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ROLE OF ECONOMIC COMMUNITY OF WEST AFRICAN STATES (ECOWAS) AND ITS IMPACT ON THE MANAGEMENT OF CONFLICT IN MALI, 2012-2021

ONYEDIBE ONYINYE JACINTA; LUKA RUTH CALEB; BELLO MUHAMMED BABAN'UMMA Ph.D

Department of Political Science, Nasarawa State University, Keffi

Abstract

Since its formation in 1975, the Economic Community of West African States (ECOWAS) has been concerned in ensuring political stability in the West African sub region. However, there are challenges which often impede its successful intervention and ability to maintain stability in the West African sub-region, as against the goal for economic integration which it was established on. This study interrogates the role of ECOWAS and its impact on the management of the political crises that engulfed Mali from 2012 - 2021. The study made use of the primary and secondary data which involved semi-structured interview and document analysis. The theory of Neo-Functionalism was utilized as its framework. It was found that ECOWAS played major role to ensure the Malian conflict was resolved as soon as possible. These included: An outright condemnation of the military coup, non-recognition of the government headed by the military junta, consultations with African Union member states on how best to resolve the conflict after joining them to reject the declaration of Mali's Northern region as the state of Azawad by the rebels, imposition of sanctions, mobilization of supports for the return of democratic governance, cash and material donations as well as the deployment of troops for peacekeeping. However, it argues that ECOWAS intervention in Mali was reactionary and undermine decades of state failure and weak political institutions in Mali, and as such has not been totally successful in quelling the Malian conflicts. The study recommended that for ECOWAS to be seen as responsive, it needs to move from the rhetoric of "swift" sanctions to the actual encouragement and nudging of its ruling elites to respect the rule of law, protect human rights, provide avenues for economic growth in their respective countries, actively nip corruption in the bud, and observe democratic principles, such as the imposition of term limits on serving presidents.

Keywords: Role, ECOWAS, Impact, Management, Conflict and Mali.

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Introduction

Conflict management and resolution becomes an important act because of the magnitude of conflicts taking place around the world today. In any situation, where there are two or more divergent views or groups, conflict is bound to arise. The magnitude and dimension of such conflict usually depends on the value placed on the contentious issues by the parties involved, and methods adopted to resolve such issues. One major factor responsible for the current state of backwardness and underdevelopment in Africa is the political instability and conflict situations prevailing in many parts of the continent. It is well established that no sustainable development could be achieved without peace and security and that development thrives only in an atmosphere of social stability. That is to say that the concepts of security and development are complementary.

It has been proven that poverty, underdevelopment and fragile states, create fertile conditions for violent conflicts and the emergence of new security threats, including cross-border crimes, such as proliferation of small arms and light weapons, mercenaries and non-state armed groups, child soldiers, human trafficking and terrorism. There is no doubt that violent conflicts, crime and lawlessness destroy lives, property and social and economic infrastructure built over decades. Aning, Birikorang and Jaye (2010) noted that the end of the cold war in the early 1990s was accompanied by a dramatic rise in violent internal power struggles that threatened and led to state implosion across Africa. It did not take long for ECOWAS to realise the changing nature of threats to regional stability. It became obvious that there was a nexus between internal conflicts, sparked largely by bad governance, identity crises, poverty, unemployment, poor resource management and other related problems. As the guarantor and harbinger of world peace, the UN has the primary responsibility to address emerging threats in the West Africa. Both Article 28 52(1) of the UN Charter and Article 17(1)38 of the Protocol Relating to the establishment of the Peace and Security Council of the African Union stress on collaboration in the pursuit of global peace and security. On its part, Article 3(d) of the 1999 ECOWAS protocol for Conflict Prevention, Management, Resolution, Peacekeeping and Security expressly proclaims the organization's commitment to "strengthen cooperation in the areas of conflict prevention, early-warning, the control of cross-border crime, international terrorism and proliferation of small arms and antipersonnel mines" (Aning, Okyere & Abdallah, 2012).

