates, consequently leading to surge in criminal activities. Human trafficking, according to Chairman of ECOWAS, Liberia President Ellen Sirleaf Johnson, has become lucrative for perpetrators to the extent that proceeds from the illicit trade (in persons) has risen to about $32 billion annually. Sirleaf noted that trafficking remains a serious human security challenge that defies collective endeavours.

Religious extremism in northern Nigeria and neighbouring states is another security issue that has undermined economic activity to a devastating extent whereby people are driven from their communities in large numbers and forced to become refugees in camps for internally displaced persons (IDPs). Refugee crisis is not germane to alone. According to a finding by the Migration Policy Institute (2003), violence in one ECOWAS state easily spreads to a neighbouring state due to the porous nature of borders. These spates of violence leave millions of displaced people in its wake, turning residents of communities into refugees in another region. The recent political crises in both Mali and Ivory Coast created thousands of refugees, a problem that ECOWAS has not been able to resolve completely. The post-election violence in Ivory Coast led to the death of an estimated three thousand people from 2010 to 2011 and created thousands of refugees displaced across Ghana, Liberia, and Togo. The United Nations Refugee Agency pegs the figure of displaced Ivorian at about 94,000 spread abroad in the neighbouring states of Ghana, Liberia, and Togo, while about 24,000 are displaced internally within Ivory Coast (Boisvert, 2017).

Though West Africa, and much of the entire continent of Africa, often looks towards the west in solving some of its economic problems through foreign aid, loans, and grants, security challenges and the attempt to solve them presents a different approach. Foreign military intervention on the African continent has not been encouraged since the early sixties when the United Nations peacekeeping operations in Congo failed terribly as the UN recorded its highest number of casualties in a peacekeeping effort in its Congo campaign than in any other mission ever. Though the western world is often perceived as sophisticated in its military prowess, African countries are suited to solving their own security challenges due to their understanding of cultures, languages, and other deep-seated differences among local communities.

Looking inwards to solving the security challenges in the region includes a joint partnership between military agencies and members of the civil society in these states in the ECOWAS region. Modern information technologies can enhance the abilities of military forces to nip security challenges in the bud. Through the use of the internet and telecommunications, different military headquarters can collaborate to share intelligence reports in real time, thus providing technical and expert assistance to one another.

In order to design functional information systems, it is important to understand the different information and intelligence needs of specific member states of ECOWAS. Additionally, member states will need to have a baseline standard of information that is required from every member, including data on people in transit between countries to promote data capturing and storage.

It was discovered that information sharing as well as accessibility to intelligence reports among member states can help enhance security in the ECOWAS region. Being able to detect vulnerabilities and uncover security threats would, however, require collaboration among the different security agencies of member states.

Another reason that was discovered to be a source of conflicts in the region is the fact that member states in the ECOWAS region have abundant natural resources, which inevitably contributes to restiveness in the area. In Nigeria where there is an abundance of crude oil, a major source of its national income, the interest in the country and its natural resources extends from the local to the national, regional, and global levels. The fact that countries in West Africa are typically made up of different ethnic groups create a competition of sorts for resources, which often leads to dissension among these different ethnicities. Despite the success recorded by the ECOWAS peacekeeping missions in Africa, the vulnerability of the region to violence makes economic activity a risky one and only a peaceful atmosphere can guarantee that the original objectives on which the ECOWAS was founded will be achieved.

**Discussion**

ECOWAS began as an economic community aimed towards the integration of member states to leverage on each other's area of strengths. The idea of a collective economic organ was borne out of the developments on the global stage. Though ECOWAS has been able to record some successes in its main objective, the challenge, however, has been the need to ensure security in the region, which influenced its position to align with the Non-Aggression protocol as well as the protocol pertaining to the Mutual Assistance on Defence (ECOWAS, 1999).

A new protocol came into effect in 1999, thereby strengthening the ability of ECOWAS to control conflicts in member states. The Protocol Relating to the Mechanism for Conflict Prevention, Management, Resolution, Peacekeeping and Security came into effect in the ECOWAS region in 1999 and was regarded as the basis that empowers the community to intervene in member states in the event of an outbreak of violence. This served as a replacement to earlier protocols and nullified the non-intervention principle. The 1999 protocol was influenced by the experience gained during the wars in Liberia and Sierra Leone. The new protocol, also, emphasized certain aspects of the ECOWAS treaty, such as the economic integration of member states, freedom of movement of persons, fostering democratic ideals, promotion and protection of human rights, respect for sovereignty and recognition of the political integrity of members' states.

