AN EXAMINATION OF THE EFFECTS OF CONFLICTS ON REGIONAL INTEGRATION IN WEST AFRICA

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LEGON

NOVEMBER 2014
DECLARATION

I hereby declare that with the exception of identified quotation and references to other people’s work which has been duly acknowledged, this work is entirely the result of my own research and it has neither in part nor whole been presented for another degree.

…………………………
…………………………
Henry Iheanacho Eze
(10501206)
Student

Certified by

…………………………
…………………………
Dr. Yao Gebe
(Supervisor)
DEDICATION

I dedicate this work to the one and only true God who puts breath in to our nostrils and the ability in our bodies. To Him be glory and honour forever.
ACKNOWLEDGEMENT

I acknowledge the unwavering support of my darling wife, Agatha and our boys Adael and Biny Amin who were there for me through the period of endeavor. You all are inestimable to me.

I also express my gratitude to my parents Mr. and Mrs. Eze whose prayer and support have gone a long way in making me the man I am today.

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Finally, I will like to appreciate all who have supported me one way or the other towards the completion of this masterpiece; Major Aminu Mohammed Shaibu and family, Mr. Michael Kodom, Mr. Gabriel Boakye, Miss Jummia Abubakar and my dear Chinwendu Ofodu.

God richly bless you all.
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LIST OF ABBREVIATIONS

AQIM - Al-Qaeda in the Islamic Magrebian
BCEAO – BanqueCentrale des Etats de l’Afrique de l’Ouest
CEAO - Communauté des États de l’Afrique de l’Ouest
ECOMOG - Economic Community of West African States Monitoring Group
ECOWAS - Economic Community of West Africa States
EEC – European Economic Community
ETLS - ECOWAS Trade Liberalisation Scheme
FTA - Free Trade Area
HIIK – Heidelberg Institute for International Conflict Research
IMF – International Monetary Fund
KAIPTC - Kofi Annan International Peacekeeping Training Centre
LTRC - Liberian Truth and Reconciliation Commission
LURD - Liberians United for Reconciliation and Democracy
MAD - Mutual Assistance in Defence
MARWOPNET - Mano River Union Women’s Peace Network
MEND - Movement for the Emancipation of the Niger Delta
MNLA - National Movement for the Liberation of Azawad
MRU - Mano River Union
NAFTA – North American Free Trade Agreement
NPFL - National Patriotic Front of Liberia
OECD - Organisation for Economic Cooperation and Development
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<td>Preferential Trade Area</td>
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<td>RUF</td>
<td>Revolutionary United Front</td>
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<td>SALW</td>
<td>Small Arms and Light Weapons</td>
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<td>UEMOA</td>
<td>Union Economique et Monetaire oust-Africaine</td>
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<td>UNAMSIL</td>
<td>United Nations Mission in Sierra Leone</td>
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<td>UNDP</td>
<td>United Nations Development Programme</td>
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<td>UNECA</td>
<td>United Nations’ Economic Commission for Africa</td>
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<td>UNIOSIL</td>
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<td>UNMIL</td>
<td>United Nations Mission in Liberia</td>
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<td>UNOWA</td>
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ABSTRACT

West Africa and Africa as a whole have been marked as a conflict-prone region. Conflict has afflicted the economy of many countries if not all creating serious economic challenges in the sub-regions. Political insurgencies continue to erupt in countries such as Mali, Niger, Mauritania, Nigeria, Senegal, and currently Burkina Faso. These insurgencies send alarming signals of the possibility for violent conflict to resurface in the sub-region. Conflicts in the West Africa are often hinged on several factors including poverty, human right violations, bad governance and corruption, ethnic and religious marginalization, small arms proliferation and control of power and resource among others. Although many actors, paramount among which is the ECOWAS and other civil society organizations (CSOs) and the international community have been making effort to resolve the prevailing and emerging conflicts and also prevent new ones from resurfacing, conflicts continue to persist in the sub-region and haulting its development. Thus, West African regional economic and security integration will be difficult, if not impossible to achieve on the premises of political destabilization, declining economic capabilities and weak ECOWAS secretariat. The study therefore believes that if much power can be vested in the ECOWAS Commission and leaders of the West African countries can increase their level of commitment to implementing the ECOWAS protocols, West Africa regional economic and security integration will be realized within the shortest possible time.
CHAPTER ONE
RESEARCH DESIGN

1.1 Background of the Study

Conflicts in Africa are a source of concern to all countries within the continent. The causes of African conflicts are complex and often country specific, with long- and short-term issues. Sub-Saharan Africa has suffered a lot of inter and intra-state conflicts. Violent conflict in sub-Saharan Africa has been responsible for the direct and indirect deaths of millions of civilians and has contributed significantly to the low levels of human security in the region. Causes of these conflicts are complicated and interconnected. It was suggested that structural causes and struggle for power have caused a lot of political instability on the continent. Adedeji (as cited in Kameri-Mbote) referred to Africa as “a continent at war with itself”.

The call for integration has a protracted history in Africa. Leaders in Africa have called for integration but these efforts have not materialised because of certain problems which include intrastate as well as interstate conflicts. However, the campaign for regional integration remains an important economic as well as political vision of Africa as enshrined in Article 3 of the AU Constitutive Act. The Economic Community of West African States (ECOWAS) was born in an effort at integration by governments in West Africa. The community was established in 1975 originally as a regional organization to essentially promote economic integration. Gradually, it was transformed, under the pressure of political events, into an organization also responsible for finding solutions to armed conflicts and other political calamities which were undermining peace and security within the community. Through these efforts ECOMOG, which was the military monitoring group of ECOWAS was instituted to embark on peacekeeping and peace
enforcement operations in member states experiencing conflicts in the sub-region. According to Yabi, ECOWAS interventions in the 1990s were, first and foremost, geared towards ending civil wars involving one or several armed groups against the government of member states.⁵

ECOWAS indeed has faced enormous difficulties in achieving its objectives of restoring peace where it intervened. Its military and diplomatic engagements have however contributed immensely to efforts which finally helped in ending conflicts that devastated the Mano River Basin region between 1989 and 2003.⁶ It can be asserted that ECOWAS played a key role in the resolution of protracted and devastating civil wars in Liberia (1989-97 and 2003-2007) and Sierra Leone (1991-2002).⁷ The roles of the community in the crisis of Cote D’Ivoire and Mali have also assured the potential for good integration for security. The actions of ECOWAS have fostered a spirit of togetherness among member nations thereby creating an enabling environment for integration in other areas.

In the light of the efforts of ECOWAS, the question which still remains is the feasibility of economic and military integration. Damning comments have been made on the problems affecting the West African sub-region as cited below.

“West Africa is becoming the symbol of world-wide demographic, environment, and societal stress, in which criminal anarchy emerges as the real ‘strategic’ danger. Disease, over population, unprovoked crime, and scarcity of resources, refugee migrations, the increasing erosion of nation-state and international borders, and the empowerment of private armies, security firms and international drug cartels are now most tellingly demonstrated through a West African prism”.⁸

Conflicts and conflict provoking conditions exist in West Africa. These conflicts have numerous effects on efforts at integration. In inquiring into the effects of conflicts on the economic and security aspects of integration efforts in West Africa, this paper will seek to discover the causes, problems and effects of violent conflicts on West Africa integration
with the intention of proffering possible ways by which integration can be achieved despite
the challenges posed by conflicts.

1.2 Statement of the Problem

There is a significant concern about the rise of conflict in the West African sub-region. Activities of terror perpetrated by extremists in the sub-region have resulted in large human casualties and the destruction of property. The proliferation of Small Arms and Light Weapons (SALW) also aid conflict in the sub-region. The occurrence of these conflicts is also encouraged by a lot of factors some of which include pervasive corruption, the presence of large informal cash-based economies, widespread poverty, massive unemployment rates, ethnic and communal violence, political instability and other activities. The negative results of these conflicts such as loss of lives, insecurity in the sub-region, threatened state developmental projects, weak economies may have a negative impact on relations among member states of the ECOWAS.

A number of countries in West Africa are either undergoing some conflict or recovering from the effects of some conflict. Nigeria, one of the founding members of ECOWAS, is facing a scourge caused by the notorious Boko Haram Sect in the North Eastern part of the country; the Malian government is trying to recover from a 2012 attack by Tuareg separatist rebels; Guinea-Bissau experienced armed conflicts between 1998 and 1999 and in September, 2003 there was a coup d’état in the country; the Republic of Guinea is no less turbulent as it has its own history of crises. The country has undergone succession crisis marked by weak institutions and serious economic and social difficulties facing the people. Liberia and Sierra Leone had their own share of armed conflicts and the effects were very devastating and Ivory Coast is on the path of recovery following political crisis
in the country from 2010-2011. These conflicts in the region question the ability of member states of the ECOWAS to achieve any form of integration.

Many evidences have been found to support the assertion that West Africa’s development cannot be realised unless there is a strong economic, political and security integration among member states. This is premised on the fact that the sub-region is characterized by constraints such as small market, low level of development, lack of common currencies among others. Proponents of integration therefore believe that if the nations within the sub-region can be integrated economically and politically, the desire for development will be realised. However, the incident of conflict which continues to engulf the sub-region has made such integration a big challenge for the ECOWAS, which has been at the fore. The big issue of concern to this study is how conflict is affecting the regional integration in the sub-region. Even though the role of ECOWAS in the sub-region has been reviewed in academic journals, there is still no consensus on the extent to which the various programs of actions implemented by ECOWAS is contributing to any significant change in the conflicts that continue to inflict the sub region. This study therefore seeks to interrogate the extent to which conflicts in the sub-region is affecting the efforts of ECOWAS in achieving regional integration.

1.3 Research Questions

The research questions are the following:

1. What are the causes of the conflicts being experienced in West Africa?

2. How effective are the efforts of ECOWAS in trying to resolve conflicts in the sub-region?

3. What challenges impede ECOWAS’ effort in addressing the conflicts facing the sub-region?
4. Is regional economic and security integration possible in the sub-region despite these conflicts?

1.4 Research Objectives

The objectives which will be achieved at the end of the study are as follows:

1. To examine the causes of conflicts in West Africa;
2. To assess the effectiveness of ECOWAS’ effort in trying to solve conflicts in the West African sub-region
3. To assess the challenges confronting ECOWAS in addressing the challenges facing the sub-region
4. To examine the possibility for regional economic and security integration despite the conflicts.

1.5 Scope of the Study

This study looks at conflicts within West Africa in relation to how they affect the efforts of ECOWAS integration. Consequently, the study is limited to only member states of the sub-regional body. The stakeholders examined in this study are therefore the governments of these countries, agents responsible for or related to conflicts within the sub-region and national/supranational agencies participating in the drive at economic and security integration for the sub-region. This study is limited to conflicts that occurred in the sub-region from 1989 till date.

1.6 Justification of the study

The consequences of violent conflict in West Africa are enormous. Conflicts are known to be a major challenge to socio-economic development within the sub-region. Almost all the
countries in West Africa have tasted serious and devastating violent conflict. Insecurity and political instability is still prevalent in the sub-region and in some cases is becoming worse. Studies have shown that, there is a very strong correlation between a decline of economies, low human development index and violent conflicts.\textsuperscript{12,13} The successful and sustainable resolution of these conflicts presents an enormous boost to future prosperity in the region.\textsuperscript{14}

This study carried out an in-depth analysis of how effects of conflicts has on the economy and security of the sub-region. In addition, a study of the impact conflict has on the integration efforts of the West African countries was carried out. This research studied the effects of conflicts on economic and security integration in the region since 1989 till date. It is intended to provide useful reference to policy makers and developmental agencies within the sub-region and contribute to ongoing the research about conflicts and its consequence on West Africa integration efforts. The study also contributes to existing body of knowledge, while serving as reference material for other researchers on similar topics.

\section*{1.7 Hypothesis}

ECOWAS protocols are comprehensive but cultural differences, the lack of political will and conflicting policies of member states among others undermines its efforts to achieve West African regional economic and security integration.

