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Assessing ECOWAS early warning response networks and stand by force in resolving challenges in West Africa

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Abstract

The inability of Economic Community of West African States to effectively responds with mediation experts and trails of sanctions to earlier signals of mass protests, tenure elongations, absence of security sector reforms, premeditated constitutional crises, opaqueness of law and order, and endangered human security status from member states could be seen legalizing Military Coups in the region and disenchantment towards former colonial masters as seen in Mali, Guinea, Burkina Faso and Niger. It was against this background that this study employed State Fragility Theory to assess the impact of ECOWAS Early Warning Response Networks (ECOWARN) and ECOWAS Stand by Force (ESF) in resolving challenges in West Africa. This study adopts a qualitative research design; by reviewing publicly available archive documents on, literature concerning ECOWAS dispute resolution and intervention activities, Mediation, and peacekeeping operations. This study concludes that ill governance from democratic rules, tenure extensions, and monarchial presidency system by African leaders are triggers to coups and counter coups on the subregion and continent. Findings from this study show that the establishment of ECOWAS Stand by Force positively influences her role in resolving conflicts in West Africa. The study also submitted that there exists a weak link between ECOWAS Early Warning Response Networks and conflict resolution in the region. This study therefore recommends that ECOWAS should explore all means to maintain her Standby Force and deepen professionalisation that eschews military coups. This study also recommends that the ECOWAS's ECOWARN should go beyond data analysis on crisis build-ups to envoy and mediation experts' visits and likewise bloc's pressure on seated government to focus on governance and human security.

Keywords: Coup de tat, ECOWAS Early Warning Response Networks, Stand by Force, State Fragility Theory

Introduction

There is no gainsaying that international security and stability is a responsibility of the United Nation (UN), and the continental blocs of European Union, BRICS+, African Union, amongst others. The completeness of this structure could be seen in regional organisation; East African Community (EAC), Intergovernmental Authority on Development (IGAD), Central African Economic Community (ECCAS), Southern African Development Community (SADC) and Economic Community of West African States (ECOWAS), who are closer to member states. The ECOWAS primarily set up for economic integration of her 15 member States in 1975 has gradually transformed under the pressure of political events and insecurities, into an organization also responsible for finding solutions to armed conflicts and other political crisis undermining peace and security within her bloc.

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ECOWAS's mandate to mediate in conflicts in its member states to promote peace and security in West Africa has evolved over time and is captured in number of protocols and documents. In 1981, ECOWAS declared that mediation would be used to resolve any conflict between two of its member states (Protocol Relating to Mutual Assistance of Defence, Article 17). In 1993, ECOWAS again committed itself to the principle of peaceful settlement of disputes among member states, including the use of mediation (Revised Treaty, Article 4). Then, in 1999, in order to develop a more comprehensive peace and security architecture, ECOWAS adopted the Protocol Relating to the Mechanism for Conflict Prevention, Management, Resolution, Peace-Keeping and Security. In Article 58 of this protocol, ECOWAS committed itself to employ, where appropriate, good offices, conciliation, meditation and other methods of peaceful settlement of disputes (Atuobi, 2011).

Concerningly, the ECOWAS's Protocol on Democracy and Good Governance which states that "every accession to power must be made through free, fair, and transparent elections could be criticised for allowing coups leaders, to easily meet the requirements to be recognized as head of state if they subsequently win an election—essentially rendering it ineffective. Just as Senegal Sally tends to tenure elongation and no suspension is considered against him for tinkering with the constitution, so was it executed by Lansana Conté, whose constitutional amendment was met with large opposition protests across the country of which ECOWAS refused to sanction Condé but calling for dialogue between protesters and Condé, who later managed to win the 2020 elections which ECOWAS concluded were lawful. A year later Condé was deposed in a military coup, and ECOWAS immediately suspended and imposed sanctions on Guinea (Mills, 2022).