Economic Community of West African States Monitoring Group (ECOMOG), like any other similar regional security mechanism globally, has had its own fair share of challenges at maintaining regional peace. The differences in political orientation, economic imbalance between states, individual self-interest, inadequate funding, obsolete equipment and poor logistics are major challenges faced by ECOWAS from achieving its regional aims. One of the fundamental issues affecting ECOWAS and the UN arises from not reaching a consensual agreement on what constitutes a threat to security and the operability of its mandate. Certain clauses are contained in the ECOWAS protocol that permits it to act without recourse to the authority of the UN. In the case of the conflicts in Sierra Leone and Liberia, no agreement was reached on any mandate between ECOMOG and the UN, which then allowed ECOMOG to unilaterally enforce actions against rebels without any authorization from the UN, regardless of the legitimate cause of the enforcement. Lack of operational logistics

support and resources for some states forces, and inefficient man power to handle the resultant humanitarian crisis were challenges to the overall success of the mission. Also, lack of funding meant the Nigerian state, which contributed the largest resources, manipulated the mission so as to advance its own national interests and regional reach.

In the mid-twentieth century, African leaders realized that regional cooperation would be necessary for the maximization of the continent's vast potentials and resources post-independence. Prior to the formation of ECOWAS various attempts had been made by governments in West Africa to form an economic system that serves the interest of the region. It was not until April 1972, when the idea of establishing an economic cooperation that could cut across language and cultural barriers was pursued by General Yakubu Gowon of Nigeria and President Gnassingbe Eyadema of Togo. These two leaders were convinced that the regional economic block would foster economic development within the region. For that purpose, both Yakubu Gowon and Gnassingbe Eyadema prepared a proposal pertaining to the structure and scope of the proposed West African Community. In 1973, they undertook a tour of twelve West African countries with a draft agreement to sell the idea.

A meeting was called in Lome, Togo in 1973 to deliberate on the draft agreement and subsequent meetings were held to consider and amend the draft treaty which finally led to the creation of ECOWAS on May 28, 1975 in Lagos. Upon creation of ECOWAS, fifteen members comprising former French, British and Portuguese colonies signed the Treaty of Lagos, namely: Dahomey (Benin), Upper Volta (Burkina Faso), Cote d'Ivoire, Gambia, Ghana, Guinea Conakry,  Guinea-Bissau, Liberia, Mali, Niger, Nigeria, Senegal, Sierra Leone, Mauritania, and Togo. Cape Verde, an island nation, joined ECOWAS in 1976, bringing the membership to 16. In 2002, Mauritania left the ECOWAS. Though there has not been any specific reason for Mauritania's exit, one reason given by the African Union was that Mauritania was hesitant about merging military forces and removing border and tariff restrictions. After the creation of ECOWAS, the organization struggled with achieving its economic objectives as it was overshadowed with numerous challenges in conflict resolution, environment issues, development issues, issues of governance, promotion of enterprises, gender and equality and humanitarian issues. There was therefore an urgent need to revise the 1975 treaty of Lagos to accommodate the challenges and draw up more comprehensive integrative objectives. The 1975 treaty was revised on 24th July, 1993 to capture all the challenges that led to the revision. To this end, provision was made to ensure security in the region that required members to work towards enhancing peace and promoting security and stability in the region.

Ever since it was created in 1975, ECOWAS has had numerous challenges in the area of combating a surge in conflicts and instability in member states, which exhausts its ability and resources originally meant for economic development. The sub-regional entity witnessed loss of lives, destruction of property and economic infrastructure as well as the displacement of thousands as a result of extreme violence and conflict. This made ECOWAS to realize that Economic development could not be achieved without the presence of peace and stability. It was in this context that ECOWAS leaders moved to adopt security measures that would safeguard the region.

The first attempt by the organization to move towards collective security started with the adoption of the Protocol on Non-aggression in 1978, which commanded them to refrain from the threat and use of force or

aggression against one another. This protocol was however criticized for failing to provide an institutionalized response mechanism in case of any breach.

By 1981, another protocol, on mutual assistance in defense, was ratified and became effective in 1986. This instructed members to a collective security defense treaty by accepting that a threat or aggression against one member was a threat against the community as a whole. This protocol was criticized for focusing on external threat without taking into cognizance the threat of coups and internal conflicts that destabilized the region from 1970-1990. Also, some member states, particularly francophone states, feared the influence Nigeria might exert in implementing this protocol and whether such influence would align with their common objectives or was to cut away the influence of France with whom they maintain defense pacts, while others pointed out that the protocol would diminish their states' sovereignty. ECOWAS' transition into security entered into a critical stage with the Liberian crisis in 1989; with no institution to respond to the conflict, which forced ECOWAS to create an ad hoc security mechanism for curbing the menace. This led member states to establish the Standing Mediation Committee (SMC) in May 1990 with the aim of finding a peaceful resolution to the conflict. SMC established and deployed ECOWAS Ceasefire Monitoring Observer Group (ECOMOG).