International Crisis Group (2012) posited that the 1999 Mechanism gave ECOWAS a flexible framework for dealing with peace and security issues in West Africa by providing a range of procedures for it to follow in each phase of a conflict. An observation and early warning system aims to prevent conflicts, while mediation and reconciliation initiatives aim to facilitate their resolution. ECOWAS can also conduct peacekeeping operations by deploying the Standby Force, which replaced ECOMOG at the start of the 2000s and forms part of the AU Standby Forces. Finally, the Mechanism allows ECOWAS to implement an "end to hostilities" and peace-building strategy. These legal frameworks provide the basis for collaborative engagements between ECOWAS and AU on the one hand, and between the two and UN on the other hand, to address both old and emerging security threats that have the tendency to undermine peace and security in the Sahel. But more important is the ECOWAS collaboration with the AU as these organizations have the spatial control over the broader Sahelian region.

Since gaining independence in 1960 from the French, Mali; Africa's third largest gold producer suffered several coups and ethnic tensions until attaining multi party democracy in 1992 with the election of President Alpha Konare (BBC News Africa, 2012). Nevertheless, the democracy and relative stability in the country was not to last, as the re-surfacing of violent conflict in the north by the National Movement for the Liberation of Azawad (MNLA) Tuareg rebels and Al-Qaeda in the Islamic Magreb (AQIM) in 2007 and the coup d'état in 2012 resulted in killings, mass forced displacement of civilians destabilizing Mali's political tranquility (BBC News Africa, 2018). The interrelated security challenges Mali faces today are complex, summed up by Lewis (2012) as "a toxic cocktail of rebels, weapons, refugees, drought, smugglers, and violent Islamic militants." While the transnational threat posed by AQIM and affiliated groups is of deepest concern to the United States and its European allies, violent extremism is only one of a number of issues destabilizing Mali's security.

ECOWAS renewed commitment to pursue peace and security in the West African sub-region has drawn the interest of scholars, political analyst, researchers and the international community. ECOWAS efforts have earned her great respect and a model for sub-regional conflict resolution both regionally and internationally and have continued to sustain the Community's existence. It is against this backdrop that this study hopes to explore the role the 'Community' played and its impact in restoring peace to Mali.

Objectives of the Study

i. To examine the role ECOWAS played in the management of conflict in Mali;
ii. To assess how the role played by ECOWAS has impacted on the management of conflict in Mali;

Empirical Literature Review

Livinus (2017) analysed the Legal Framework of Economic Community of West African States (ECOWAS) mechanism for conflict prevention, management, resolution, peace-keeping and security and highlights the circumstances which led to its adoption. It also assessed the achievements and challenges of the mechanism. Through the use of secondary sources, the study observed that the mechanism has been able to address major challenges ECOWAS encountered in its pre-mechanism peace-keeping, such as the capacity of ECOWAS to assume responsibility for mutual security, mode of troop contributions, pre-financing of peace-keeping and clarification of conditions under which interventions in the internal affairs of member state are permissible. The mechanism has been successfully used by the community to intervene and mediate in conflicts in Liberia, Sierra Leone, Guinea Bissau, Cote D' Ivoire, Togo and more recently, Mali. However, there are inadequate resources and financial commitment by member states to man and finance the mechanism. It was therefore recommended that there should be consistent implementation of the community levy protocol and mechanisms by member states so as to provide the ECOWAS with the requisite funds to meet its financial obligations under the mechanism. Meanwhile, the impact of the role played by ECOWAS on the management of conflict in Mali was not discussed.

Adie, Nwokedi, and Mahwash (2020) collectively wrote on the conflict in Mali and the specific contributions of Nigeria towards its resolution. The study employs a qualitative method based on content analysis in analyzing the data collected. Also, the study adopts the theory of realism as a framework to provide explanation for Nigeria's engagement in the conflict. From the findings, it is

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cleared that Nigeria contributed significantly to the resolution of the Malian impasse, being the leader of the continent where Mali is located and having a clear foreign policy principle that promotes Africa centeredness. And more importantly, as a way to ensure her own survival since the dreaded Boko Haram set was reported to have established link with the terrorist group in Mali. Thus, some of these contributions were statement of condemnation, cash donation, personnel contribution and the initiation of peacekeeping mission among others. Some recommendations have also been made in the study. Accordingly, Countries within the sub-region of West Africa should cooperate with and support Nigeria when necessary to chart a new course that will guarantee durable peace and stability in Mali; The Malian government and the rebel groups should always embrace dialogue as a way out of their conflict rather than resorting to violence. However, the impact of the role of ECOWAS in conflict management in Mali was not elaborated.

