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## **ECOWAS and its Influence on Democratising the Foreign Policy Processes of West African States**

**Goyei Guy Fineman**

United States International University-Africa.

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*The dominant argument of studies preceding the collapse of the Cold War is that foreign policy decision-making and implementation processes in many African states were centralised, due to democracy deficit. However, the wave of democratisation and globalisation that followed the end of the Cold War has occasioned a significant transformation in the way many contemporary African states perceive and approach their foreign policies. Sustained democratisation is also contributing to the broadening of participation in foreign policy processes, thereby, propelling the involvement of regional organisations, such as the Economic Community of West African States (ECOWAS) to assume a greater role in foreign policy. Utilising the descriptive approach and the institutionalist-structural functionalist theories, the study interrogates the influence of the ECOWAS regional body on the foreign policies of its member states. It centrally, argues that the interventionist role which the ECOWAS plays is influential in democratising the foreign policy architecture and processes of states in its region.*

**Keywords:** Foreign policy, Democratisation, Foreign Policy Democratisation, Western Africa, and the ECOWAS

## INTRODUCTION

The combined impacts of the collapse of the Cold War and the processes of globalisation situate post-colonial Africa in the realities of certain internal and external contradictions, pressures and challenges. The most notable of such contradictions and challenges is demonstrated by the rise of democratisation in Africa in the 1990s. These dynamics altered the pattern and interplay of domestic politics from military rule or one-party authoritarian systems to multiparty democracy in many African states (Adar, 2007:2; 2015; Adar & Ajulu, 2002; Barkan, 2009). Such political undercurrents also triggered changes in the very nature of African states' foreign policy settings and institutions.

Not only were domestic institutions affected, regional and global institutions also had the impact of the post-Cold War undertow. Similarly, foreign policy-making processes in many African states which traditionally, were the exclusive preserve of African heads of states is increasingly being challenged and as such, becoming more democratised to accommodate the trappings or institutions of democracy (Shraeder, 2004: 245; Adar & Schraeder, 2007:2; Salihu, 2005). Such institutions, among others, include vocal African parliaments, opposition political parties, the press, public opinion parliaments, labour organisations and interest groups which constitute the articulate sections of the civil society.

Scholars, such as Northedge (1968:157) and Ofoegbu (1980:3) have, in different contexts, also made reference to the interplay of the forces between the inside (domestic environment) and outside (external environment) in states foreign policy decision-making processes. DeHaven (1991:88); Osuntokon (2008); Ojukwu (2011) and Adar (2015:103-119) are, among other scholars

that have further observed the rising impact of regional and intercontinental institutions (actors) on the interplay between the internal and external stimuli in African states foreign policy decision-making processes. The African Union's efforts in conflict management or peacekeeping in Africa exemplifies the external influence which regional organisations have on the domestic and foreign policy actions of African states. The diplomatic manoeuvrings and activities of the Intergovernmental Authority on Development (IGAD) and the East African Community (EAC) as regards conflict management and regional security influences on Kenya's foreign policy behaviour are yet other illustrations of the impact regional organisations have on the foreign policy processes of their member states (Nyakwaka, 2007).

Within the West African sub-region, the Economic Community of West Africa (ECOWAS) illustrates another regional organisation with increasing influence in the foreign policy decisions of member states. Established initially to promote economic cooperation and integration in West Africa, the ECOWAS now assumes more political/diplomatic role especially, following the upsurge of political reforms in the 1990s and the growing number of prolonged domestic conflicts in the region (Hartmann, 2017; Adar, 2015). The ECOWAS's role in managing conflict and the influence it exerts in member states foreign policy decisions, it can be argued, are entrenched in the Protocols on the Mechanism for Conflict Prevention (1999) and that of Democracy and Good Governance (2001) of the revised ECOWAS Treaty (1993).