ECOWAS political will and organizational capability is being tested with the situation in Mali, Burkina Faso, Guinea and Niger, as the inability of the regional bloc to create inroads to stem the negative tides of democratic slides calls for review. Failure of ECOWAS preventive mechanisms to treat negative nuances from governments as posing the same threat level as nongovernmental groups could be seen as ECOWAS's major albatross. The regional bloc's Early Warning Early Response (EWER) mechanisms failed to indict State that promote blurred constitutional changes, fraudulent and opaque riddled election by State, unsettling waves of protests, and apparition of tenure elongation, all these should attract the attention, interest and intervention of ECOWAS before issues degenerated to Coups and counter Coups. The problems of ill governance, corruption, insecurity, poverty, and unemployment remain rife across ECOWAS member states. Currently, the region battles terrorism and internal security challenges due to activities of Boko Haram in North-Western Nigeria, Niger, and at the Cameroon borders, with bandits, and

armed herdsmen. Liberalization program has failed to achieve the desired results, and as such economic development has been slowed down by political challenges (Igwe et al., 2021).

Interestingly, the ease of doing business among member nations, ECOWAS citizens, business owners, and investors to travel, invest, and pull together resources to achieve economic integration amidst plethora of internal security challenges define ECOWAS ability to make lives easier for her region (Igwe et al., 2021). The plethora of internal security challenges in the arms conflicts in Mali even under a military rule, the Islamic State of West African Province (ISWAP) ravaging Northeast Nigeria, Coups de'tat and political instability orchestrated by the tenure elongation syndrome among the political class in member States. All these emerging pattern call for the need to examine ECOWAS mechanisms for resolving conflicts; The Authority of Heads of State and Government, The Mediation and Security Council, ECOWAS Conflict Prevention Framework, The Council of Wise, ECOWAS Stand by Force, and ECOWAS Early Warning and Response Network (ECOWARN).

The ECOWAS adoption of the Protocol Relating to the Mechanism for Conflict Prevention, Management is a more comprehensive peace and security architecture, after 24years of existence, shows the need for mediation in member state, in a strong effort to achieve regional stability and security. Six years after her establishment ECOWAS saw the need for mediation among member states beyond economic affairs and deeply into security related issues, all in a bid to secure her initial and primary goal; of economic stability to raise standard of living through cooperation and integration of an economic union. The conflicts in which ECOWAS has intervened that are examined in this study, shared similar characteristics: civil conflicts based on struggle primarily for political power, tenure elongation, and, at times, over resources. While ECOWAS approaches in these situations has been similar; mediations, sanctions, suspensions, or the threat of military interventions.

Inadvertently, efforts of ECOWAS at conflict prevention, management birthed the ECOWAS Early Warning and Response Network (ECOWARN), its establishment and functioning are defined by the Protocol, Relating to the Mechanism for Conflict Prevention, Management, Resolution, Peacekeeping and Security of December 1999. ECOWARN expectedly is an Early Warning Early Response (EWER) mechanism whose analysis of events of protests, constriction of press freedoms, persecution of oppositions, endangered human security, could alert the regional blocs when member states are sliding into weak governance status. These signals could amply transmits degeneration into anarchy, tenure elongation, unpopular constitutional amendment, opaque electoral process and arm struggle. The question then is despite the presence of all these signals, why does ECOWAS only acted when coups finally occurred and

not before. While analyst could submit that ECOWAS member countries are not yet ready to give up some of their sovereignty to their regional organisation (ECOWAS, 2023).

Furthermore, another preventive mechanism is the ECOWAS peacekeeping Operation or Stand by Force, first tagged ECOWAS Monitoring Group (ECOMOG), which restored civil rule in Liberia uprising of 1989 rebel group, coup and counter coups and in Gambia's 2020 debacle, after constitutional crisis of refusal to step down by the outgoing president. ECOWAS also maintains a Standby force, not only to restore democratic order during coup de tats but to combat terrorism, drug trafficking, as Observers, peace building and peacekeeping operation missions (Obiezu, 2022). The incapability of funding by member states couple with fragile political situation at home of each member state could be seen limiting the ESF (Tejpar & de Albuquerque, 2015), and particularly the dominance of intervention of France in most francophone nations with reluctance to abdicate such roles to ECOWAS while both international bodies and continental bodies stay at the background, while regional bodies takes the lead, as played out in Mali, and Burkina Faso

Worrisomely, most of ECOWAS interventions are on ad hoc basis thus lacking the institutional structures that would have provided expert support for designing peace agreements that could hold water in the field. The overreliance on mediators who are presidents, Chairman, past chairmen, and past presidents as mediators or because of a belief that they could use their influence as elder statesmen and experienced leaders in the region, call for review. The likelihood that sometimes it is difficult to guarantee the neutrality of a president mediator, and the choice of someone perceived to be biased complicates the conflict rather than solves it, coupled with the tendency for sitting presidents to propose solutions instead of allowing the parties to do so themselves. Additionally, ECOWAS member countries are not yet ready to give up some of their sovereignty to their regional organisation, and this could be seen constricting the bloc's capability to intervene prior to the crises.