Okon (2021) assessed ECOWAS Responses to the Conflict in Mali. Secondary data are used for the study and presented qualitatively. The study revealed that the towering interest of Algeria and other neighbors in the chaotic northern Mali, as well as French interest in its former colony hindered ECOWAS initiative and its effectiveness in resolving the conflict. The study recommends ECOWAS' involvement in negotiations at the next peace agreement, and the drawing up of a roadmap for implementing such agreement. Besides, ECOWAS needs to address governance deficits in Mali and elsewhere in the sub-region through peer review mechanism; and increase its capacity to respond to violent conflicts beyond microstates and Anglophone enclaves in the region. The major weakness of the study is that despite its attractive title, it did not clearly describe the role of ECOWAS in conflict management in Mali.

Theoretical Framework

The study adopts the theory of Neo-functionalism by Haas (1970). Neo-functionalist theory major proponents are Haas (2003), Hyman and Lindberg. Neo-functionalist emerged as theoretical modifications to the functional co-operation thesis and made the greatest contribution to the study of non-European schemes in 1970. They posit that non-political co-operation with the functionalists' emphasis may not be adequate in achieving political integration of states in the possibility of eliminating conflicts between states through non-political cooperation. On this premise, they proffer that eliminate the causes of war, state-centric interests must be dealt with by establishing international political organizations and processes, which will address political issues. This will enhance greater co-operation when taken together with non-political cooperation in other facets.

Neo-functionalism is a theory of regional integration in which integration is considered to be inevitable process, rather than a desirable state of affairs that could be introduced by the political or technocratic elites of the involved states. There are three main principles of neo-functionalism;

1. The principle of positive spillover effects states that integration between states in one sector, that is, economic sector will eventually ramify into integration or co-operation in other sectors such as political, socio-cultural, security, etc.

2. The mechanism of a transfer in domestic allegiance which assumes that as the process of integration gathers momentum in an increasingly pluralistic domestic society of each state; interest groups and other associations will transfer their allegiance or loyalty away from national institutions towards the supranational institution(s) when they begin to realize that their material

interests or wellbeing can be better pursued through supranational institution(s) than the pre-existing national institutions; and

3. Principle of technocratic automaticity which states that as integration hastens the supranational institution(s) will take the lead in fostering further integration as they become more powerful and more autonomous of the member states (Echezona, 1998; Haas, 1970).

There have been some levels of criticism to the Neo-functionalist approach. One of which is that, Neo-functionalist looks at regional cooperation process as a transitional stage of integration rather than an end in itself. On this premise they see the approach to be an oversimplification in the sense that it ignores the primacy of politics in the cooperation states in a discreet and noncontroversial areas, it soon gets over politicized negating the validity of gradual politicization process.

There is no doubt that the foregone theoretical postulations of neo-functionalism chime with this study. Neo-functionalism emphasize that collaborative efforts in one functional area can spill-over or have ramifications for other spheres of cooperation. In this case, although ECOWAS was originally established to promote free trade, the imperative of security has nudged ECOWAS into regional security cooperation. This explains the basis for the incorporation of regional security cooperation as one of the core themes after the demise of the Cold War. Although ECOWAS had evolved previous security arrangements as mentioned already, it was the prevalence of internal conflicts after the termination of the Cold War that accentuated the utility of regional security cooperation.