ECOMOG recorded laudable achievement in its peacekeeping operations in West Africa among others, Liberia in 1990, and Sierra Leone in 1997 and in Guinea-Bissau in 1999. Nevertheless, lessons learnt from these various peacekeeping operations led to the initiation of a process meant to improve future interventions. The revised treaty of 1993 took into account issues pertaining to security, good governance, conflict resolution and management and witnessed the establishment of various protocols to enhance its security mechanisms. In 1999, members of ECOWAS adopted the Mechanism for Conflict Prevention, Management and Resolution, Peace and Security as a mechanism to strengthen sub regional conflict management and prevention capacity. The new mechanism was adopted against the background of not only the organization's involvement in Liberia but also for the developments of its mediation system.  Unlike its earlier principle of non-intervention, the ECOWAS Collective Security Mechanism empowers the body to intercede and mediate in disputes among or within member states.

The Liberian Civil War, which started in 1989, was a true test of ECOWAS commitment to security issues. The crisis had its origin from the manner in which the country was established, organized and governed up to the election in 1985. The Liberian crisis, though appears to be local in nature, had the potentials of not only devastating the country's economic and security but posed serious threat to its immediate neighbours and the sub region at large. The crisis degenerated into full blown humanitarian crisis forcing the migration of about five hundred Liberian citizens to as far as outside the sub-region. This number later burgeoned to over one million, degenerating into a humanitarian disaster on a large scale, forcing thousands to seek refuge in neighbouring countries and beyond the sub-region, thereby straining the struggling economies of these countries.

Under these circumstances, member states of ECOWAS established the Standing Mediation Committee (SMC) with the express aim of finding a peaceful resolution to the conflict. Notwithstanding these steps, the Liberian crisis defied immediate solution despite the military and political initiatives of ECOMOG. Before the end of the war in 1996 ECOMOG was able to obtain a cease fire, thereby restoring peace and political stability in the war torn zone. It took seven years of intertribal war and of frequently broken cease-fires, for the combined efforts of ECOWAS, African Union and United Nations to impose a settlement and to organize elections. The crisis

in Liberia was of concern to ECOWAS leaders who feared it could spill into neighbouring states in the region, and by 1991 that fear came true as the Revolutionary United Front in Sierra Leone launched a revolution from Liberian territory to overthrow the government of the All People's Congress.

Despite this laudable achievement recorded by ECOWAS over the years, one wonders why the group has been able to do little with the current security challenges of the region. Since inception it has been faced with economic, political and security challenges which have unable her to attain her full potentials. The problems and challenges facing collective security arrangement in West Africa are enormous. Past ECOWAS peace and collective security ideas faced certain challenges that prevented it from achieving the expected peace and stability required in the region.

For most of the years before 1980, countries in West Africa, and largely the entire continent, were unable to provide solutions to the security challenges bedevilling the region. African states sought alternative solutions to security crises on the continent. The experience of the crisis in Congo in the early eighties, coupled with substantial presence of African troops in the mission, proved that Africans were suited to solving their own problems. Since that period, Africans have contributed largely to solving their own problems by providing military forces to help quell violence and restiveness in neighbouring states.

## Recommendations

Based on the findings of the study, certain recommendations are necessary in order to improve the state of collective security in the ECOWAS region. These recommendations include the need for governments of member states in the community to re-emphasize the important nature of the enactment of the institutional reform put forward in 2013 for the purpose of reinforcing ECOWAS' capability in peacekeeping, security, and socio-economic development. Also, heads of governments should establish a committee saddled with the responsibility of overseeing the implementation of the reform process. Members of this committee should be drawn in such a way that it reflects the diversity of West Africa. Immediate steps should be taken by the president of the ECOWAS Commission to enhance the effectiveness of the different departments in the community by improving factors that impact on administration, finance, and personnel management. Also, the ECOWAS Commission should work towards promoting transparent democracy in states, assist members in the review and reform of their democratic culture as a means to reinforcing the different political structures in those states. ECOWAS should also take initiatives to empower individual states in such a manner that they are able to challenge security threats collectively.  Just like West Africa has been engulfed in various conflicts abd violence other part of the world has similarly experienced same. However, this paper can serve as a guidline for the Thai Acdemic Insitution as well as ASEAN Community  in solving and preventing security issues as the ongoing Rohingya crises in Myanmar which if not curtailed could cause a spill over effect in Thailand and ASEAN Community .  Mistakes learnt frow ECOWAS could serve as an important lesoons for both Thailand and Asean. As Thailand continues to position itself within the ASEAN community there is need for Thailand to explore new partnership with ECOWAS Community by collaborating or engaging the ECOWAS Stand by Force (ESF) through personnel training, joint exercises and material assistance. This Strategic partnership could further enhance in the fight against terrorism, transnational and cybercrime as well as increase trade opportunites.

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