In light of the foregoing, this article examines the changing role of ECOWAS in the foreign policies of West African states. Primarily, this

inquiry focuses on the impact of ECOWAS on the internal and external dimensions of the foreign policies of its member states. It specifically, draws attention to the interplay between the internal and external forces of ECOWAS and its implications on the foreign policies of West African states. Anchored on descriptive method of enquiry along with the institutionalist and structural-functionalist approaches, the study proceeds from the premise that ECOWAS, an intergovernmental regional body, is influencing the foreign policy behaviours and processes its member states in a democratising fashion.

This paper addresses itself in the three fundamental aspects. The first part deals with the background to the formation of ECOWAS, its main objectives and philosophical underpinnings. The second section interrogates the conceptual and theoretical issues on the subject, while the third part, drawing on conflict interventionist role, investigates the interchange between the internal and external stimuli of ECOWAS and its influence on the foreign policy decision-making processes of member states.

### **Background to the Formation of ECOWAS**

The Economic Community of West African States (ECOWAS) was founded on May 28<sup>th</sup> 1975 by the Treaty of Lagos (Ademola, 1995; Adebajo, 2002). Created to promote economic trade, national cooperation and a monetary union for the growth and development of West Africa, the Community comprises 16 West African countries. They include the Republic of Benin, Burkina Faso, Cape Verde, Gambia, Ghana, Guinea, Guinea-Bissau, Ivory Coast, Liberia, Sierra Leone, Mali, Niger, Nigeria, Senegal, Togo, and Mauritania covering approximately 6.1 million square km (United Nations Data, 2014).

The vision of ECOWAS is to create a single regional economic space in West Africa through integration and collective self-reliance (McDonald, 2005:42). Thus, its goal is to promote and develop the West African sub-region in the area of industry and agriculture, transportation and communication, trade and payments, manpower, energy and natural resources, through economic cooperation of member states (ECOWAS, 1993). Other than to expand trade among member states within the West African sub-region and the rest of the world, the underlying vision of the ECOWAS is also to establish a customs union, encourage free movement of people, goods and capital.

As a regional body, ECOWAS lays the burden of regional conflict management on its member states. It is to that extent, the Nigerian Government, in May 1990, persuaded other ECOWAS states to set up a Standing Mediation Committee (SMC) to quell the escalation of hostilities between government forces and the rebels in Liberia (Orji, 2015:4). In August 1990, the SMC, based on Nigeria's influence, approved the creation of the Economic Community of West African States Monitoring Group (ECOMOG), a Mutual Defence Protocol and a Cease-Fire Monitoring Group for the West African Community. The ECOMOG's mandate in Liberia was to order a cease-fire, institute an interim government, and conduct a general election within one year (Bach, 2007: 307).

To advance its vision and core objectives, Article 6 and 13 of the Revised ECOWAS Treaty (1993) introduced the establishment of a regional Parliament for its member states. Whereas Article 6 of the Revised ECOWAS Treaty provides for the Community such institutions as the: Authority of the Heads of State and Government; Council of Ministers; Community Parliament; Economic and Social Council; Community Court of Justice; Executive Secretariat; Fund for Co-operation, Compensation and Development; Specialised

Technical Commission; and any other institution that may be established by the Authority, Article 13 of same establishes the ECOWAS Parliament, defining its structure, composition, mandate and competence (ECOWAS,1993).

The Community Parliament that was signed by the Authority of Heads of State and Government of the Community in August 1994 came into force in March 2000 (Centre for Democratic Control of Armed Forces-DCAF, 2011). The Parliament was created in line with the need to foster and accelerate economic and social development to improve the living standard of the people of West Africa. The creation of the ECOWAS and its Parliamentary Organ is, in itself, symbolic of the collective resolve by member states of the Community to pursue common political, economic, cultural and security agenda and goals for the promotion of democracy, which will in turn, transform the foreign policy settings and decision-making processes of states.