The focus on the role of ECOWAS in conflict management in Mali is also indicative of the fact that the coalescing of efforts by states be it at the technocratic or political levels, under the aegis of ECOWAS, is indispensable to resolving security challenges of Mali. There is no doubt that a conflict in one West African state particularly Mali can spill-over or have ramifications for the rest of the sub-region. In that regard no West African state is immune from conflict as was witnessed in the extent to which the Mali civil strife had adverse effects on the security profiles of the Gambia and Cote'd'Ivore. Similarly, a benign security profile in Mali has implications for the development of the sub-region.

Methodology

The case-study design is adopted because it probes deeply, intensively, and analyzes the interaction between factors involved in the study. This has the advantage of identifying the major issues in the Malian conflicts as well as outlining ECOWAS responses and the gaps in them. This study focuses on ECOWAS response in the Malian conflict but also covers issues of common concern to all regional groupings saddled with the responsibility of intervening in violent conflicts in their domain.

This study population is limited to staff and officials of Directorate of Early Warning, Regional Security Division and SSR division of ECOWAS secretariat in Abuja, Embassy of Mali, ECOWAS Division of the Ministry of Foreign Affairs, Africa affairs unit of the Institute of Peace and Conflict Resolution, National Institute for Security Studies, Centre for Strategic Research and Studies-Nigerian Defence College. The reason for choosing these institutions become necessary and fundamental because of the strategic position they have occupied and knowledge in terms of ECOWAS and the management of conflict in Mali.

To arrive at the sample size, the researcher used purposive sampling technique. The technique allowed the researcher to choose the sample on the basis of some predetermined characteristics

such as deep knowledge of the issue under study, years of experience and age. The researcher purposefully chose people with a wide range of opinions to shed light on the study's objectives. All the survey respondents were purposively chosen. This is informed by the need to ensure that only respondents with useful and valid knowledge about the study focus are engaged. Therefore, seven (7) respondents were purposively chosen for the interview.

Data for research was obtained from both primary and secondary sources. Primary data was collected through Key Informant Interviews. Secondary data was sourced from extant literature such as textbooks, magazines, communiqué, scholarly journals and the internet. The data was presented qualitatively and content analysis technique was used in the analysis of the research findings.

Data Presentation and Analysis

The section reflected on the data that were collected to raise questions on issues, create categories, describe and organize data into themes. The research then assigned a code to all the 7 participants; each participant was given a pseudonym, for example P1, standing for Participant 1 through P7, for Participant 7, to ensure they were shielded from any form of identification. Participants were asked questions in an effort to answer the research questions on the role and impact of ECOWAS and the management of conflict in Mali.

Role of ECOWAS in Conflict Management in Mali

Theme One: ECOWAS Mediation and Intervention in Mali

In 2001, the organization adopted the supplementary Protocol on Democracy and Good Governance to forestall unconstitutional change of government. The protocol legitimized an automatic use of sanction and suspension to deter and reprimand unconstitutional change of government among member states and also set guidelines for constitutional transfer of power and electoral laws (ECOWAS, 2021). P7 noted that it was this protocol that rationalized the intervention in the Mali Crises of 2020. The intervention which was in two phases saw ECOWAS Ministerial and Mediation Mission in Mali in an attempt to nip in the bud the protest that followed the parliamentary elections of April and June 2020. The failure to reach a compromise among parties and the consequent military coup in August saw ECOWAS imposing economic sanctions and suspending Mali from its decision making body as means of pressuring the junta to transmit power to a civilian government. Notwithstanding, Malians rejected ECOWAS resolution to the crises (Interviewed July 14th, 2023).

P2 explained that ECOWAS was swift to condemn the coup in Mali and at its emergency summit held 27th of March in Abidjan, a communiqué was released on 29th March suspending Mali's membership, with immediate effect from participation in all decision-making bodies of ECOWAS in accordance with the provisions of the Supplementary Protocol on Democracy and Good Governance as well as the African Charter on Democracy, Elections and Governance, and demanding the restoration of constitutional order in the country as well as assets freeze and border to weaken and isolate the junta. Ambassadors from ECOWAS countries were recalled, borders closed, and a travel ban on the coup leaders was imposed. More severely still, Mali's assets with the Banque Centrale des États de l'Afrique de l'Ouest (BCEAO: The Central Bank of West African States) were frozen, and all financial assistance to Mali from the West African Development Bank (WADB) and the ECOWAS Bank for Investment and Development (EBID) was suspended. The