\section*{1.8 Theoretical framework}

\subsection*{1.8.1 Kantian Theory of Perpetual Peace}

In earlier days where many conflicts were driven by strives between different religious doctrines, earlier peace theorist thought the only way to maintain peace coexistence is
maintaining homogeneous religious values for peaceful coexistence of the international system. Without instilling less tolerance to different religions, peaceful coexistence meant that a particular society or societies had to practice the same religion. Today, with the development of modern society, characterized by rationalization, the world has become what Max Weber called “disenchanting” and theorists have focused on integration as a means to end future conflicts and wars.\textsuperscript{16}

Immanuel Kant’s analysis of the covenant of peace, which he called \textit{foedus pacificum}, is one of the earliest works that dealt with the correlation between integration and peace without instilling religion into the dynamic of peaceful coexistence.\textsuperscript{17} For Kant, peace is an exception to the normal “state of nature,” which is war. The Kantian conception of the “state of nature” emanates from a pessimist attitude of human nature that Kant uses to appraise states.\textsuperscript{18} Kant qualifies his argument and explains that “state of nature” does not mean open warfare, but rather “a constant threatening that an outbreak may occur”.\textsuperscript{19} The distinction is that while warfare and its consequences are expected outcomes of open hostilities, an unceasing threat of war is an unpredictable situation that puts everyone on alert and causes them to view their neighbors as possible enemies. Hence, Kant has a broader conception of war that included not only “open hostility” but also any threat of war. Moreover, Kant believed a state is a voluntary association established by men that serves as a peace institution to avert the “natural state of nature,” which is war.\textsuperscript{20}

However, the historical factors that led to the formation of modern day African states present a stronger theoretical challenge for Kant’s theory of perpetual peace. The impact of colonial imposition of territorial boundaries on Africa’s people negates voluntary association, which according to Kant, is central for the elimination of the natural “state of nature”.\textsuperscript{21} Kant’s conceptualization of perpetual peace does not require the existence of nation states, but rather, centers around “voluntary association,” be it among men or states.
For Kant, it is the “voluntary association” that is the means to eliminate the “state of nature”. He reasoned that peace treaties might end current wars but not future wars. Hence, Kant proposed a “federation of states” rather than a “nation of states” governed by an international treaty as a measure to halt future wars.

However, other scholars have raised some criticisms with Kant on his claim for perpetual peace. Moeletsi Mbeki in his analysis of the plight of Africa concerning the political elites who contrive to keep their fellow citizens poor while enriching themselves argues that perpetual peace cannot be a justification for Africa’s choice to integrate. Mbeki substantiates his argument on the recurrence of state-to-state wars, and concludes that since most wars in Africa are ethnic-based civil wars, regional integration has no correlation on the peaceful existence of states. Another theoretical criticism of Kant is Georg W.F. Hegel’s work on Philosophy of Right. Hegel explains that the idea of perpetual peace through federation of states is contingent on the private sovereign will, which for Hegel, supersedes any international treaty.

In theory African states pledged to recognize colonial boundaries, but in reality, the ambiguity, incoherence, and multiplicity of colonial treaties and/or the discovery of mineral resources has led to several border conflicts in Africa. One of the first border conflicts occurred during the very early stages of African independence between Ghana and Upper Volta, leading to dissolution of a customs union between the two states. Several other border conflicts in Africa have made their way to the International Court of Justice and the Permanent Court of Arbitration. Moreover, two recent conflicts, one between Cameroon and Nigeria and one between Eritrea and Ethiopia, were among states that had common regional integration membership. Irrespective of formal commitments to honor colonial boundaries, in the African context, Kantian theory of perpetual peace is subject to “sovereign will” of states. If West African security and economic integration can
be successfully achieved through the strengthening is its federation (ECOWAS) and the commitment of member countries to implements its protocols and treaties.

1.9 Literature Review

The history of post-independence West Africa, especially in the past two decades, has been marked by numerous violent conflicts.32 Very few of these conflicts have been inter-state conflicts while intra-state conflicts have been the dominant form of warfare.33 While some of them (Liberia, Sierra Leone) have been particularly violent and resulted in a high number of casualties and deaths, others have been low-intensity or contained such as the security crises in Burkina Faso, the Gambia, Senegal.34 Not only are West African conflicts of varying dimensions, durations, scales and intensities, but triggers and catalysts of these conflicts are also multi-dimensional, diverse and highly interlinked.35 Intrastate conflicts have attracted a lot of scholarly review because of its complexity and how it emerges. A school of thoughts is of the view that as far as scarcity of resources could bring about conflicts; abundance of resources could also bring conflicts36 and the latter could happen when people have the view that there is corruption at the seat of government. That may cause anti-government groups to emerge and demand answers from the authorities’ in-charge within the government. If allegations and accusations are not properly managed, violent conflict will emerge. In order to place this essay in a proper context within the body of existing knowledge, various literatures will be reviewed in the context of the study.

Bowd and Chikwanha in their book titled “Understanding Africa’s Contemporary Conflicts Origins, Challenges and Peace building”, are of the view that conflict emergence could be intrastate or interstate and continue that, an intrastate conflict emerge for a complex variety of reasons. Violent conflicts in the West Africa have contributed
negatively to the economies and posed other challenges like political instability, abject poverty and undermining of human security. They asserted that conflict, is not necessarily a negative phenomenon; what is important is the way in which the society responds to the emerging conflict. They also noted that in order to “design and develop successful policy responses and to learn from previous initiatives, it is thus necessary to fully comprehend the concept of conflict and its context”. By this stance, they confirmed a research done by Galtung that if a society is coercive in nature there is a likelihood that structural conflicts would easily to emerge. However, they opined that if conflicts could be well examined and managed, there would be transformational processes that would bring about peace and development.

In addition, Omeje in his book “Conflict in West Africa” found that:

Conflict triggers and catalysts are multi-dimensional, ranging from historical animosities and colonial legacies, to factors rooted in the complexity of post-colonial realities, forces of globalisation and global governance, external agencies and the vagaries of the ecological system.

In the view of Stormy-Annika et al. on conflict issues, they published a paper with the title *Scarcity and Abundance Revisited: A Literature Review on Natural Resources and Conflict*. They said that “access to natural resources is increasingly perceived as the security risk of the twenty-first century”. They opined that there is a relationship between natural resources (scarcity or abundance) and conflict.

Aside these conflicts, the sub-region also faces numerous socioeconomic challenges. The majority of sub-Saharan Africa’s (SSA) 47 countries are small and least developed, according to UNCTAD’s definition. Most of Africa’s countries have low per capita income levels and small populations which result in small markets. Not only are most SSA economies small and poor, but 15 are also landlocked, an important contributory factor to high trade transaction costs, and more generally to the high costs of doing business in Africa. Regional integration therefore makes sense for sub-Saharan Africa.
and indeed since independence African governments have embraced regional integration as an important component of their development strategies and concluded a very large number of regional integration arrangements (RIAs), several of which have significant membership overlap.°4

According to Jailson E. da G.R. Gomes:

Regional integration guarantees its participants preferential economic, commercial, political regime which undermines certain universal regulative instruments. It allows the countries of the region to stand up to the challenges of globalization, endure the pressure of global leaders who dictate the rules of the game. Secondly, it allows creating regional preferential advantages in global competitive landscape at the world goods, services, technologies and labor markets. Thirdly, regional integration lowers cost of production and marketing expenses, encourages international labor disintegration, specialization and cooperation of goods and services production encourages dynamic development of national economies, the growth of their competitive ability in global environment.°5

Ebaye in reference to Philippe and Langenhove article noted that integration should:

“…strengthen trade integration, create appropriate enabling environment for private sector development, engineer the development of infrastructural programmes in support of economic growth, stir the development of strong public sector institutions and good governance, enhance the reduction of social exclusion and the development of an inclusive civil society, contribute to peace and security, build environment programmes at the regional level, and strengthen regional interaction with other regions of the world”°6

He explained further that the degree of integration depends upon the willingness and commitment of independent sovereign states to share their sovereignty.°7 It has often been argued that the inability of the states to give regional institutions the power to act has been one of the major stumbling blocks to the effectiveness of regional integration in the sub-region. Ebaye (2010) however clarified the importance of states giving some of their autonomy to the regional institutions:

“In many integration attempts in Africa, political leaderships have jealously guarded their sovereignty and were not willing to surrender any of it to supranational powers. As a result, national political agents tended to determine the nature of their participation in the integration project. The transfer of some powers will not only provide sub-regional secretariats with the necessary legitimacy but, most importantly, will vest in these institutions the necessary authority to make tough policy decisions and to
enforce coordinated action in critical areas of national policy management. These shifts in decision-making do not necessarily imply erosion of existing state power and authority. Rather, what will have changed is the way in which states use their power and authority; decision-making will be made in coordination with other member-states. Moreover, the transfer of authority to elected supra-national bodies will enhance their ability to plan, coordinate, oversee and evaluate the implementation of collective projects and programs. Thus, sovereignty need no longer be thought of as a zero-sum game.48

It has widely been argued that even though the success stories of sub-Saharan regional integration has been dismal, given the characteristics of the continent and the sub-region, regional integration is still the best alternative for the continent as a whole.49 At the continental level, all West African states are members of the African Union (AU). At the regional level, ECOWAS has been a pioneer in developing a regional peace and security architecture and the West African Economic and Monetary Union (also known by its French acronym, UEMOA) is an enduring example of successful monetary integration.50

1.10 Research Methodology

The research depends solely on secondary data. The data is collected from academic journals, published and unpublished reports, books and book reviews, dissertations, theses as well as the internet. The study uses qualitative methods to do the analyses, uses comparative and individual cases of other renowned researchers, and international bodies that are conflict-research bias. Content analysis is used involving probing and analysing past events with a view to comprehend the past and the present in order to forecast the future and deal with the issues under study.

1.11 Organization of the Work

This study is organized into four distinctive chapters as follows; the first chapter is the research design and it introduces the theory underlying the study as well as the
methodology. Chapter Two assesses the conflict situation in West-Africa as a whole, highlighting some of the past conflicts and emerging conflicts, the causes of those conflicts, the measures to resolve the conflicts and the constraints to conflict resolution as a whole.

Chapter Three is the analytical chapter of the work as it analyses the efforts made by ECOWAS at regional integration and the possibility for regionals economic and security integration in the midst of all the numerous challenges posed by conflict in the sub-region. Chapter Four then summarizes the findings from the review of literature and draws conclusions and make recommendations to help speed up regional integration in West Africa.
Endnotes


5 Ibid.

6 Ibid.


8 Ibid

9 Ibid


16 Ibid., p.139

17 Immanuel Kant, Perpetual Peace 4–6 (M. Campbell Smith Trans., 3rd Ed., 1917)
18 Ibid., p.5
20 Ibid., p.139
21 Ibid., p.142
22 Immanuel Kant, Perpetual Peace 4–6 (M. Campbell Smith Trans., 3rd Ed., 1917)
25 Ibid, p.133
26 G.W.F. Hegel, Philosophy of Right (S.W. Dyde Trans., 2001).
27 Ibid
29 Ibid., p.143
37 Bowd Richard and Chikwanha Barbara Annie (eds), Understanding Africa’s contemporary conflicts Origins, challenges and peacebuilding (2010), p.x
43 Ibid., p. 3
44 Ibid., p. 3
47 Ibid., p. 277
48 Ibid., p. 281
CHAPTER TWO
THE CONCEPT OF CONFLICT AND REGIONAL INTEGRATION IN WEST AFRICA

2.0 Introduction

The concepts of conflict and regional integration like many other concepts in the social sciences and international relations have been given varied meanings by different scholars. This chapter touches on some of the scholarly definitions of conflict and regional integration. Some of the past and present conflicts in the West African sub-region as well as the causes of conflicts are discussed in this section. The efforts by various stakeholders to end violent conflicts are also discussed in this section. There are evidences to suggest that regional economic and political integration are cardinal in ending violent conflicts in West Africa. Therefore the rationale and need for regional integration are also discussed in this section of the work.

2.1 Defining Conflict

With the paradigmatic shift from inter-state to intra-state conflicts, many literatures have different definitions and concepts of conflict and its resolution. To Bernard Mayer conflicts can be explained through a three-dimensional lens. That is ‘conflict as perception,’ ‘conflict as feeling’ and ‘conflict as action.’ As a perception, Mayer identifies that conflict is often the conviction that ‘one’s own needs, interests, wants, or values are incompatible with someone else’s’.¹ As a feeling, conflict can be expressed through several emotions including ‘fear, anger, bitterness, sadness, hopelessness’ or the combination of these. Finally, Mayer highlights that conflict involves actions which may be ‘violent or destructive’.²
Conflict is defined as ‘contradictions inherent in power relations and which manifest themselves in individual and group interactions with one another and with nature in the pursuit of limited resources or opportunities’. Conflict could also be seen as a violent expression of disagreements and frustration often arising from unmet needs and aspirations. While conflicts are not always violent, the ones that have affected West Africa have been characterized by violence and brutality.