In a bid to achieve the objective of this study, the following research questions were answered;

a. What is the influence of ECOWAS Stand by Force on resolving challenges in West Africa?
b. How does the ECOWARN network affect resolving challenges in West Africa?

The rest of the paper is organized as follows. Section II presents a review of the literature on the ECOWAS, ECOWAS conflict management mechanism of ECOWARN and ECOWAS Stand by Force. Section III briefly discusses the empirical review in the paper. Section IV describes the theoretical framework underpinning the study. Section V presents the methodology adopted by the study. The final section provides concluding remarks and recommendations

Literature Review

Economic Community of West African States

The Economic Community of West African States ECOWAS Treaty (also known as the Treaty of Lagos) established the community when it was signed in Lagos, Nigeria, on May 28, 1975. ECOWAS main goal is to promote economic cooperation among member states in order to raise living standards and promote economic development. This regional bloc developed a Stand by Force (ESF) to address some security issues for conflicts in the region. ECOWAS established its free trade area in 1990 and adopted a common external tariff in January 2015. The ECOWAS body has 15 members of Benin, Burkina Faso, Cabo Verde, Cote d'Ivoire, The Gambia, Ghana, Guinea, Guinea-Bissau, Liberia, Mali, Niger, Nigeria, Senegal, Sierra Leone, and Togo. The regional Organisation is headquartered in Abuja, Nigeria. The Official languages of the regional body are English, French, and Portuguese.

The structure of the Economic Community has changed several times over the years. In June 2019, ECOWAS has seven active institutions: the Authority of Heads of State and Government (which is the leading body), the ECOWAS Commission (the administrative instrument), the Community Parliament, the Community Court of Justice, the ECOWAS Bank for Investment and Development (EBID), the West African Health Organisation (WAHO), and the Inter-Governmental Action Group against Money Laundering and Terrorism Financing in West Africa (GIABA) (Boddy-Evans, 2019).

ECOWAS Conflict Management Mechanisms

The ECOWAS Standby Force

The ECOWAS Standby Force (ESF) is a standby arrangement made up of military, police and civilian components as recognised by Chapter VIII of the United Nations Charter which provides for regional peace and security arrangements. The ESF means the use of force as a last resort if diplomacy fails and it is a part of the larger African Standby Force (ASF) structure, which comprises five regional forces; North, Eastern, Western, Central, and Southern (William, 2023). The December 2022 ECOWAS Summit, established a regional peacekeeping force aimed at countering terrorism and reinstating democratic governance following military coups. The Standby Force is headed by the chiefs of defence staff from member countries. In addition to fighting military coups and violent extremism, ECOWAS target using the Standby Force to help discourage extremist, jihadist, and secessionist groups from hoisting flags through violence (Al Jazeera, 2023; Okojie, 2023).

The ESF is an operational multipurpose structure the Protocol on Mutual Assistance in Defence signed in 1981 in Freetown (now known as Protocol Relating to the Mechanism for Conflict Prevention, Management, Resolution, Peace-Keeping and Security promulgated in 1999). The ESF functions are

observation and monitoring; peacekeeping and restoration of peace; humanitarian interventions; disarmament and demobilisation; policing activities, enforcement of sanctions, including embargo; preventive deployment; peace building; including the control of fraud and organised crime. It is usually led by a field commander. It was last led by Colonel Magatte Ndiaye, a Senegalese soldier, when it restored peace in The Gambia (Atanda, 2023).

The ESF known as ECOMOG, is the military arm of ECOWAS formed in 1990 to regularly intervene in conflicts within the region. It made an unprecedented intervention in Liberia in 1990 and successfully restored order. ECOMOG's next stop was Freetown, in 1997 to restore democratic rule of Ahmed Kabbah that was overthrown by Major Koroma in a military coup. In 1999 ECOMOG was on a ceasefire mission in Guinea Bissau after hostilities broke out after an attempted coup in 1998. The ESF was on spot in 2003 after Ivorian armed forces and rebel groups came to a ceasefire agreement as troops are deployed as ECOMICI to complement the United Nations and French troops. The ESF under ECOWAS Mission in Liberia (ECOMIL), served as an interposition force, keeping the warring parties apart and facilitating the arrival of the United Nations Mission in the Liberia second civil war in 2003. The 2012 coup in Mali saw ECOWAS leading the Africa International Support Mission in Mali (AFISMA) to support the Malian government in the fight against rebels in 2013. In 2017, ECOWAS Mission (ECOMIG) was in Banjul to force Yahya Jammel to concede election loss to Adama Barrow in the 2016 election (Al Jazeera, 2023).