summit, which was attended by representatives of Algeria and Mauritania, appointed President Blaise Campoaoré of Burkina Faso as its mediator in the Mali crisis with the mandate to interact with relevant stakeholders and engage them in fruitful dialogue for the restoration of peace in the country taking into account ongoing efforts in this direction. The Summit also decided to dispatch a high- level delegation to Mali to acquaint the mutineers with the content of the Summit decisions and to discuss, in particular, the modalities for the speedy restoration of constitutional order in Mali (Interviewed July 11th, 2023).

Haysom (2014) noted that, with French support, ECOWAS proposed a political and military intervention with its mobilization of the 3000 strong ECOWAS Standby Force (ESF) for the ECOWAS Mission in Mali (MICEMA), and then the AFISMA, which were blocked by both Algeria and Mauritania. Besides, the UN was skeptical about the ECOWAS' capacity to resolve the conflict, since the sub-regional body regarded the junta as an illegitimate regime. More so, the organization was perceived to lack the capacity to undertake such a mission and there was a fear of strategic danger of dispersing terrorist fighters in Northern Mali, if the mission was poorly executed. A similar sentiment was expressed in August 2012 by Arieff (2012) as he observed that ECOWAS sanction 'underscored its operational shortcomings, but warned that a delay in confronting armed groups in the north, including terrorist actors could enable them to consolidate or expand their hold, it could also lead to open conflict among various entities vying for control' (p. 2). This was prophetic as the delay by global actors to support ECOWAS with the needed financial and logistic supports did not only lead to belligerents' battle for supremacy and control; the victorious jihadist in the northern power contest unfolded their caliphate agenda and expanded towards Bamako. Nevertheless, ECOWAS formed the bulk of AFISMA contingent which complemented the French airstrike that halted and killed the caliphate ambition of the Jihadists (Haysom, 2014).

P5 explain further that ECOWAS ordered military planners to coordinate the possible intervention of 3,000 regional troops organized under the ECOWAS Standby Force (ESF). The ECOWAS mediation in Mali followed a prolonged approach. Firstly, the political negotiation process to find satisfactory solution to both the political crisis (quite effective and successful) and the violence in the north (mixed outcome). ECOWAS was the first institution to send delegation to Mali to mediate Mali crisis. On 29th March, 2012, ECOWAS then President, Alassane Quattara flew to Bamako but couldn't land because protesters had occupied the airport. The visit of ECOWAS delegation was cancelled and the Presidents decided to meet the next day at Abidjan to assess the situation and take appropriate measures. After the Abidjan Meeting, ECOWAS took harsh measures on 31st March against the Junta and its CNRDRE specifically diplomatic, economic and financial sanctions with assets freeze of officials and their associates and the closing of seaports to landlocked Mali (Interviewed July 14th, 2023).

According to ICG (2012), the sanctions on Mali had an immediate impact on the Junta who decided to sign with ECOWAS mediators on the 6th April 2012, a framework agreement providing a series of steps for the restoration of constitutional order in Mali. The formal resignation of Touré on 8th April was a precondition for the junta to accept ECOWAS framework for the return to constitutional order. The president of the National Assembly, Dioncounde Traoré, assumed power as interim president with effect from 12 April. The other key aspect of the framework negotiated by ECOWAS-more political in nature than strictly constitutional- was to ensure that the coming period of transition will be led by a prime minister and national-unity government. They will,

according to the text of the 6 April agreement, have "full powers" to "manage the crisis in Northern Mali" and to "organise free and fair elections" (Yabi, 2012).