Invariably, conflicts in West Africa have been notably fuelled by multiple interrelated causal factors including poverty, human rights violations, bad governance and corruption, ethnic marginalization and small arms proliferation. While the above causes persist, some of the conflicts that have occurred in the sub-region have been linked to certain triggers which often ignite the uprisings. According to ECOWAS, as defined in its Conflict Prevention Framework 2008, these triggers are associated with sudden happenings that arouse tensions often leading to violent conflicts. For example, the 2012 coup d’état in Mali was reportedly triggered by the lack of support from the Traoré regime to the Malian army to handle the Tuareg rebellion in January 2012 which led to the death of several national soldiers.

2.2 Violent Conflicts and Civil Strife in West Africa

The history of West Africa is a series of conflicts: Most of the states have seen civil wars (Sierra Leone, Liberia, Guinea-Bissau, Ivory Coast), coups d’état (Gambia, Niger, Guinea) as well as ethnic and religious clashes (Benin, Nigeria, Mali) since gaining independence. Moreover, poverty, political despotism, corruption and foreign interference have turned ‘the dreams of an economically integrated and politically united West Africa into a living nightmare for most of its citizens’. Outstandingly brutal and violent was the era after the Cold War, when several countries experienced destructive civil wars on their soil. West
Africa has been grappling with violent conflicts and civil strife for decades, however, the periods between the 1980s and the 1990s leading to the new millennium presented more violent and protracted conflicts which destabilized many of its economies.\(^7\) Notable countries that plunged into violent conflict during that period include Liberia, Sierra Leone, Guinea-Bissau and Côte d’Ivoire.\(^8\)

### 2.2.1 Past conflicts

The territories of the 53 African states were carved out during the Berlin Conference of 1884-1885 by the Europeans in an effort to rule Africa and scramble for its wealth. The artificially created territories brought together people of different ethnic heritage and warring groups. The most populous state, Nigeria has over 250 ethnic groups. As West African countries begun to gain their independence from their colonial master, a new wave of conflicts emerge to claim back territories that has been lost to other states due to colonial rule. In the 1960s, there were border disputes between Ghana and Togo for the control of South-Eastern Ghana and between Mali and Burkina-Faso of the control of the Agacher Strip. The conflicting claims to territory persist today in West Africa as seen in the conflict between Nigeria and Cameroon over the Bakassi Peninsula. The latter conflict even persists today despite the numerous efforts by the international community.\(^9\)

No West African State has escaped armed rebellion in its political history. The common feature of these conflicts is the brutal nature it takes. Attacks and atrocities against non-combatants are mostly employed as deliberate strategies of warfare – including such tactics as systematic rape, mass executions, ethnic cleansing, and even genocide.\(^10\) For instance, Liberia plunged into its first violent civil war in December 1989 with the invasion of Charles Taylor’s National Patriotic Front of Liberia (NPFL). Taylor’s rebellion, which sought to overthrow the autocratic and repressive rule of then President
Samuel Doe, not only succeeded with his ascension to power in the 1997 elections, but also resulted in the outbreak of a violent seven-year civil war. In 1996, with the support of the ECOMOG, violence was abated leading to a ceasefire. Nevertheless, this seeming peace was short-lived as longstanding and simmering ethnic tensions, corruption, subjugation and abject poverty of the people thrust the country back into a second civil war in 1999; two years after Taylor was elected into office as president. By the end of the second civil war, there were reported high cases of rape and torture, high death rates, destruction of basic infrastructure and services, malnutrition and about 21,000 child soldiers to disarm and demobilize. The 2009 report of the Liberian Truth and Reconciliation Commission (LTRC) indicated that 250,000 people were killed in the almost 14-year conflict and one million displaced. These conflicts made Liberia poor as in 2010, the country reportedly ranked 162 of 169 countries in the Human Development Index, making it one of the poorest countries in the world.

Two years after the outbreak of civil war in Liberia, violent civil conflict also erupted in neighbouring Sierra Leone in 1991 hinged on a coup led by Foday Sankoh’s Revolutionary United Front (RUF) rebel group against President Momoh’s regime. Clashes between the Gaddafi and Taylor supported RUF and the incumbent resulted in over a decade long violent conflict which was officially declared over in February 2002. The conflict, arising from corruption, bad governance, social injustice, and breakdown of democratic institutions resulted in the killing of 50,000 people, and the destruction of infrastructure as well as other pertinent social services. Similarly, Guinea-Bissau and Côte d’Ivoire experienced violent civil conflicts in 1998 and 2002 respectively. Like other West African states, Guinea-Bissau’s history is characterized with periodic conflicts however; the ‘7th June War’ in 1998 pushed the former Portuguese colony into a violent civil strife. The 11-month conflict which ended on 7 May 1999, led by Brigadier Ansumane Mane, was
supposedly caused by weapon trafficking in neighboring Senegal for the Casamance independence movement, corruption and human rights abuse. Like all violent conflicts, casualties were recorded as it claimed the lives of thousands and entrenched poverty in the country. Despite enjoying turbulent peace over the past ten years after the 1998 conflict, characterized by periodic political crisis, the coup d’état in April 2012 which led to the arrest of Prime Minister Carlos Gomes Júnior threatened the security and already fragile peace of this small West African state.

Furthermore, the civil conflict that plagued Côte d’Ivoire, the one-time economic powerhouse and the beacon of stability in West Africa cannot be overlooked. Deeply rooted in ethnic-religious divisions and identity aggravated by politics of exclusion, the country erupted into full-fledged civil strife in September 2002. Following the explosion of the civil strife into a violent conflict, several peace initiatives were adopted but failed to resolve the conflict in Côte d’Ivoire until the successful signing of the Ouagadougou peace accord in 2007 restored peace and stability in the country. With three years of relative peace in the country, Ivorians were ready to take to the polls in November 2010, a critical election which was anticipated to consolidate the peace the country had enjoyed and unify its stratified population. Much to their chagrin, the country nearly relapsed back into a violent civil war after the disputed elections led to a violent confrontation between loyalists of incumbent Laurent Gbagbo and main opposition Alassane Ouattara. The following five-month battle led to the death of over 3000 people and the displacement of many.

### 2.2.2 Present and emerging conflicts

Generally, even though there is a decline in large scale violent conflict and civil strife, pockets of simmering tensions, insurgency and the re-emergence of coups d’état continues
to trouble the sub-region. For example the recent coups d’état in Guinea-Bissau and Mali; insurgency in the Sahel region affecting West African countries of Mali, Niger and Mauritania, as well as low-scale conflicts in notably stable countries like Ghana, Senegal and Nigeria further makes the sub-region capricious and prone to more violent conflicts. 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. 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. Furthermore, the recent Boko Haram insurgency in northern Nigeria, which hinged upon religion and economic deprivation, also poses security concerns in the sub-region. Since its emergence in 2002, the Boko Haram insurgency has taken many lives, displaced several thousand and destroyed state property. Travelling to the south of Nigeria, the prolonged Niger Delta conflict over oil has further compounded the insecurities in West Africa’s most populous nation. The Niger Delta conflict has led to several kidnapping of expatriates, casualties and the increased use of sophisticated weaponry in the region by militant groups such as the Movement for the Emancipation of the Niger Delta (MEND) thereby heightening insecurity within the country and across the sub-region.

2.3 Causes of Conflicts in West Africa

The causes for West Africa’s tendency to conflict are diverse and highly interlinked: Scholars have raised issues such as the accumulation of political, economic, structural, historical and cultural factors and it has been noted that there is not a single element to
blame for. The root of violent conflicts and civil strife in West Africa is linked to several complex factors. In his article, ‘Conflict and Peace in West Africa,’ Cybil Obi identifies that:

The roots of conflict in West Africa are much deeper and complex, and are embedded in the interplay of historical factors, socio-economic crisis, legacies of authoritarianism and the politics of exclusion, international forces, and local struggles.28

Admittedly, while the aforementioned constitute the broader causal factors, embedded within and related to them are bad governance and corruption, human rights violations, poverty, ethnic marginalization and small arms and light weapons proliferation (among others), which continue to serve as triggers and drivers of violent conflicts in the sub-region.29

2.3.1 Bad governance and corruption

Post-colonial rule of West African countries has been fraught with several challenges. Elemental among them are the issues of bad governance and corruption. Following independence, several regimes across the sub-region have mismanaged state resources and weakened governance institutions which has resulted in economic stalemate, political apprehensions and breakdown of social peace and stability. Today, these twin factors constitute a major cause of violent conflicts and civil strife in West Africa. Several scholarly works on conflicts in the sub-region have identified bad governance and corruption as the underpinning factors fuelling and renewing violence in West Africa.30 Conflicts in Nigeria, Guinea-Bissau, Sierra Leone, Liberia, Côte d’Ivoire and other West African countries notably hinge upon bad governance and corruption. For instance, in the Sierra Leonean war, it was identified that bad governance, corruption and poverty were the root causes of the conflict.31 Additionally, research conducted in Liberia by Patrick Vinck,
Phuong Pham and Tino Kreutzer in 2011 indicated that majority of the population (64 per cent) identified, among other factors, greed and corruption as the cause of the Liberian civil war.\(^{32}\)

Corruption in West Africa’s most populous nation, Nigeria, has been highlighted as one of the underlining factors in the Niger Delta conflict and the more recent, yet very pronounced, Boko Haram insurgency.\(^ {33}\) Ironically, the Niger Delta region though blessed with the largest oil resource in Nigeria is also the poorest region in the country. This is perhaps attributable to the high corruption at the national level which does not give opportunity for oil wealth to trickle down to the ordinary ‘Deltarians’ and the larger Nigerian population. In 2003 for example, the Nigerian Anti-Corruption Agency, the Economic and Financial Crime Commission (EFCC) reportedly estimated that 70 per cent of the oil earnings, constituting over US$ 14 billion was stolen and wasted.\(^ {34}\) Reportedly, the majority of the perpetrators of corruption in Nigeria include senators, ministers, commissioners and individuals with higher connections in the political playground. In affirming the linkage between corruption and violence in Nigeria’s Niger Delta, Ejibunu indicates that ‘seeing money coming from the Federal Government, on earnings on crude oil sales, with essentially none of it reaching the ordinary people, has created condition for insurrection’.\(^ {35}\)

Likewise, in a small country like Guinea- Bissau, bad governance and corruption are deeply entrenched in the social, political, judicial and economic system leading to bitter pent-up feelings among the local population which are sometimes expressed through violence.\(^ {36}\) In their 2010 joint report on the ‘Root Causes of Conflict in Guinea-Bissau: The Voices of the People,’ Voz di Paz and Interpeace, international non-governmental and peace-building institutions, chronicled the voices of local citizens of Guinea-Bissau on issues of corruption and conflict. Some citizens were quoted saying:
The President steals. The Governor steals. The minister and even the Prime Minister steal. The administrator steals. Who will not steal? The country is being destroyed by the President. It was there that the destruction began. If the President takes twenty-four billion (CFA), what is left?37

Another expressed that:

The health centres do not have anything; patients have no bed and no sheets. The leaders go to build buildings. It is not the people that are spoiling them. The people are united, but the State does not want our unity. They are pitting us against each other. We are told, `That person is not worth anything. That lineage is not worth anything.’ So we fight while they will sit and eat together, laugh and clap.38

Clearly if the above mentioned persists and remains unresolved, it could increase the likelihood for more violent conflicts and civil strife rather than ending them and building sustainable peace in the sub-region.