The ECOWAS Early Warning and Response Network

The ECOWAS Early Warning and Response Network (ECOWARN) is an observation and monitoring tool for conflict prevention and decision-making. As set out in Article 58 of the revised 1993 ECOWAS Treaty, its establishment and functioning are defined by the Protocol, Relating to the Mechanism for Conflict Prevention, Management, Resolution, Peacekeeping and Security of December 1999. The implementation of this tool begun in 2003, while the Observation and Monitoring Centre is based in Abuja. It has a Situation Room and works with analysts, experts and ECOWAS personnel. ECOWAS created the Peace Exchange Forum which is a specialize online dialogue platform through which relevant actors can exchange and improve synergies among their actions. In line with 2022-2026 Strategic objectives of the ECOWARN directorate, the goal to meet with key partners in order to foster collaboration with the aim of strengthening ECOWARN with improved technical, technological, communication and state of the art tools for enhanced data mining (ECOWAS, 2023).

The zone offices are like observation and monitoring offices, respecting the State sovereignty, ECOWAS has relied on open information sources, which has nothing to do with what is called "intelligence or counter-intelligence" which remains State's prerogative. This open information is transmitted by

ECOWAS-trained civil liaison officers, members of civil society, in each zone capital. Each office works in liaison with a government representative (a member of the administration) and civil society representative (mostly members of West African Network for Peacebuilding (WANEP). Each week, national focal points have to fill in an ECOWARN risk indicator form. Once the various weekly reports and the incident reports on the situation in countries in question have been analysed and the indicator form has been filled out, every Monday the head of the zone office sends his report to the ECOWAS Early Warning Department in Abuja (Sagna, 2009).

MALI

The escalation of violence that culminated in the recorded all-time high violence and death in Mali is largely unconnected with the entry of the Russian private military company, the Wagner Group in 2022, as Wagner mercenaries enabled the violent return of the Malian Armed Forces (FAMa) to areas from which they had previously largely withdrawn, enabling FAMa to become the deadliest actor in Mali for the first time throughout the conflict (ACLED, 2023). This development further pushes back ECOWAS interventions as Mali severe defence pact with her former colonial master France, as this further reinforce the purely military approach by militarizing society little or no attention to governance. Mali is the epicenter of violence in the Sahel, traces of Ghadaffi's empowerment of the Tuaregs rebel is still potent.

The August 18, 2020 coup followed closely months of protests calling for Keita to step down as public discontent with the government grew over alleged corruption, persistent economic woes, ongoing Tuareg rebellion, and worsening security in large parts of the country where affiliates of al-Qaeda and ISIS are active. Government was implicated in provisioning of support of some local militias against others and accusation of abuses and extrajudicial killings by Malian troops perpetuated deep-seated mistrust and enmity in regions with little official presence otherwise. ECOWAS mediators as led by Former Nigeria President Jonathan, announced that deposed President Keita insisted that he has resigned, that he was not forced to resign and that he does not want to return, as he simply wants a quick transition for Mali to return as soon as possible to a civilian regime (Al Jazeera, 2020).

Disheartenedly, in Mali's peace and security function, ECOWAS has been largely absent in Mali, leaving France, the EU, and the U.S. to fill the vacuum to combat violent extremism—has had difficulty raising money and establishing the necessary structures and capacity to fulfill its mission to address violent extremism in the region. There is no apparent concerted to develop towards navigating Mali out of the political crisis and ill governance. For many Malians, President Keita was a symbol of government corruption, of international interference and inaction, of ongoing instability, and of the lack of health care, infrastructure, and education. But IBK's ouster alone will not fix Mali's profound political, economic, and

security challenges. The Malian crisis shows the importance of investing in rule of law and governance in times of peace, and during conflict (Fornof & Cole, 2020).