This framework of agreement was perceived as an important achievement for ECOWAS because the coup leaders accepted to relinquish power in less than ten days, a record in Africa according to ECOWAS representative in Mali, Aboudou Touré Sanogo and his men have been granted amnesty, but also warned that any statements seen as undermining the agreement would lead to the reinstatement of targeted sanctions against them. Subsequently, a new civilian government was announced on April 25, which included military leaders in three key positions – Ministers for Defense, International Security, and the Interior. Members of the previous government were excluded from heading any of the remaining ministries. Moreover, Sanogo stated that the junta would "continue to play a supervisory role until new elections are held" (Bybee, 2012:9).

According to ECOWAS, it has secured commitments from Niger, Senegal, and Nigeria to provide the bulk of the 3,300 troops to deploy to Northern Mali. ECOWAS stated that the peacekeeping troops were ready to deploy. The unstable political and military situation led to the formation of a transitional government of national unity headed by Prime Minister Cheick Modibo Diarra in August 2012. This government included five close allies of the junta leader, Captain Sanogo. But this did not help the political and military situation on the ground and, if anything, only emboldened the MNLA rebels and their Islamist allies, who took advantage of the situation to further consolidate their military control over the whole of northern Mali.

The enabling framework for ECOWAS's response to the Malian conflict include, amongst others, the protocol on the Mechanism for Conflict Prevention (1999) and the Supplementary Protocol on Democracy and Good Governance (2001). These protocols are mutually reinforcing instruments of the ECOWAS Conflict Preventive Framework (ECPF) (Okon & Williams, 2018). Mali is a signatory to the framework which despise the unconstitutional change of the government in the member states and emphasizes the sanctity of the ballot box and the completion of executive tenure in office as spelt out by the countries' constitution. Hence, the military coup of March 22, 2012, led by Captain Amadou Sanogo, marked the entrance of ECOWAS to the Malian conflict (Alozieuwa, 2013; Francis, 2013). The regional body condemned the coup and, in collaboration with the African Union (AU), suspended Mali from its fold.

ECOWAS' motive for intervening in Mali stemmed from the threat to West African stability that the conflict was thought to pose with the potential to spill over into fragile Niger, Senegal and Burkina Faso and the possibility of stronger relations developing between Islamist extremist groups in Mali and Nigeria: according to a UN report, 100 Boko Haram fighters from Nigeria received training at AQIM camps in Mali in 2011, and Boko Haram is believed to have provided support to extremist groups in Mali (UN Security Council, 2011). ECOWAS was able to align these concerns with those of powerful Western states, and demonstrate a willingness to work with UN mechanisms.

Impact of the role played by ECOWAS in the management of conflict in Mali

Theme Two: Outcome of the ECOWAS Mediation in Mali

On ECOWAS success in Mali, P6 noted that inner rancour within ECOWAS hindered the success of ECOWAS intervention in Mali and also the fact that ECOWAS strongest contributor (Nigeria) was facing internal security especially from Boko Haram and therefore could not fully commit to the situation in Mali. This situation led Mali to invite France to intervene in the crisis in the North although France has always had its presence in the region. France and Chadian army (the Chadian

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army was incorporated into the French command structure) he noted played a huge role in restoring peace in Northern Mali, however he noted that ECOWAS restored Democracy in Mali without which these interventions would not have been impossible. Finally, he noted that following the intervention from both the regional and international community, Mali was enjoying relative peace which can be sustained with good governance (Interviewed July 17th, 2023).

When conflicts erupt, one of the conflict resolution mechanisms is regional intervention. This may either be by mediation or peacekeeping forces. Looking at the conditions under which third parties intervene in intrastate conflicts. The intervener tries sufficiently to bolster one side to compel the opposing side to quit fighting. Continued fighting is rarely, if ever, the goal of a contending group. The interests of the intervener, further-more, revolve largely around ensuring political stability in a specific region of the globe; one way to facilitate this is to help contain overt military violence-be it by orchestrating a cease-fire or facilitating the defeat of the opposing group. It is assumed that third parties do not intervene to exacerbate or prolong the crisis.