2.3.2 Human rights violations

Incidences of human rights abuses and violations are numerous in West Africa and as such this forms the basis for the eruption and renewal of violent conflicts and civil strife in the sub-region. Across the sub-region, there are reported incidences of sexual and gender-based violence, reprisal killings, beatings, impunity for state officials and institutions, high social injustice, repressive and brutal leadership, and unequal distribution of state resources among others.39 All these serve as both triggers and consequences of war. For instance in Nigeria, violations of the human rights of local citizens underscore as one of the factors causing the militancy in the Niger Delta region.40 Many of the oil companies in the region are reported to be causing environmental pollution and economic marginalization while the state supinely looks on. A specific example is the 1992 killings of youth from Bonny, a local community, during a peaceful demonstration against the ecological pollution and marginalization caused by Shell Company.41 Unfortunately, the state security institutions support these oil companies to violate the rights of its own citizens as was the
case in January 1993 when 300,000 Ogoni protestors who were harassed, arrested and killed by Federal government troops when demonstrating peacefully against Shell oil for environmental pollution and economic marginalization.42

In Guinea-Bissau as well, the impunity for human rights abuse by state officials in part led to the violent conflict that destabilized the country in 1998.43 Local authorities are often accused of engaging in beatings and oppression of the local citizens creating a culture of ‘Matchundade’8 (aggressive behaviours) which bred major conflict with brutal consequences.44 Due to the continuous existence of these repressive acts against the citizens and among ethnic groups, even after the 1998 civil war, Guinea-Bissau seems to be sitting on a boiling pot of tensions which, unresolved, could explode into another violent conflict as was mildly witnessed in the 2010 mutiny and the recent April 2012 coup d’état.45

Moreover, human rights violations in seemingly stable West African countries such as The Gambia and Equatorial Guinea are increasingly creating precarious situations for instability. Although these countries have not experienced large-scale violent conflicts in recent times as their neighbours have, the brutal, undemocratic, unequal and authoritative rule by incumbent regimes is creating tensions which, unresolved, could bring the countries to a boiling point of violent war and civil strife. The 2011 Freedom House report on the ‘Worst of the Worst: The World’s Most Repressive Societies’ named Equatorial Guinea and Côte d’Ivoire as part of the 20 most repressed societies in the world.46 The Teodoro Obiang Nguema Mbasogo regime in Equatorial Guinea for example, is not only accused of pervasive corruption but also rife human rights abuses including detention of political opponents, torture, extrajudicial killings, interference in the judicial system, disregard for rule of law, widespread violence against women and impunity of security forces.47 Similarly, the government of Alhaji Yayha Jammeh of The Gambia is accused of similar human rights abuses and violations (USDS 2011). As stated earlier, although these
violations have not resulted in violent conflicts in these countries, their linkages to political and internal tensions in both countries cannot be overlooked.\textsuperscript{48} For instance, since 1994, Yayha Jammeh’s 19-year regime has experienced over four attempted coups and several tensions.\textsuperscript{49}

### 2.3.3 Poverty

Poverty also stands to be one of the major setbacks in West Africa and the continent of Africa. According to the 2012 UNDP Human Development report nearly half of sub-Saharan Africans live in poverty.\textsuperscript{50} Consequently, the poverty that many across the continent endure can be seen to be one of the major contributing factors to the occurrence of violent conflicts in Africa. Like the rest of Africa, the West Africa sub-region is neither immune to the poverty canker nor ignorant of its impact on their fragile peace and stability. With over 60 per cent of its population living below the poverty line of US$1 a day, civil unrest and grievances, both recipes for conflicts, become widespread. These agitations sometimes take violent forms and are seen as channels for punishing governments for their failure to alleviate poverty.\textsuperscript{51} For instance, in research conducted by Vinck et al. in 2011 show that 30 per cent of the Liberian population indicated that poverty was one of the root causes of the Liberian civil war.\textsuperscript{52} Similar assertions have also been made with regards to the conflicts in Nigeria and Guinea-Bissau. In Voz di Paz and Interpeace’s 2010 report, poverty was stated as one of the major cause of the Bissau-Guinean conflicts, citing food insecurity, lack of infrastructure and access to basic social needs as some of the poverty indicators in the country.\textsuperscript{53} Emphasizing the connection between poverty and conflict, the Bissau-Guineans have an adage which states ‘In homes where there is no bread everyone fights and no one is right’.\textsuperscript{54} Indeed hunger, starvation, lack of economic growth and development create a high likelihood of violent conflicts and civil strife.
2.3.4 Ethnic marginalization

Ethnicity by itself is not violent however the concept has been manipulated in ‘societies polarized into two imbalanced divides with one faction feeling marginalized’. Correspondingly, James Fearon and David Laitin also believe that ‘a greater degree of ethnic or religious diversity ’by itself is not ‘a major and direct cause’ of violent civil conflict’. Nevertheless, to a larger extent, for a heterogeneous community like West Africa, ethnicity has become a dividing factor that continues to drive violent conflicts and civil strife within and among communities and states, destabilizing the peace in the sub-region. Research conducted across the sub-region identifies ethnicity and ethnic fragmentation as one of the root causes of violent conflicts in West Africa. Particularly for Liberia, this was prominent as 49 per cent of the population reportedly identified ethnicity and ethnic divisions as the root cause of the Liberian civil wars. More specifically, in the 10-year repressive rule of Samuel Doe, the Krahn and Mandingo ethnic groups were more favoured than the others which resulted in various ethnic tensions that saw the rebellious invasion of Charles Taylor, an Americo-Liberian, leading to the violent civil war that overthrew Doe’s government in 1996. Currently, Liberians are still afraid of a potential renewal of civil war along ethnic lines when the United Nations (UN) Peacekeeping mission ends. Similar situations exist in other countries such as Côte d’Ivoire, Guinea-Bissau and Nigeria. For a small country like Guinea-Bissau, ethnic divisions are so entrenched among the various communities and at the national level, resulting in constant fighting and violence. Likewise, in a country like Ghana which is noted for stability and peace, ethnic division in its northern region, among the Andanis and Abudus has led to violent inter-ethnic strife that threatens the peace in the entire country.
2.3.5 Small arms and light weapons proliferation

Small Arms and Light Weapons (SALW) proliferation is one of the major challenges in West Africa. The sub-region remains an area of considerable SALW proliferation because of their affordability, accessibility and availability; and porosity of the borders and legal frameworks legitimizing their use. As reported by Edeko Sunday, West Africa hosts about 7 to 10 million of the world’s illegal SALW as well as 8 million out of the 100 million circulating in Africa. Additionally, 77,000 of the small arms are allegedly within the control of West African insurgent groups. The circulation of illegal arms within and across states has increased the proclivity of conflicts within the sub-region. Small arms proliferation has contributed to the mobilization for coups d’état, undemocratic overthrow of governments, increasing casualties and violent inter-communal and intra-state conflicts in West Africa. Since the 1960s there have been over 37 successful military coups in almost all the countries in West Africa often resulting in violent wars; killing millions and displacing many. Furthermore, small arms proliferation notably fuelled the conflicts in Liberia, Sierra Leone, Côte d’Ivoire, Guinea- Bissau, Mali, Niger, Senegal and Togo. For example, arms were supplied by governments to aid the civil wars in Liberia, Sierra Leone and Côte d’Ivoire. For instance, Charles Taylor’s National Patriotic Front of Liberia (NPFL) was accused of supplying and distributing Foday Sankoh’s Revolutionary United Front (RUF) with arms to fuel the conflict in Sierra Leone. The conflict led to the death of over 50,000 people; 30,000 amputations; and the sexual violation of over 257,000 women (Ploughshares 2002). Additionally, the Liberians United for Reconciliation and Democracy (LURD) rebel group received weapons from the Guinean governments which they used to kill civilians in Monrovia during the conflict in Liberia.
2.3.6 Resources Induced Conflicts

One of the key factors sparkling conflict in West Africa is resources especially in recent times. Some of the conflicts that have occurred and continue to afflict some of the countries have been the struggle over the control of natural resources. The conflicts in Liberia, Sierra Leone, and the Niger Delta are predominantly resource based conflicts. The resources are not the basis of the conflicts, but provide the fuel that drives it as in the case of Liberia and Sierra Leone, where the Diamond mines and timber ‘concessions’ provided the needed foreign exchange. However, in the case of Nigeria, it is the presence of oil in the Niger Delta and the associated controversy over the distribution of the proceeds that has formed the basis of the conflict. Rebellions that have natural resource backing tend to be more complicated as the rebels have the financial clout to engage in a protracted struggle.65

2.4 Initiatives towards Conflict Prevention and Resolution in West Africa

The outbreak of violent conflicts and civil strife in West Africa has led to several actions and interventions played by different actors. These actors include civil society organizations (CSOs), ECOWAS, the African Union (AU) and the international community. At the sub-regional level, ECOWAS’ involvement and efforts in addressing critical security challenges have achieved some noticeable success. In Liberia, Sierra Leone, Guinea-Bissau and Côte d’Ivoire, the deployment of peacekeepers through ECOMOG and the key mediatory role played by the sub-regional bloc helped salvage peace and stability, bringing an end to the violent conflicts.66 Additionally, the involvement of ECOWAS can be witnessed through its lead on the process of drafting and signing numerous peace agreements that resulted in the attainment of peace in several countries in the sub-region.67 These include but are not limited to the Linas-Marcoussis, Accra II & III, and Pretoria
Agreements on Côte d’Ivoire; the Accra, Cotonou and Abuja Peace Agreements on Liberia; and the Lomé Peace Agreement on Sierra Leone.\(^6\) In terms of mediation, ECOWAS was involved in recent conflicts in Côte d’Ivoire, Mali and Guinea-Bissau to ensure that stability is restored. For instance, during the 2012 coups d’état in Mali and Guinea-Bissau, the ECOWAS Heads of States and Governments appointed H.E. Blaise Compoare of Bukina Faso and H.E. Goodluck Jonathan of Nigeria as mediators for the respective countries.\(^6\) The ECOWAS has furthermore been collaborating with civil society organizations to implement its Early Warning Mechanism (ECOWARN) which seeks to prevent and monitor conflicts in the sub-region. For instance, for the past eight years since the operationalisation of ECOWARN, ECOWAS has been working with the West Africa Network for Peacebuilding (WANEP) to monitor elections in Ghana, Togo, Côte d’Ivoire, Guinea Conakry and other countries on the continent.\(^7\) In addition, the adoptions of the Protocol, Relating to the Mechanism for Conflict Prevention, Management, Resolution, Peacekeeping and Security in December 1999 and the ECOWAS Conflict Prevention Framework (ECPF) in 2008, among other protocols, have helped enhance and affirm ECOWAS’ role as a key player in conflict prevention and resolution in West Africa.\(^7\)

The efforts of civil society and women’s groups within the sub-region cannot be ignored. Throughout the various violent conflicts and civil strife that West Africa has experienced, these groups have played a pivotal role in building lasting peace within communities and states. The initiatives of groups such as WANEP, West Africa Civil Society Institute (WACSI), Mano River Union Women’s Peace Network (MARWOPNET), and Women in Peacebuilding Network (WIPNET), among others, have brokered peace and ended violent conflicts in West Africa. For example, to end the Liberian war WIPNET, through its advocacy campaign, ‘We want peace, No More War’ forced Charles Taylor and the war-
lords of the LURD to attend the peace talks in 2003 resulting in the signing of the Agreement on Ceasefire and Cessation of Hostilities on 17 June 2003. In a similar action, an advocacy campaign by MARWOPNET in 2001 brought together the presidents of Liberia (Charles Taylor), Sierra Leone (Tejan Kabbah) and Guinea (Lansana Conte) for a peace talk. This action marked the first time the three leaders had come together to discuss insecurity and peacekeeping along their borders (Jones 2011: 166). Other regional civil society affiliated institutions, like the Kofi Annan International Peacekeeping Training Centre (KAIPTC) in Ghana (since its inception in 2003), have trained various military, police and civilians in conflict prevention and peacekeeping. The KAIPTC has also created avenues for dialogue among civil society groups and other regional bodies on peacekeeping, peace building, mediation and negotiation, and post-conflict reconstruction.

At the continental and international level, the AU, UN and other bilateral and multilateral actors have taken several initiatives to support the consolidation of peace in West Africa. The African Union for example was instrumental in ending Côte d’Ivoire’s post-electoral violence that occurred in 2010 – 2011. The continental body, among other initiatives, formed a five-member mediation group including Kenyan Prime Minister Raila Odinga, Presidents Robert Mugabe (Zimbabwe), Jacob Zuma (South Africa), Goodluck Jonathan (Nigeria) and Mohamed Ould Abdel (Mauritania) to broker peace between the two disputing factions. Also in response to the April 2012 coup d’état in Guinea-Bissau, the AU at its 318th Council meeting placed a ban on Guinea-Bissau from participating in any AU activities until constitutional order and peace was restored.