GUINEA

Guinea has a history of one party system, military incursion into the civil space and longserving rulers such as Ahmed Sékou Touré and Lansana Conté, who served as president for twenty-five and twenty-four years, respectively. ECOWAS blindness to political rascality but quickness at suspending and sanctioning member states, only to then readmit and allow them to participate in ECOWAS activities so long as they fulfilled the requirements of holding a "democratic election" generates counterproductive image for the regional bloc. Perpetuating this trend in 2020, former president Alpha Condé as the first president to be elected democratically amended the constitution to allow himself to serve for two more terms. The moves of the constitutional amendment, was met with large opposition protests across the country. Despite the protests, ECOWAS responded only be calling for dialogue between the two sides and refused to sanction Condé.

Condé managed to win the skewed 2020 elections, which election observers from ECOWAS concluded were lawful, upholding the results. One year later, Condé was deposed in a military coup, and ECOWAS immediately suspended and imposed sanctions on Guinea. This further queries ECOWARN relevance and also ECOWAS ESF moral ground to set boot on ground in Guinea

Burkina Faso

Burkina Faso with the most successful Coups number is at par with Ghana and Sierra Leone on ten incidences Mali, Burkina Faso and Guinea have not been able to stem the circle of violence after coming to power. Major spiraling problems in Burkina Faso revolve around weak and opaque political developments occasioned by sit tight syndrome by past and successive presidents, the gross abuses by Islamist Armed Groups oiled by apparent absence of governance which create a narratives for the Jihadists, abuses and absence of accountability by State Security Forces and Pro-Government Militia, prevalence of hate Speech and Incitements amongst others

The Jihadist are in control of 40% of the territory as they seek to control the country's gold mines and regional economic trade routes connecting other landlocked Sahel countries to the West African coast while the international partners are involved in tackling terrorism, the presence of ECOWAS is yet to be found and this call for review (Breslawski & Fleishman, 2022).

The Burkinabe military Junta did not face mass public opposition, mostly due to the general sense of frustration with insecurity. despite sanctioning efforts of ECOWAS, the Juntas expressed willingness to

maintain counterterrorism cooperation with France which received a positive signal from Paris, further circumvent efforts of ECOWAS to enforce military intervention. Burkina Faso which is fastly overtaking Mali in violence and death occurrence despite under military regime shows that the escalation curve of the conflict is likely to continue between pro-government militiamen, rival fighters from the al-Qaeda-affiliated Jamaa Nusra al-Islam wa al-Muslimin (JNIM). and Islamic State Sahel (ISS) (Armed Conflict Location & Event Data Project (ACLED), 2023).

Niger Republic

Ironically, Bazoum received accolades for containing the jihadists' menace in the Sahel, anti-corruption programs notably in the oil sector on past administration protégés, combating Boko Haram terrorism and banditry, focus on girl child education, improving literacy, and reducing poverty. While Bazoum made enemies in the process of bringing into accountability Nigerien army forces (Aksar et al., 2023). Concerningly, the absence of Security Sector Reform (SSR) in Niger, could be seen when president Bazoum, relieved the Chief of Staff of the Niger Armed Forces; Gen Mody of his role, with UAE Envoy posting which the latter refused (Gen Modi is now Vice President to the Junta), also efforts at downsizing Niger presidential Guard of about 700 men, ongoing budget scrutinizing, and a review of Gen Tchiani 10yrs non posting as Presidential Guard Commander; Tchiani was not the only one who saw his job under threat this draw the ire of ECOWAS.

Sentiment against France is also rife, despite Bazoum clamp down on protest against France, which could also be one of his undoing particularly housing the France troop earlier dislodged by the Junta in Mali amidst Nigeriens belief that France policies have not been fair to the masses (Issoufou & Ochieng, 2023). This sentiment against France also confers a seeming legitimacy and acceptance on the Junta (Mu'azu, 2023). Sensitivity bordering on Niger shows that an ECOWAS-Niger military intervention conflicts could empower Islamist militants, and minority communities which could trigger outbreak of civil conflicts (Ritter, 2023).