Specifically, P3 emphasized that:

> ECOWAS promptly intervened in the conflicts in Mali with little or no success. The fact remains that the political elites in the country have long alienated their people. They have not only alienated their people, but have also used ethnic and religious sentiments to make themselves relevant in politics and in some cases perpetrate themselves in political offices. The incursion or meddling of military into politics has not helped matters, but rather militarized the society the more. The point is that poor governance or bad political leadership by the ousted democratic regimes in Mali resulted to excessive militarization when the military decided to intervene into politics. ECOWAS intervened to restore democracy by demanding the military to withdraw to the barracks for a transition programme into democracy. The processes of democratization and demilitarization are not, totally or completely successful. Thus, militarization resulting from poor governance of the ousted democratic governments impeded or constrained ECOWAS intervention for demilitarization of Mali (Interviewed July 14th, 2023).

In fact, in interrogating the objective of ECOWAS intervention into the 2012 Malian crisis, Okeke (2014:21) observed that: The objective has been to restore democracy by forcing the military back to the barracks or restricting it to the constitutional role of protecting the territorial integrity from internal insurrection and external aggression. But the root causes of military intervention into politics and crisis of regime change or political succession are yet to be adequately addressed by the ECOWAS, for example, issues of legitimacy crisis, poor governance, bad leadership, political leadership failure, political corruption, electoral crisis and political violence have been largely left unattended or ignored. The political conditions in most of the countries in the sub-region and indeed Africa as a whole are not democracy friendly or unsuitable for democratization and flourishing of democracy or demilitarization.

Obviously, ECOWAS' weakness in placing priority on democracy and peace-building is informed by its determination to pursue the principles of liberal democracy, which according to Adetula (2011:15) 'is not in the least emancipatory especially in African conditions because it offers the people rights they cannot exercise, voting that never amounts to choosing, freedom which is patently spurious, and political equality which distinguishes highly equal power relations.'

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P4 submitted that ECOWAS mediation in Mali was the catalyst to restoring constitutional order, democracy, peace and stability in both country. However, in the case of Mali, Peace came a little slower, this was because ECOWAS at first was divided on the form intervention in Mali and when it settled on intervention, it lacked the manpower and resources in which to carry out the intervention. This was probably due to the fact that Nigeria, a regional medium power in ECOWAS was experiencing its own internal crisis. Consequently, ECOWAS had to rely on foreign intervention to repel the insurgency in Northern Mali. The deployment of ECOMIB since May 2012 and its continued existence since then are already a cause for satisfaction in light of the difficulties experienced by ECOWAS in Mali, made easier by the small size of the country, ECOWAS's intervention in Mali since 2012 has showed it can obtain results if it has the backing of influential member countries and the necessary political, military and financial resources.

According to a UNOWA (UN office for West Africa) report, ECOWAS mediation has led to the signing of about two dozen peace agreement to end destructive conflicts in West Africa, ECOWAS has achieved organizing friendly related activities that can promote peace and reduce crisis and wars such as building high ways to ease transportation challenges across member states, building industries, supplying power to member states etc.

ECOWAS played a decisive role in organising the post-coup transition in Mali. As a prominent Malian politician involved in the initial negotiations said: "thanks to ECOWAS, we have returned to constitutional order within three weeks" (ICG, 2015: 14). P2 stated that ECOWAS continued to supervise the transition and corrected the deficiencies of the 6 April agreement to end the crisis. Despite criticisms, the organisation demonstrated coherence with its principles by firmly and clearly refusing any break in constitutional order. By exercising maximum pressure on the junta, it reached its overall objective. With time, Malian, and Bissau actors' and regional and international diplomats' judgment on ECOWAS's political and diplomatic response to the coup became more measured and sometimes even positive. The initiatives taken on Mali by the then Ivorian ECOWAS chairman are also seen in a positive light. This example shows that heads of state in the region can sometimes play a useful role in managing a crisis, both within the regional organisation and independently.

It is not surprising that scholars are quite unclear about ECOWAS's political prowess in post conflict management given the complexity of this question. To this extent, (Jaye, 2011) argued that whilst ECOWAS has consistently been involved with peacekeeping in the military-related conflicts its role in peace-building remains questionable. Uzoechina (2014) explains by stating that ECOWAS has not developed the capacity to address the issues of trans-border crimes such as money laundering, human trafficking, proliferation of small arms and light weapons, drugs trafficking, spread of HIV/AIDS and other related issues. Therefore, there is need for ECOWAS to refocus its narrow-minded military security space to a broader security perspective that takes into perspective non-military security issues.