Beyond the borders of Africa, the UN and the European Union (EU) have also been key contributors to the consolidation of sustainable peace in West Africa. The UN for example has been deploying peacekeepers into violent conflict territories in West Africa for decades. Currently, the global body has peacekeeping missions in Côte d’Ivoire (UNOCI) and
Liberia (UNMIL); however its mission in Sierra Leone (UNAMSIL) ended in 2005 and was replaced with the UN Integrated Office for Sierra Leone (UNIOSIL). Through these peacekeeping activities, the UN help protect civilians; disarm, demobilize and reintegrate ex-combatant; support post-conflict reconstruction processes; and establish peace and stable environment in these conflict zones. More recently, the global governance body has also been supporting ECOWAS in addressing the crisis in Mali and Guinea- Bissau. For instance, the Secretary-General’s Special Representative for West Africa, Said Djinnit, participated in the ECOWAS Mediation and Security Council meeting on Mali and Guinea-Bissau took place in Abidjan, la Côte d’Ivoire, on 19 May 2012. In addition, the establishment of the UN Office for West Africa (UNOWA) in January 2002 has assisted the region to address, inter alia, issues of human rights abuse, election violence, cross-border insecurities, security sector reforms, drug trafficking and organized crimes as well as provide funding for the implementation of state and regional programmes. The EU on the other hand, have been, among other activities, funding and supporting election observation and monitoring programmes across the sub-region. Since 2000, it has deployed 78 Election Observation missions worldwide including missions to 10 West African countries - Sierra Leone, Nigeria, Guinea-Bissau, Liberia, Ghana, Togo, Guinea Conakry, Côte d’Ivoire, Niger and Senegal. Through these missions, EU has been working with local communities and state institutions to monitor, prevent and resolve election-related violence in the sub-region.

2.5 Challenges to Ending Violent Conflicts in West Africa

Despite efforts made to prevent and end violent conflicts in West Africa, the region continues to experience sporadic violence and volatile security challenges. The major challenge to ending conflict in West Africa can be attributed to the poor understanding of the
fundamental causes of the conflict. For example in the current Malian crisis, the misplaced understanding of the international community that the root cause of the conflict is the terrorist activities by Islamists in the region; thus, placing it in the context of ‘fight against terror’ has in part hindered the process of finding lasting solution for the conflict.\textsuperscript{79} In that it has shifted the focus from the deep seated root causes of bad governance, corruption, discrimination, ethnic marginalization, and unstructured military governance) to terrorist activities which is mainly an offshoot of the conflict.\textsuperscript{80} Other challenges identified by scholars include weak institutional structures; language barrier (Anglo- Francophone-Lusophone); lack of skills and expertise in conflict mediation and dialogue; lack of resources; lack of political will; lack of coordination between and among ECOWAS agencies and its partners; and non-inclusive peace-building processes. These factors make ending violent conflicts in the region increasingly delicate and challenging.\textsuperscript{81} In affirming the above, Aning and Bah identified a disjoint concerning collaboration and coordination between and among ECOWAS institutions and its external partners.\textsuperscript{82} This they emphasized is affecting the implementation of the ECPF which was designed to ‘strengthen human security and incorporate conflict prevention activities as well as aspects of peace-building’. This has in part is also affecting the work operation of the ECOWARN. For instance, recently, the regional early warning system was criticized for not detecting the signs that led to the April 2012 coup d’état in Guinea-Bissau as the early warning mechanism continued to grapple with internal and external coordination challenges.\textsuperscript{83} Lack of resources of states and the sub-regional body also hinders the resolution of conflicts in the sub-region. Financial, human and material resources for conflict resolution have been some of the sub-region’s challenges. For instance, most national security forces lack the requisite equipment and capacity needed to adequately disarm belligerent groups.
For example, in the Malian conflict, lack of equipment and capacity of the national army has been noted as one of the challenges preventing successive governments from addressing the Tuareg rebellions since the 1960s.\textsuperscript{84} In Liberia also, despite the acclaimed heroic intervention of ECOMOG in 1996, material challenges such as lack of equipment, arms, sea and airlift capacities, and machinery to some extent, affected the effective implementation of the ECOMOG mandate which in part contributed to the re-surfacing of the conflict in 1999 after peace was restored in 1997.\textsuperscript{85}

Additionally, lack of political will of governments of West African states to create transparent and accountable governance institutions, address human rights issues and implement signed peace agreements and resolutions is also a challenge hindering the resolution of violent conflicts in the sub-region.\textsuperscript{86} For example, in the 2010 post electoral violence in Côte d'Ivoire, Laurent Gbagbo’s defiance to the ECOWAS communiqué from the Abuja Summit on 24 December 2010, calling for him to step down, hindered the early resolution of the conflict; further fuelling the crisis as his loyalists continued to fight. Furthermore, limited involvement of women, local communities, grassroots organizations and civil society in peace-building and peacemaking processes perhaps contributes to the challenges impeding lasting resolution of conflicts in West Africa. Women play essential roles in peacemaking in their communities, homes and organizations however, when it comes to official negotiations and mediations, women’s participation and representation remain nominal. In West Africa, the primary organs for conflict mediation in the ECOWAS Member States are the Council of the Wise (CoW) and the Special Representatives and Special Envoys of the President.\textsuperscript{87} With the latter represented by only one female President Ellen Johnson Sirleaf, many women are automatically excluded from participating in formal negotiations. The exclusion of women in this process often results in unresolved tensions. Melanne Verveer, Head of the US State Department’s Office for
Global Women’s Issues, noted at the 2010 Conference on the Role of Women in Global Security that thirty-one of the world’s thirty-nine conflicts relapsed back into violent wars after peace agreements because women were excluded from the peace process. Moreover, lack of adequate expertise and skills of mediators also accounts for this persisting challenge. Furthermore, effective peacemaking requires adequate mediation and facilitation skills which seem to be lacking among members and other mediators in the sub-region.

2.6 Defining Regional Integration

In general, integration is the unification of a number of hitherto independent units into a larger whole, which is ‘more than the sum of its parts’. Integration can be conceived of as a process (dynamic), terminal condition (static) or combination of both. As a process, integration involves the establishment of common legal rules and legal systems for citizens. As an outcome, integration in Africa has taken the form of bureaucratic and political institutionalisation, while as a process it has involved development from a state of isolation to a condition of unification and incorporation. Regional Integration is a process and it basically involves two or more nation-states entering into a regional agreement to co-operate and work closely together to achieve peace, stability and wealth through regional institutions and rules. It usually integration involves one or more written agreements that describe the areas of cooperation in detail, as well as some coordinating bodies representing the countries involved. Integration also occurs at various levels of society (local, national, regional and international) and takes economic, social and political forms and its success or failure is determined by the interaction of enabling and inhibiting variables.
Economic integration can be defined as “a close degree of economic intertwining that by formal agreement of informal circumstances, the countries involved begin to surrender some degree of sovereignty and act as an economic unit”\(^{92}\). Yet, economic cooperation can be understood as “a process whereby sovereign states cooperate with one another bilaterally or multi-laterally through international governmental organisations (such as the IMF) or processes (such as the G-7 meetings)”.\(^{93}\) However, it is not clear when economic cooperation becomes economic integration because it is an evolving process along a spectrum of stages ranging from economic isolation, through commercial policy, to economic cooperation, and lastly to economic integration.

Some scholars have viewed regional integration as a worldwide phenomenon of territorial systems that increase the interactions between their components and create new forms of organization, co-existing with traditional forms of state led organization at the national level. They argue that the initiatives should fulfill; the strengthening of trade integration in the region, the creation of an appropriate enabling environment for private sector development, the development of infrastructural programmes in support of economic growth, the development of strong public sector institutions and good governance, the reduction of social exclusion and the development of an inclusive civil society, contribution to peace and security in the region, the building of environment programmes at the regional level, and the strengthening of the region’s interaction with other regions of the world. Others have viewed regional integration as the process by which states within a particular region increase their level of interaction with regard to economic, security, political, social and cultural issues. They concluded that regional integration is the joining of individual states within a region into a larger whole. The degree of integration depends upon the willingness and commitment of independent sovereign states to share their sovereignty.\(^{94}\)
Thus, the main objective of regional integration is to unify some or all aspects of the economies in question. It usually grows from simple cooperation on and coordination of mutually agreed aspects amongst a given number of countries to full integration. Chingono and Nakana in their study mentioned that integration occurs at various levels of society (local, national, regional and international) which may take economic, social and political forms of which its success or failure is determined by the interaction of enabling and inhibiting variables.  

### 2.7 Importance of West African Regional Economic and Security Integration

From a global perspective, African states are not strong enough to survive in the world market on their own. African countries are militarily weak and cannot defend themselves and thus need to belong to a regional group in order to increase their power and ensure their security. Just as Hettne et al. pointed out, that in order to counter the effects of a turbulent global political and economic system and to arrest their marginalization, developing countries needs to integrate their national political and economic systems. Regional integration discourse however assumes that neighbouring countries that have similar economic with socio-political and security problems may benefit from integrating their economies because this creates a situation of mutual inter-dependence and development.

In a similar vein, Davies argues; combination of cooperation, coordination and integration is realistic and feasible under prevailing conditions which could best advance the goals of contributing to development and growth. More so, countries may need regional integration arrangements even if they do not have similar problems base on the fact that regional
integration will creates larger economic spaces and allows for economy of scale, which may increase efficiency, competitiveness and faster growth.\textsuperscript{96}

Regional integration discourse assumes that neighbouring countries that have similar economic, socio-political and security problems may benefit from integrating their economies because this creates a situation of mutual inter-dependence and development. Also countries may need regional integration arrangements even if they do not have similar problems. Regional integration creates larger economic spaces and allows for economy of scale, which may increase efficiency, competitiveness and faster growth.\textsuperscript{97}

The UN classifies 73\% of West African states as Least Developed Countries (LDCs). ECOWAS accounts for 35\% of the African LDCs-making West Africa the foremost LDC region in Africa and, indeed the world as a whole. No less than eleven ECOWAS countries exhibit some of the lowest socio-economic development indicators, including the lowest Human Development Index ratings in the world... (Only) Cape Verde, Cote d’Ivoire, Ghana and Nigeria are non-LDCs...The average annual per capita income of $949 in 2007, veils the grimmer reality of nearly 60\% of the people in the region live on less than one US dollar a day. This is far above the 46\% for sub-Saharan Africa...indeed West Africa is the region with the highest prevalence of poverty in the world today. This parlous economic state has meant over-reliance on foreign aid and loans, a situation that resulted in the designation of almost all the ECOWAS countries (with the exception of Nigeria and Cape Verde) as Highly Indebted Poor Countries.\textsuperscript{98}

...if done right, regional integration can be complementary to the process of globalization in both seizing the opportunities presented by globalization, and in guarding against and overcoming the attendant vulnerabilities and challenges. For small countries and poor regions like West Africa... regional integration may be critical in helping overcome some of the natural disadvantages and limitations that small nation states face with respect to the unavoidable forces of globalization.\textsuperscript{99}

The two excerpts above paint a very gloomy picture of the overall economic, technological, social and political fortunes of West Africa. More depressing is the fact that these vital statistics have so far remained bleak. Significantly, twelve of the world’s fifty poorest countries are in ECOWAS namely; Benin, Burkina Faso, Cape Verde, Gambia,
Guinea, Guinea Bissau, Liberia, Mali, Niger, Senegal, Sierra Leone and Togo, Côte d’Ivoire, Ghana and Nigeria, are not in the list. However, majority of the population in the three countries make a living through subsistence livelihoods especially agriculture.\textsuperscript{100}

West Africa’s trade pattern is outwardly oriented towards the developed countries of the North. Exports are overwhelmingly raw produce, while the region depends on imports for most of its needs, including food, from the same source. Indeed West Africa’s trade and aid dependence on the traditional Northern development partners have remained virtually the same since the flush of independence more than five decades ago. Nigeria, the region’s super power, is not an exception with its overwhelming dependence on crude oil, which accounts for 80\% of its foreign exchange earnings. Like the smaller and less endowed ECOWAS Member States, Nigeria is a net importer of food, particularly rice and wheat, but also luxury goods, to feed the large appetite of the one percent of its population that controls 80\% of its wealth. The point that is being made is that if this grim and shocking state of affairs applies to the richest and most powerful country in the region, the plight of the smaller and poorer ECOWAS Member States is best imagined. As would be expected, many of them are still dependent on budgetary supplementation from the Organisation for Economic Cooperation and Development, OECD, countries to meet their development needs. However, and like the rest of the continent, the region is turning increasingly towards the emerging economies of Brazil, India and China, BRIC, as important trading partners and aid donors.\textsuperscript{101}

The argument is equally made with respect to the size of the national markets in the region; except for Nigeria the markets of other ECOWAS states are small, making them uncompetitive and unattractive to the outside world. Successful regional integration is believed to increase the size of the local market; enhance competition and efficient production, due to economies of scale. All things being equal, then, it is much easier for
the enlarged West African market to attract foreign investment that will benefit the region provided the investors do not engage in tariff-jumping.