Empirical Review

Mu'azu et al. (2023) investigated the influencing roles of social media and emerging multi polar world order on ECOWAS military intervention in Niger Republic. The study engaged qualitative research design, The findings from the study revealed that the Nigeria government lost swift military interventions in the people's courts to the influence of social media restraints, which painted the intervention as war and a needless war against her Northern region which share ethnical, families and economic ties with Niger. The study did not interrogate the other preventive mechanism of ECOWAS which this study does

Ani and Amusan (2016) empirically examined peace and conflict management in West Africa by the Economic Community of West African States primarily formed to promote multidimensional cooperation that will bring peace and sustainable development in Sub-Saharan Africa. The study was a qualitative study with reliance on related secondary source of data. Findings from the study revealed how organs of the ECOWAS has successfully managed a number of conflicts in Sierra Leone, Liberia, Guinea Bissau and Cote d' Ivoire, while highlighting the policies and programs adopted to manage conflict and promote sustainable development. Study submitted that a multi-track approach in the war against terrorism, revolution, multi-dimensional conflicts and political crisis that have bedeviled the West African region should be considered. Study was done with general focus on all organs while this study specifically focused on the wise men council and peacekeeping operation and referent to the Gambia operation which the study did not capture hence the need to fill the gap in literature.

Terwase et al. (2018) investigated the role ECOWAS played in the past in sustaining peace and security in the West African regional community, focusing on the regional body's peacekeeping operations in Liberia, Sierra Leon, and Cote d'Ivoire. The study adopted qualitative research design with secondary data sourced from related published works and internet sources. The findings that emanated from the study showed that there exists the absence of early warning mechanism by the ECOWAS hence, the need for one to be evolved. Study focused mainly on peacekeeping operations while this study extends focus to capture other mediation instruments particularly the Wise Men Council mechanism deployed in handling conflict resolution by ECOWAS.

Bosetti et al. (2016) investigated the nexus between organized crime the continual difficulty in conflict prevention and peacemaking activities by inculcating sensitivity to good practices. The study submitted that peacemakers, peacekeepers, and peacebuilders operate in highly complex and fluid strategic environments, where groups with clear criminal agendas have a major impact on conflict dynamics, peace processes, and postwar transitions. The study submitted that an increasing international recognition of the close connections between organized crime and conflict should be taken serious by integrating awareness of organized crime into conflict prevention strategies, conflict analysis, mission assessment, and planning. This is particular as it has been noticed that organised criminals desired political powers and political gladiators are also into organised crimes thus a continual loop that made violence to remain unabated. This study underscore the relevance of Early warning Early Response mechanism on how organised crimes and violence keeps violence against states in a continual loop

Odote and Nzomo (2019) interrogated the nexus between roles of Early Warning Systems in conflict prevention in Africa as necessitated by the shortcomings of the reactive nature of conflict management

approaches. The study engaged desktop research design. Findings from the study showed that the shortcomings of the existing early warning systems are due divergent scholarly perspectives and practical policy dilemmas of which many conflict early warning systems are reactive, not context specific, and in many cases early warning signs and indicators are ignored. The study concluded that an early warning and response framework that would link warning and preventive responses. Guided by the view that each conflict has its own dynamics, nature and context, response plans must be developed as part of the early warning system. The study did not consider the efforts of ECOWAS stand by Force as a preventive mechanism which this study considers.

Atuobi (2011) engaged qualitative research design to investigate the role of the economic community for West Africa States and the mechanism of mediation in the West African region of Africa. Study engaged related secondary data from published records, conferences, reports and online publications from serial and non-serial publications. Results that emanated from the study showed that the Economic Community of West African States mediation-facilitation lacks input from professional mediators as against elder statement intervention, hence many shadow interest are not captured nor involved in the negotiation and peace agreement drafted in creating win-win solutions. The study is quite relevant but there exist a gap in period of study as this study captures recent development as seen in the Gambia debacle which the study did not captured.

Maru (2016) interrogated the African Union's Continental Early Warning System and the nexus response using organizational culture of response, political will and depoliticisation of warning indicators The study adopted thematic analysis of semi-structured interview with 30 experts and decision-makers while referring to pertinent secondary data, with process tracing to assess the political willingness of response to conflict in Burundi. Findings submitted that that decision-makers were reluctant to discuss early warning signals of powerful African countries, struggled to put continental welfare over national interests, and lacked authority to impose decisions on member states. Study also showed that conflict early warning experts, hierarchical organizational structure, and the absence of a formal structure to bring early warning into the decision-making process limited the effective flow of early warning information to the decision-makers. On depoliticization, study revealed that the early warning indicators were developed in a technical manner, which limits subjectivity or bias. Effective conflict early response is guaranteed when decision-makers prioritize early response above political interest. Study was done on African Union while this study considers ECOWAS.