Discussion of Findings

i. The study revealed that the enabling framework used as strategies for ECOWAS's responses to the Malian conflict include, amongst others, the protocol on the Mechanism for Conflict Prevention (1999) and the Supplementary Protocol on Democracy and Good Governance (2001). These protocols are mutually reinforcing instruments of the ECOWAS Conflict Preventive Framework (ECPF). Mali is a signatory

to the framework which despises the unconstitutional change of the government in the member states and emphasizes the sanctity of the ballot box and the completion of executive tenure in office as spelt out by the countries' constitution. Hence, the military coup of March 22, 2012, led by Captain Amadou Sanogo, marked the entrance of ECOWAS to the Malian conflict. This is in agreement with research proposition one (1) that states that "there is a significant relationship between ECOWAS resolution mechanism and restoration of constitutional order, peace and democracy in Mali". Therefore, it is valid.

Nwolise (2015) has argued that the present Eurocentric conflict management methods, which do not fit into the cultural and traditional practices of African societies, are part of the ways in which the colonialists seek to maintain a perpetually divided and conflict ridden Africa, which is readily available for external manipulation, destabilization, and exploitation. Evidently, this postulation cannot be downplayed considering the protracted and endemic nature of conflicts in Africa, especially in West Africa.

ii. The study also revealed that ECOWAS was the first to intervene and mounted pressure on the military junta to transfer power to a civilian government. ECOWAS promptly intervened in the conflicts in Mali with little or no success. The fact remains that the political elites in the country have long alienated their people. They have not only alienated their people, but have also used ethnic and religious sentiments to make themselves relevant in politics and in some cases perpetrate themselves in political offices. The incursion or meddling of military into politics has not helped matters, but rather militarized the society the more. This finding corroborate with research proposition two that "ECOWAS has not achieved remarkable success in fulfilling its mandate to contain violent conflicts in Mali". The implication, as earlier opined by Bamidele & Ayodele, 2016: 47) was that ECOWAS had failed in its responsibility to 'monitor others' compliance and to implement their commitments.

Conclusion

ECOWAS formed as an economic integration instrument in 1975 has transmuted to a conflict management / resolution entity since the end of the Cold War. Its intervention or response to the Malian conflict since 2012 and its gaps were the subject of this study. The study shows that while ECOWAS has the enabling framework to respond to the current conflict, it is hindered by the overbearing interest of Algeria and other neighbors, as well as France. Additionally, ECOWAS' inability to address governance deficits in Malian politics, especially the marginalization of the minority Tuaregs and governmental corruption weaken its legitimacy as an impartial arbiter. More so, the sub-regional body lacks the capacity to undertake massive response required in the difficult terrain with massive landmass. ECOWAS needs to participate in negotiations for lasting peace in Mali and initiate road map for the implementation of the peace agreement. In addition, ECOWAS needs to domesticate and mandate member states to incorporate the African Peer Review Mechanism into their domestic policy and work for compulsory biennial review of member States in order to reduce governmental deficits that generate tension in Mali and elsewhere in the sub-region.

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Recommendations

Based on the foregoing analysis, the study makes the following recommendations.

i. For ECOWAS to be seen as responsive, it needs to move from the rhetoric of "swift" sanctions to the actual encouragement and nudging of its ruling elites to respect the rule of law, protect human rights, provide avenues for economic growth in their respective countries, actively nip corruption in the bud, and observe democratic principles, such as the imposition of term limits on serving presidents.

ii. Violators of the Community's principle of 'Zero Tolerance' for power obtained by unconstitutional means, as enshrined in the Supplementary Protocol on Democracy and Good Governance should not be allowed to go unpunished; this would serve as deterrence to other stakeholders in the Community. Also, constant monitoring mechanism to sustain the relative peace and stability in the countries and in the region is needed.

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