Socio-politically, successful regional integration will not only increase intra-regional economic ties through trade promotion, it will also weave a maze of valuable social, cultural, economic and political exchanges that enhance interdependence among the member states, to the extent that the risk of war and violent conflict among them is greatly reduced, if not eliminated. The unbroken peace Western Europe has enjoyed since the end of the Second World War is an eloquent testimony to this important externality of credible regional integration arrangements.\textsuperscript{102}

The end of the cold war and the marginalization of Africa, coupled with the vicious cycle of poverty, underdevelopment, disease and internecine conflicts have generally been cited as the fundamental reasons for the aggressive effort for such architects of regional integration and the establishment of an African peace and security mechanism.\textsuperscript{103} Most West African states have failed woefully to deliver the ‘good life’ to their citizens. Accordingly, national sovereignty is being consistently challenged in the continent and states are increasingly eager to give way to regional economic groupings, especially those that are inspired by Western Europe where successful economic integration has demonstrated proven capacity to enhance the well-being of the citizens. Not surprisingly, the European Union (EU) has become an irresistible reference point openly cited by West African leaders and bureaucrats as a worthy example of a regional integration scheme and mentor of sort.

In short, in a post-Cold War world order that has witnessed the emergence of successful economic groupings in Europe and elsewhere in the world, regional integration is the key to political and socio-economic stability, successful nation building and political
independence in the long run for West African states. The imperative of regional integration was vigorously canvassed by late President Siaka Stevens of Sierra Leone who believed that:

...it is only after developing African states have coordinated their efforts and organised themselves at [sub] regional levels, that we can have the strength of purpose, which will make people listen to us not only in the Organisation of African Unity, OAU, but also at the United Nations.
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CHAPTER THREE
REGIONAL INTEGRATION AND CONFLICTS IN WEST AFRICA

3.0 Introduction

The Economic Community of West African States (ECOWAS) was established with the prime motive to work at integrating the West African countries economic and political integration. Since its inception in 1975, the Commission has made many strives by putting in place some protocols and policies which if fully implemented by members states the integration will be a reality. Though the implementation and results have been dismal, the evil consequences of conflict have further slowed down the integration process and some scholars think that the integration is not possible. This chapter discusses the efforts made by ECOWAS at regional integration and whether or not integration is possible in the face of conflict in West Africa.

3.1 Institutions working at integration in West Africa

As in other parts of the developing world, the experience of West Africa with formal regional integration has been largely driven by the desire to overcome the constraint of small economic size, which was hampering their ability to industrialize efficiently, by extending the logic of protected and state-led economic development to a larger number of countries. It is important to note that before the establishment of ECOWAS in 1975, there were other three groups which have been established to help in the integration process. The Communauté des États de l’Afrique de l’Ouest (CEAO) was established in 1973 and it members were Benin, Burkina Faso, Côte d’Ivoire, Mali, Mauritania, Niger, Senegal. The Mano River Union (MRU) was also established in 1973 and the members were Guinea, Liberia and Sierra Leone. The last but not the least was established in 1994 (a year before
the birth of ECOWAS) named UEMOA and the members comprised Benin, Burkina Faso, Côte d'Ivoire, Guinea Bissau, Mali, Niger, Senegal, and Togo. By 1975, there were over 40 inter-governmental organisations (IGOs) that co-operated with either the countries of ECOWAS, the erstwhile Communauté des États de l’Afrique de l'Ouest CEAO), or the Mano River Union (MRU). The Membership of ECOWAS comprises of Benin, Burkina Faso, Cape Verde, Côte d’Ivoire, Gambia, Ghana, Guinea, Guinea-Bissau, Liberia, Mali, Niger, Nigeria, Senegal, Sierra Leone, and Togo¹.

Before UEMOA, the CEAO led the scene with the creation of a joint central bank, the BCEAO. On its part ECOWAS established a West African Clearing House to facilitate intra-regional transactions and reduce reliance on foreign convertible currencies. It is remarkable that despite a certain communality of purposes — liberalising intra-area trade and achieving other forms of co-operation — there has been hardly any effective co-ordination among them. Considering the significant overlap in both goals and activities, it is indeed surprising that member countries found it necessary to maintain a multiplicity of institutions. ECOWAS, which was later established has gained popularity and recognition as the institution at the fore of regional integration in Africa²

3.2 ECOWAS Mandate

Like other Regional Economic Communities (RECs) in Africa, the formation of ECOWAS is credited to the dogged determination of Adebayo Adedeji, erstwhile Executive Secretary of the United Nations’ Economic Commission for Africa (UNECA). He was convinced that Africa would not be able to compete with the rest of the world unless it is united economically and politically; and that such a process should start at the much smaller regional level³. ECOWAS is unprecedented in at least two important respects. First, it brought together for the first time 15 West Africa countries, irrespective of linguistic,
colonial and pre-colonial history and experiences, in one region-wide organisation. Second, the creation of ECOWAS was also a clear indication of the determination by West African leaders to enhance the pre-colonial ties among their people, and to weaken the adverse social and economic legacies of the colonial era. The expectation was that the new organisation would enable the member states to create an enlarged market to enhance their competitiveness and development. It was also envisaged that the enlarged market would enable industries and producers to exploit economies of scale and promote market specialisation that would eventually lead to improved terms of trade for the region. A single West African market with a population of almost 300 million would also increase the region's bargaining power vis-a-vis other regions and trading blocs. Additionally, “politically challenging policy changes can often be achieved through regional agreements”.

Finally, globalisation is fraught with grave challenges and vulnerabilities especially for small, developing and weaker members of the community of states; and such challenges are better tackled collectively within the framework of a credible regional integration scheme. A United Nations Development Programme, UNDP, report endorsed this perception in its conclusion that regional integration holds considerable promise for supporting inclusive growth, accelerating and sustaining development outcomes’ in Africa.

3.3 Aims and Objectives of ECOWAS

ECOWAS’ mandate in 1975 was to create a common market in West Africa. However the 1993 Revised Treaty expanded the organisation’s brief to reflect the important changes that were taking place in the West African region and the rest of the world. Article 3 of the Revised Treaty identified the aim of ECOWAS as: “to promote cooperation and
integration, leading to the establishment of an economic union in West Africa in order to raise the living standards of its people...” Paragraph 2(d) of the same Article declared the long term goal of ECOWAS to be the:

...liberalisation of trade by the abolition, among member States of customs duties levied on imports and exports and the removal of non-tariff barriers in order to establish a free trade area at the Community level; the adoption of a common external tariff and a common trade policy and finally, the removal of obstacles to the free movement of persons, goods services and capital and the right of residence and establishment

The revised treaty was to promote the “harmonisation and coordination of members’ policies and the promotion of integration programmes, projects and activities, particularly in food, agriculture and natural resources, taxation, transport and communications...” Apart from these high goals, the 1993 treaty tried to accommodate the new global, continental and regional concerns that were not anticipated in 1975. These ranged from politico-security issues to state collapse - resulting from the civil wars in Liberia and Sierra Leone - as well as the organisation’s bitter, tortuous and challenging experiences in peacemaking in the two countries.

Paradoxically, it is ECOWAS’ achievements in these new areas that gave it local and global exposure, recognition and respect among its peers. The unorthodox concerns of the organisation also set aside the once hallowed principles of respect for state sovereignty and non-interference in the domestic affairs of members. In addition, ECOWAS’ foray into peacekeeping and conflict management challenged the primacy of the global UN’s pre-eminence on matters relating to threats to world peace and security. Ironically, ECOWAS preoccupation with conflict management and peacemaking also became the most notable catalyst for the consolidation of its economic integration agenda, contrary to the
experiences in Western Europe and other African RECs. In all this, there was no doubt that Member States played a pivotal role in shaping the fortunes of the organization.\(^8\)

### 3.4 Efforts by ECOWAS in Regional Integration

Assessing indicators of regional integration in any part of the world is fraught with challenges, but it is much more so for an organisation like ECOWAS, which is yet to make any significant impact on the lives of the ordinary citizens in the region. Consequently we will focus our attention on those activities, protocols and decisions of ECOWAS that are designed to change the attitude and behaviour of member states through convergence on issues relating to politics, economics, culture, etc. Decisions and policies designed to harmonise national and regional policies with the aim of giving integration processes a nudge no matter how weak that may be, would also be assessed, albeit selectively.

#### 3.4.1 Protocols

Protocols are important indicators of integration because if they are faithfully implemented, they can engender positive behavioural change among the integrating states towards one another, and in respect of third parties in Africa and the rest of the world\(^9\).

**a) The Protocols on Non-Aggression (1978) and Mutual Assistance in Defence (1981)**

They represent concrete policies and decisions taken by ECOWAS to protect and consolidate the integration project. This protocol is important in a number of ways. First, they reflected the fact that the region was vulnerable to threats of internal and external destabilisation, especially in the aftermath of the abortive Portuguese sponsored invasion of Guinea under Sekou Toure in 1970, and the end of the 30-month Nigerian civil war,
1967 to 1970. Second, the founding fathers were alive to the fact that integration can only flourish in a peaceful and stable political and socio-economic environment. They believed, and rightly so, that engaging in conflict prevention was necessary and indispensable if the integration project were to be kept on track. Third, the protocols represented concerted regional efforts at confidence building in security matters among the members. In that regard, they set the tone for the elaborate 1999 Mechanism for Conflict Prevention, Management, Resolution and Peacekeeping and Security, which is generally acknowledged as ECOWAS’ most important milestone in the consolidation of its conflict prevention and peacekeeping roles in the region. It should be emphasised that the ECOWAS’ greatest success to date as noted earlier, has been in the sphere of conflict prevention, management, and peacemaking and peacekeeping, all of which have considerably contributed directly to the consolidation of peace and democracy in member states as well as the regional integration agenda

b) The Protocol on Free Movement of People, Goods and Services

Four years after the establishment of ECOWAS (19790, the Commission’s enacted a Protocol on Free Movement within the ECOWAS sub-region. It was conceived as an instrument to enable free movement of ECOWAS citizens within the sub-region. This protocol was projected as an integral part of institutionalizing a single regional socioeconomic space where all citizens can benefit from opportunities in member states, including the utilization of arable land by indigenous agriculturists, access to coastal areas by landlocked member states, employment of English and French language experts and, most significantly, unrestricted access to natural resources by member states. However, since the inception of this protocol, free movement of persons and goods within the sub-region has not been fully realized. Incompatibilities in immigration and customs policies, monetary zones, and official languages among member states, have impeded productive
migration and integration within the sub-region. These limitations have compelled ECOWAS to transform its conceptual notion of “ECOWAS of States” to “ECOWAS of People,” in which the people would be the focus of regional unification, rather than the state\(^{13}\).