Van Wyk (2020) engaged an exploratory assessment on the Economic Community of West African States' council of Wise as a high-level panel of significant diplomatic instruments. The was engaged desktop

research approach with reliance on secondary date a s obtained from related literature. The study submitted that there is the need for improvement in the Council of the Wise innovativeness in conflict resolution and governance, in a bid to be more impactful. The study also equated the Council of the wise as an expression of traditional conflict governance due to the Council's knowledge production, and operational and normative impact. Study focused mainly on the ECOWAS council of the wise while this study captures the ECOWAS peacekeeping force in examining ECOWAS roles in resolving challenges in the West African region

Theoretical Review

The State Fragility Theory

State fragility is defined as deficiencies in one or more of three core functions of the state. These functions include state authority, state capacity and state legitimacy. Authority refers to the state's ability to control violence. Capacity refers to the state's ability to provide basic public services (Bertocchi & Guerzoni, 2011). The fragile state as articulated by Sara (2008) is the term used for countries facing severe developmental challenges such as weak institutional capacity, poor governance, political instability, unemployment, poverty and low level of economic development. It is a theory that describes how extreme poverty is concentrated in a given state, how low level of human and social development are linked to weak institutional capacity, governance and to internal conflict, all of which undermine the capacity of the state to deliver basic social and infrastructural services and offer security to citizens.

More fundamentally, a fragile state is the one that is trapped in a vicious circle of violent conflict and poverty or suffer from a natural resource curse; others face a legacy of not providing the most basic services to their citizens. Such basic services include among other things, good health facilities, good roads, quality education, electricity, good water supply etc. Slater (2012), a leading proponent of this theory has observed that a fragile state is significantly susceptible to crisis in one or more of its subsystems. According to him, a fragile state is a state that is particularly vulnerable to internal shocks as well as domestic conflicts. This implies that in a fragile state, institutional arrangement embodies and perhaps preserves the conditions of crisis both in economic and social terms. In economic terms, this could be institutions, importantly property rights that reinforce stagnation or low growth rates, or embody extreme inequality in wealth, in access to land or access to the means to make a living.

Methodology

This study adopts exploratory research design; it examines the nexus between ECOWAS preventive mechanism of ECOWARN and ECOWAS Stand by Force in resolving challenges in West Africa. The study relies solely on secondary data. The research is conducted by examining literature concerning

mediation roles, Peace keeping Operations, international security and regional security. The literature was obtained through searches in publicly available material. Literature from non-serial publications, official reports, and conferences has been included particularly if they have been cited by other references.

Discussion of Findings

The review of literature showed that the establishment of the Economic Community of West African Stand by Force positively influences her roles in resolving conflicts in West Africa, particularly when deployed. This could be seen impacted when common grounds are not shared due to vested interests among member states whose practices are below governance radar. This finding aligns with the previous works of Ani and Amusan (2016), Terwase et al. (2018), Muazu et al. (2023).

The result gotten from empirical literature is that there exist a weak link between ECOWAS Early Warning and Response Network (ECOWARN), a conflict alert preventive mechanism and conflict resolution in the region. Study concluded that there is the need to deepen the ECOWARN to truly reflect as an Early Warning Early Response mechanism. This could translate to the inability of ECOWAS to intervene as members States are not willing to concede sovereignty ground when apparently sliding into anarchy hence an invitation to military. This finding is consistent with the findings in the previous work of Maru (2016), Odote and Nzomo (2019), Atuobi (2011), Van Wyk (2020)

Conclusion and Recommendations

Based on the conclusions of this study, the following recommendations are made;

i. This study therefore recommends that ECOWAS should explore all means to maintain her Standby Force whose deployment could be triggered before anarchy or military coups are premeditated. Such will call for professionalisation restraining Member State's forces to eschew military coups which ravages the region extensively.
ii. That the ECOWAS's ECOWARN should go beyond fortifying her data analysis on build ups of violence triggers but actually be seen acting particularly in the face of apparent mi- governance, incessant protests, constricted civil space. ECOWARN analysis should elicit mediation experts' visits and likewise bloc's pressures on seated government to focus on governance and human security.

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