### 3.4.2 The 1993 Revised Treaty

The 1993 Revised Treaty is a veritable indicator of the determination of ECOWAS and its member states to move integration forward by accommodating new developments within the region and the rest of the world with the aim of putting in place instruments and institutions that will ‘effectively’ address those concerns. For instance, Article 58 of the new treaty betrayed the new focus on security matters, and by implication ECOWAS’s unwitting adoption of a ‘security complex’ posture in its relations with member states. The treaty tacitly acknowledged that the primary security interests of each ECOWAS state are linked together ‘sufficiently’ and that their national securities cannot be realistically considered apart from one another\(^{14}\). Aside from that, Article 3 of the Revised Treaty affirmed the main purpose of the organisation as “the promotion of cooperation and integration, leading to the establishment of an economic union in West Africa”. As well, Article 4 rehashed key integration driver principles such as non-aggression, harmonisation of policies underscored by the peaceful settlement of disputes among member states, protection and promotion of human rights, accountability and democracy\(^ {15}\). Finally, the new treaty put in place institutions that were to deepen integration processes in the region; a Community Parliament, a Court of Justice as well as specialised agencies that are tasked with important socio-economic responsibilities like health and sanitation to promote the well-being of the ordinary citizens. The revised treaty also laid the basis for other fundamental policy thrusts and protocols such as that on Democracy and Good
Governance, which has significantly contributed to the deepening of democracy and good governance in ECOWAS states, through convergence and zero tolerance for changes in government through undemocratic means. No doubt, inter-state relations in West Africa are more peaceful and predictable in the last three and a half decades than they have ever been. Certainly, the risk of inter-state war between ECOWAS members is now very remote\textsuperscript{16}.

### 3.4.3 ECOWAS Trade Liberalisation Scheme (ETLS)

This is another critical project in the organisation’s drive to promote and consolidate economic integration in West Africa, a core objective and mandate. The ETLS which came into effect in 1990 is intricately intertwined with several other vital goals planks such as the creation of a common market, a single monetary zone and free movement of people, goods and services, among others. More specifically, the ETLS is anchored on the complete removal of all barriers to trade in the region; and the standardisation of all custom duties and taxes of equivalent effect to enhance intra-union trade\textsuperscript{17}.

Three categories of goods were initially targeted under the ETLS scheme:

i. Unprocessed goods especially livestock, fish and mineral products,

ii. Traditional handicraft wares and products, including handmade goods with or without the help of mechanical devices, fancy wares, small cabinet work, carpets, footwear,

iii. Industrial goods of Community Origin.

These items are subject to the following, under the trade liberalisation scheme:

- Total exemption from import duties and taxes
- No quantitative restriction
- Non-payment of compensation for loss of revenue.
Stringent conditions are however required to be satisfied by an importer/exporter to be able to benefit from the ETLS regime. They include: (i) goods must be of local origin in member states of ECOWAS, (ii) goods must be identified/listed in the ETLS annex, and (iii) goods must be accompanied by a certificate of origin and an ECOWAS export declaration form.

On paper, the requirements look rather simple and easy to fulfill by any serious minded business person in the region; but in practice, it is much more difficult for intending exporters to effectively utilise the provisions of the ETLS. One of the most frustrating barriers is the reluctance of national governments directly and indirectly to ensure the full operation of the scheme, because some of them still rely heavily on import duties and related taxes for their revenue. Besides that there is the usual bureaucratic red tape and attendant delays in obtaining the mandatory documents, a process that could take several months, if not years, depending on the member country, by which time the exporter or business person would have clearly lost the momentum. Related to that is the fact that the relevant laws and provisions are yet to be fully harmonised by member states to achieve region-wide convergence. Not only that, some ECOWAS members, especially those that are relatively developed and prosperous like Nigeria, Ghana or Cote d'Ivoire, are wary that unscrupulous third parties external to the regional could use rogue nationals to dump cheap and sub-standard goods on their markets and frustrate the growth of local industries. A third factor is that even after the mandatory documents must have been obtained and the goods are loaded onto trucks, long distance trans-national drivers often experience long frustrating delays at border posts as corrupt officials try to extort money before giving them the ‘all clear’ sign to proceed to their destinations.
### 3.4.4 The Common Monetary Zone

The creation of a common monetary zone is one of the critical goals of regional integration in West Africa. However, not much success has been recorded in this sphere in spite of the many advantages that are associated with a common currency. When fully operational, a single currency provides a wider and more attractive market for local and foreign investors because monetary transactions will be simplified and short. Sadly, ECOWAS does not at the moment have a single currency as it is characterized by two main monetary groups. On one side are eight Francophone states plus Guinea Bissau, which belong to the Union Economique et Monétaire ouest-Africaine (UEMOA) zone with the CFA as legal tender. On the other, are the remaining Anglophone ECOWAS members plus Guinea, with essentially inconvertible national currencies. Significantly Liberia, which uses the American dollar as legal tender side by side with its local dollar that is only convertible in the country, does not for now belong to any of the two groups. As would be expected, transacting business in the region is generally difficult, slow and expensive because transactions are done in hard currency, mainly the US dollar, are preferred. Although the five ECOWAS countries outside the CFA zone decided in December 2000 to create a single currency to be known as the West African Monetary Zone (WAMZ) no convincing progress has been made in that direction, and the deadline has been shifted a couple of times. Consequently the 2015 deadline may not be realistic and the feasibility of a single, region-wide common currency is dim\(^{20}\).

### 3.5 Challenges to ECOWAS Integration Process

There are numerous challenges that have been identified in literature to be obstructing ECOWAS in its operation to smoothly ensure that the economic and political integration that it has been mandated to carry out has been accomplish. Some of these challenges
which are discussed below are but not limited to inadequate political will from the governments of member countries, cultural differences, conflicting policies with members states and ultimately violent conflicts. A study of Ghana’s trading relationship with other ECOWAS states concluded that “a wide range of barriers makes even this low level of regional trade difficult to achieve and frequently uncompetitive. Market knowledge is inadequate and accurate tariff and technical data is hard to obtain. Trade finance is poorly developed and expensive. Language differences, harassment at borders and road-blocks discourage many entrepreneurs and add to the costs\(^\text{21}\).

The ECOWAS Secretariat has few powers to force governments to implement trade liberalization measures. Ten different currencies are in use, but most are not accepted in international trade, and the West African Clearing House is unable to prevent serious delays in settling payments between some member states\(^\text{22}\). More in general, constraints on intra-regional trade include the inconvertibility of member currencies and difficulties in establishing letters of credit, inefficient and costly transport and communication links, differences in national product or service regulations and standards and the lack of information about the existence of potential buyers and sellers in partner countries.

Despite reforms since the early 1990s, the above litany of problems is still heard as a result of a number of unchanged attitudes and occurrences prevalent in domestic policies and permeating into ECOWAS structures and functions. These are reflected in the multiplicity of objectives of ECOWAS, some of which conflict with the publicly stated foreign-policy objectives of member governments, as well as in the overlapping membership in formal arrangements, which makes it difficult for member states to harmonise their interests. Different member countries remain at different levels of development with regard to each of these areas and attach different degrees of importance to each objective\(^\text{23}\).
Another challenge to integration has been overlapping membership. The problem with countries belonging to several formal arrangements is that they are often forced to deal with conflicting objectives, as happens with ECOWAS and UEMOA. The effectiveness of one grouping tends to be undermined by the existence of the other as the limited financial resources of members cannot meet all requirements, and technical expertise in this poor region gets stretched to its limit. The current two-track approach being pursued by Ghana and Nigeria may be seen as an attempt to reduce the impact of the conflicts on the achievement of the broader goals of ECOWAS\textsuperscript{24}.

Lack of Political Commitment is also a constraint to regional integration\textsuperscript{25}. Shaw attributes this to the fact that countries have widely-different political ideologies and external alliances. He also observes that there is a basic problem of incompatibility between established political economies and ruling classes. Countries which perceive themselves to be losers desire to reduce the costs of integration as much as possible and potential gainers are unwilling to concede much in case there is not much to distribute\textsuperscript{26}.

### 3.6 Conflict as a challenge to ECOWAS Regional Integration Process

Available statistics shows that generally 2/3 of the 53 African countries have experienced civil conflicts in the countries. Less than 17 countries have been able to avoid internal sizeable conflicts in the continent and each year, civil conflicts are more likely to occur in 17 countries. The statistics for West Africa in particular is no different from that for the entire continent. Almost all the 15 countries in West Africa have experienced conflict in one form or the other.

As a major challenge to the economic development, civil conflicts cause serious damages to national economic prospects. The most common feature that has been identified in the literature on the consequences of civil conflicts is the decline of economic capabilities that
results from civil conflict. A country confronted to a civil conflict might experience serious losses in its accumulated physical and human capital, and in its overall trade flows\textsuperscript{27}. For instance, in the 1994 genocide in Rwanda about 800,000 Rwandans were reportedly massacred. Similarly, the Burundi civil war claimed over 200,000 lives as at the year 2000\textsuperscript{28}. In Liberia, over 250,000 lives were lost in the country’s fourteen year civil war between 1990 and 2004. The same may also be said of Sierra Leone in which an estimated 200,000 people were killed during the nation’s civil war between 1991 and 2001. But perhaps the most pathetic situation occurred in Sudan. The civil war in Sudan has been one of the longest and costliest on the continent with an estimated two million lives lost to the war\textsuperscript{29}.

Aside the loss of lives, civil conflicts render citizens homeless and they become recognized as refugees in other countries. For instance, in Liberia, the 2004 Report of the Global Coalition for Africa noted that an estimated 700,000 were internally displaced as at 2003\textsuperscript{30}. The spill-over effects of the Liberian conflicts were felt in neighbouring countries through increased refugees flows. About 3000 Liberians were hosted by Nigeria at the height of the crisis while an appreciable number of them also became refuge in Guinea. In Sudan, an estimated 4.7 million Sudanese were displaced during the nation’s prolonged civil war. As of 2004, the total number of African refugees was put between 15 and 20 million\textsuperscript{31}. Current statistics globally show that as of the end of 2012, more than 45.2m people were forcibly displaced compared with 42.5m at the end of 2011\textsuperscript{32}. Civil conflicts also have a strong negative impact on neighboring countries as it tends to retards a country’s growth due to decline in their economic capabilities\textsuperscript{33}. Apart from the effect to lives and properties, Besley and Persson find that the risk of civil conflict results in a lower investment in state fiscal capacity, notably because of the diversion of fiscal resources in the increased military expenditures\textsuperscript{34}.  

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As a result of its impaired economic situation and lower investment in state fiscal capacity, Bah expects a country confronted to a civil conflict not to be able to respect its commitments towards the countries in its regional economic community (communities). He believes that the conflict might impede production diversification, infrastructure development within the occurring country, and make macroeconomic discipline impossible. For regional integration to be successful, it has to have convincing features of permanency and irreversibility, and a sustained political commitment is crucial for that.

Yet, conflicts change the priorities of the governments, and lead countries to become withdrawn. Bah and Tapsoba therefore believe that civil conflicts is an obstacle to regional economic integration process on the basis of the fact that it is a potential source of regional political destabilization and might also increase the economic divergence between the members of the same regional economic community, by increasing notably the asymmetry of the shocks affecting their respective economies. They believe that these shocks can be transmitted to the country’s partners, depending on the strength of their trade relationship for instance.

In the midst of all the shocks emanating from conflict is also another challenge which is according to some critics, widens the integration. This concerns the weak nature of ECOWAS secretariat with few powers to force governments to implement trade liberalization measures. Ten different currencies are in use, but most are not accepted in international trade, and the West African Clearing House is unable to prevent serious delays in settling payments between some member states. Generally, constraints on intra-regional trade, which include the inconvertibility of member currencies, inefficient and costly transport and communication links, differences in national product or service regulations and standards and the lack of information about the existence of potential
buyers and sellers in partner countries are believed to make regional integration impossible in the face of on-going conflicts and terrorist attacks in member states.

While inter and intra-regional conflicts continue to proliferate over the West-African sub-region, almost all the reforms by ECOWAS have yielded no significant results. The output of all the policy initiatives to integrate the countries has been very slow. Many policy analysts, politicians and commentators therefore consider West-Africa’s integration as nothing but a ‘myth’. For example, the protocol on free movement of people adopted more than two decades ago, and which could have had direct impact on the common citizens if it were faithfully implemented by member states, has not had the desired effect of facilitating easy movement of peoples, goods and services across the region, and that generally, the objective politico-economic situation in West Africa has not changed significantly since 1975 when ECOWAS was set up. The recent outbreak of ‘Ebola’ endemic disease has threatened the security situation and this has even restricted this policy the more as countries which have been declared buy the WHO as Ebola free such as Ghana, Nigeria among others have tightened their borders to protect their citizens.

3.7 Possibility for Integration in the midst of Conflicts

In spite of the enormous challenges and effects of conflicts the sub-region is facing as discussed above, there are others who categorically believes that West-Africa’s economic and security integration is no far from being a reality. Proponents believe that since the Lagos Treaty was adopted in 1975, important institutions and mechanisms have been set up by ECOWAS to deal with various aspects of its integration agenda even in the midst of conflicts. They however acknowledge that the pace of such integration has been very slow. They expounded that some of the Protocols that have been adopted by member states since 1975 such as; the Protocol on Non-Aggression and that on Mutual Assistance in Defence
(MAD); Free Movement of Persons, Goods and Services; Democracy and Good Governance, and the Mechanism for Conflict Prevention, Management, Resolution and Peacekeeping and Security; are all keen in making regional integration possible. However, the presence of the overbearing number of security personnel mounting checkpoints at member states’ borders is considered counter-productive to the protocol on free movement.

The second argument is also made on the premises of the Revised ECOWAS Treaty. The 1993 Revised Treaty is considered a veritable indicator of the determination of ECOWAS and its member states to move integration forward by accommodating new developments within the region and the rest of the world with the aim of putting in place instruments and institutions that will effectively address those concerns. For instance, Article 58 of the new treaty betrayed the new focus on security matters, and by implication ECOWAS’s unwitting adoption of a ‘security complex’ posture in its relations with member states. The treaty tacitly acknowledged that the primary security interests of each ECOWAS state are linked together sufficiently and that their national securities cannot be realistically considered apart from one another\(^{38}\).

Proponents further elaborated that the new ECOWAS treaty put in place institutions that were to deepen integration processes in the region; a Community Parliament, a Court of Justice as well as specialised agencies that are tasked with important socio-economic responsibilities like health and sanitation to promote the well-being of the ordinary citizens\(^{39}\). The revised treaty also laid the basis for other fundamental policy thrusts and protocols such as that on Democracy and Good Governance, which has significantly contributed to the deepening of democracy and good governance in ECOWAS states, through convergence and zero tolerance for changes in government through undemocratic means. The proviso has been invoked by ECOWAS to good effect against regimes in
Guinea, Niger Republic and Togo, and provided the legal and normative basis for regular ‘shuttle’ diplomatic missions by members of the Council of Elders in the region, which successfully doused political tensions in several member states. An overall assessment of all these new treaties show that inter-state relations in West Africa are more peaceful and predictable in the last three and a half decades than they have ever been. Certainly, the risk of inter-state war between ECOWAS members is now very remote\textsuperscript{40}.

Finally, the ECOWAS protocols, its Trade Liberalisation Scheme (ETLS), and related matters such as harmonisation of fiscal and economic policies including the establishment of a common external tariff, removal of tariff and non-tariff barriers to intra-regional trade, establishment of a free trade area and the Common Monetary zone in the region are all indication that regional economic and security integration is possible.
Endnote


2 Ibid, p.14

3 Castens Austin, “Regional Integration in a Globalizing World: Priorities for the Caribbean”, (Key Note Speech at the Biennial International Conference on Business, banking and Finance, Port of Spain, Trinidad and Tobago: 2006)

4 UNDP, 2011

5 Ojo, Olatunde “Nigeria and the Formation of ECOWAS”, (International Organisation 34: 1980) p. 4


9 Ibid., P.24

10 Ibid., P.24


12 Adeniran, A.I. Regional Integration in the ECOWAS Region: Challenges and Opportunities. (Backgrounder No. 19: 2012)


17 Sesay A. & Omotosho, M: 2011 p.27

18 Central Bank of Nigeria, “The ECOWAS Trade Liberalisation Scheme”, ETLS

19 Sesay A. & Omotosho, M: 2011 p.28

20 Ibid., p.28

24 Ibid., P.25
28 Global coalition 2004:7
29 Ibid., p.10
30 Ibid., p.8
34 Besley, T. and Persson T., Wars and state capacity (Journal of the European Economic Association 6) pp. 522-530
35 Bah, A., Civil Conflicts as a constraint to Regional Economic Integration in Africa. (England, Routledge: 2012)
36 Ibid., 2012
CHAPTER FOUR
SUMMARY OF FINDINGS, CONCLUSIONS AND RECOMMENDATIONS

4.1 Introduction

Based on the extensive literature review on the three main themes, this section presents the summary of the findings, draw conclusions and offer recommendations. The purpose of this study was to broadly examine the effect of conflict on regional integration in the West African sub-region. The objectives of the study were to basically examine the causes of conflict in West Africa, underscore some of the solutions to those conflicts, assess the concept of regional integration and the theoretical underpinnings of the concept; discuss the possibility for regional economic and security integration; and to finally examine ways in which the challenges presented by conflict be used to foster regional and economic integration.

4.2 Summary of Findings

One of the key factors that distinguish Africa as a whole and West-Africa sub-region in particular from the rest of other regions is the marked history of violent conflicts, at both national and cross-national levels and regional levels. Almost all the fifteen (15) West African nations have witnessed conflicts in various forms, ranging from inter and intra-ethnic and religious conflicts to the level of genocide. Thus, the cost of conflict in Africa ranges from the loss of few lives and properties and the uncountable destruction of lives and properties. While, conflict in the sub-region is a post-colonial phenomenon, the policies of colonialism shaped the dynamics of conflict that after independence, the agenda from conflicts and wars changed.
Evidence from literature show that conflicts in West Africa have been notably fuelled by multiple interrelated causal factors including poverty, human rights violations, bad governance and corruption, ethnic marginalization and small arms proliferation. Others have found that ethnicity in particular is not a cause of conflict but rather it is the quest for mineral resources such as diamond, timber and oil among others that have sparked conflict in the region. In all, one of the critical cause of conflict in West Africa has been the quest for political power. Almost all of the major bloody conflicts in West Africa centers around the quest to obtain political power.

In the midst of the various conflicts that have afflicted the sub-region, ECOWAS has been at the forefront, serving as a platform for conflict resolution and management. ECOWAS has in the time past, through its ECOMOG force has recorded many successes in some countries with collaboration from regional bloc. The violent wars in countries such as In Liberia, Sierra Leone, Guinea-Bissau and Côte d’Ivoire, were all resolved through the deployment of peacekeepers through ECOMOG and the key mediatory role played by the sub-regional bloc. Civil societies and other women groups have also played crucial roles in bringing peace to war-torn countries. The AU, UN and other bilateral and multilateral actors have taken several initiatives to support the consolidation of peace in West Africa. However, the poor understanding of the fundamental causes of the conflict continues to weakens many of the initiatives aimed at conflict resolution. Language barrier; lack of skills and expertise in conflict mediation and dialogue; lack of resources; lack of political will; lack of coordination between and among ECOWAS agencies and its partners; and non-inclusive peace-building processes all continue to affect the conflict resolution initiatives.

On the other hand, the concept of regional security integration basically refers to the process where two or more nation entering into a regional agreement to co-operate and
work closely together to achieve peace, stability and wealth through regional institutions and rules. Considering the trade challenges confronting the West-African sub-region with regards to the small market and poor trade arrangements which mostly put the region in a disadvantaged position coupled with the security threats of revolution and rebel movements, regional economic and security integration have been advocated as cardinal to the stability of the region. Various theories have tried to explain the purpose of regional integration from different but similar perspectives. For instance, while the neoliberal theory by Robert Keohane and Joseph Nye postulate that economic and political forces can bring states into partnership with each other, Swanstrom theory of degree expounded that regional integration begins from economic and later revolves into political and security integration. Karns and Mingst also theorized that, states form and strengthen regional groupings basically for political and economic reasons. These three theories all point to the fact that regional integration is of great necessity for the development of West Africa.

As noted earlier, one of the basic hallmark of West African countries is conflict. Civil conflicts have afflicted the sub-region with broken institutions, human right abuses, rape, refugees and uncountable number of deaths. Conflicts have weaken the power of states to engineer development for their citizenry. Evidence from literature shows that many conflicts that have afflicted the continent has contributed immensely to the continent’s underdevelopment. While many nations have adopted measure to build the broken integrity of the regions, terrorist groups are emerging to further deplete and cause more harm. In the midst of all these, poor and corrupt governance rendering majority of the masses poor and sharpening and deepening the gap between the rich and the poor have also sparked revolutionary spirits in the hearts of the masses. In the midst of all these ongoing struggling dynamics, some people believe that regional economic and security
integration is nothing but a myth. They further explained that ECOWAS since its establishment has not been able to make any major progress at integration.

Lower commitment of governments to implement sub-regional agreements, multiple and sometimes conflicting associations that member nations affiliate coupled with weakened power of ECOWAS are all indicators that have been highlighted as impediments to regional integration in West Africa.

Notwithstanding these challenges, proponents of integration believe that even though the sub-region continues to suffer from the exegesis of conflict, the argument made is that without regional economic and security integration, conflicts will still continue to be a torn in the flesh of Africans. After analyzing the role that ECOWAS has been playing in the sub-region since its establishment in 1975, and the protocols that have been established, integration is not far from being a reality. The revised ECOWAS treaty of 1993 is hailed as one of the greatest strive at integration. For instance, the Protocol on Non-Aggression and Mutual Assistance in Defence (MAD); Free Movement of Persons, Goods and Services; Democracy and Good Governance, and the Mechanism for Conflict Prevention, Management, Resolution and Peacekeeping and Security; are considered keen in making regional integration possible. ECOWAS Trade Liberalisation Scheme (ETLS) is also heightened as one of the key premises for integration as advocated by Swanstrom theory of degree.

Even though the pace for regional integration in West Africa has been very slow, the commitment of member nations has been low, and the effects of conflict on affected countries have been very high. With the protocols, institutions and mechanisms ECOWAS has put in place, West African economic and security integration is highly possible.
4.3 Conclusions

West African countries have been involved in regional economic integration since the beginning of the twentieth century. The efforts made so far have relatively not yielded the desired results envisaged. The recurrence of civil conflicts and other constraints related to political institutions raise the issue that regional economic and security integration can successfully take place only if it is accompanied by a political integration process.

It is essential for member states to strengthen their political ties when one of them is confronted to a civil conflict. This will contribute to increase economic actors’ confidence in the coherence of the initiative. Thus, by being committed to resolve a civil conflict occurring in a country, regional groups’ members might also reap specific benefits, in terms of their own progress in economic and security integration.

Even though previous studies have identified the negative consequences of conflicts to member states and its associated spillover effects to other nations, the overwhelming benefits of regional integration should serve as an incentive for members of the ECOWAS community to work for the prevention and the resolution of conflicts in their peers.

If conflict in a West African country impedes its progress in its regional economic and security integration, then it should be a primary concern for its members since their own progress towards integration would also be affected, through its subsequent negative externalities.

4.4 Recommendations

With a number of African states still trying to deal with the outcome of failed nation-hood, and others consumed by civil and secessionist wars, regional security arrangements need to focus on modest measures for the prevention and containment of conflicts, rather than
utopian ideas and complex institutional mechanisms. The emphasis should be on simple but reliable structures for security cooperation. This can help stabilize relations, prevent the spill-over of conflicts, secure emerging common values and perhaps, lay the foundation for nascent security regimes.

One of the areas that can help in speeding the process of West African security and economic integration is the active role of civil society organizations. It is an undeniable fact that some civil society organizations have been a source of great conflict in the sub-region, engineering post-election conflicts. However, in some countries also, they have been a great source of change and a major player in the quest for multi-party democracy. The point therefore lies in the extent to which they are managed and emancipated into the governance structures of countries. ECOWAS can therefore strategize to work with some of the civil society organizations operating at various levels; regional, national and even at the district levels (large or small) to help in the process of integration.

Moving forward, it is important that members of ECOWAS and UEMOA show a strong commitment to implementing their respective treaties and protocols, as they both stand to make greater progress in security regionalism within West Africa. In most cases, West African regional bodies’ treaties, texts and protocols are well drafted, but the challenge lies in how to practically implement all of them, given the lack of political will and commitment by member countries to implement them. West African states must understand what is truly meant by regional integration, and come to the realization that as members of a regional grouping, they have bound themselves in agreements, all in order to ensure that the goals of the sub region supplant national goals.
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