Within the broader context of the ECOWAS sub-region, the Parliament's role is further defined and strengthened by its involvement in the activities of other institutions of the regional body, especially its Executive Arm. The Parliament participates in the meetings of the ECOWAS Council of Ministers and the Authority of Heads of States regularly. It increases its visibility by getting involved in regional issues with implications in the domestic and foreign policies of member states. In the forward to the Democratic Control of Armed Forces (DCAF) Guide for the ECOWAS Parliament, Ambassador Winkler Theodor describes the ECOWAS Parliament as an essential oversight component of the security sector of West Africa (Centre for Democratic Control of Armed Forces-DCAF, 2011: 9). The Parliament serves as the region's forum for dialogue, consultation,

consensus representation and the promotion of effective integration.

The Community Parliament's fundamental notion of ensuring that the activities of ECOWAS are anchored on participation, transparency, and accountability is also in tandem with the philosophy underpinning the creation of the regional body. It was also established to enhance security sector governance as well as subject member states' foreign policies to greater democratic accountability through effective parliamentary oversight. This increases the recognition of ECOWAS activities and the Community Parliament towards upholding the elements of deliberative or representative democracy in member states' foreign policies and regional security issues. The ECOWAS serves as a platform for promoting human security issues within the framework of its institutions, the rule of law and human rights.

### **Foreign Policy Democratisation: A Conceptual Understanding**

An attempt towards understanding what foreign-policy-democratisation is must begin with a definition of 'foreign policy' and 'democratisation', as that will provide useful insight. Foreign policy is the aggregate of a state's intentions as opposed to its relations with other states and non-state actors in the international arena (Ogwu, 2005; Okoth, 2010). It signifies policy guidelines that form the basis for advancing a state's national interests abroad (Nzomo, 2016: 100).

A state's foreign policy encompasses the totality of all its external affairs, particularly decisions and actions which it undertakes in the course of its dealings with other states or non-state actors (Viotti & Kauppi, 2012). Adar & Ajulu (2002:1) consider the foreign policy as the involvement of a state abroad or its actions towards the external environment in pursuit of national interests. As used in this context

foreign policy is thus, the aggregate of a state's official plans and initiatives *vis-a-vis* its external environment, coupled with the values and attitude underlying such actions (Nel & Westhuiszen, 2004:1).

In contrast, democratisation connotes bringing to an end an undemocratic regime, the inauguration of a democratic political system, its consolidation, and institutionalisation through regular elections and by other means and features (Huntington, 1991). Democratisation is the transition from a non-democratic regime to a more democratic system and the process in which the rules and procedures of citizenship are either applied to political institutions previously governed by coercive principles, social tradition and administrative practices (O'Donnell & Schmitter, 1986). Other scholars, such as Herbst (2000) and Uhuo (2012) orient themselves to the processual interpretation of democratisation. Whereas Herbst (2000) sees democratisation as a multi-directional process comprising constitutionally established institutions and mechanisms for transformation, consolidation, institutionalisation, inclusivity and individual participation, Uhuo (2012: 48) perceives democratisation as the establishment of democracy 'institutionally' and 'attitudinally'. The Likes of Osaghae (1999: 8) and Nwabueze (1993) equate democratisation with pluralism' and 'multipartyism', 'popular participation and constitutionalism,' and 'virile civil society'.

Democratisation has an undertone of liberalisation. Hence Agbu (2011) portrays it as liberalising state-society relations while Olowu, Adebayo & Kayode (1995) view it as the movement away from the dominance of state-society relationships by one institution, for instance, the executive branch to a polycentric structured society. Democratisation attains its height only when there exists: a strong adherence to

fundamental civil liberty, respect for rule of law, a virile civil society, and a civic culture that enhances and elevates the individual's status and participatory capacity in society (Dahl, 1998; Hauss, 2003; Franceschet, 2009).

Drawing from the definitions of 'foreign policy' and 'democratisation', foreign-policy-democratisation can be described as the broadening of participation, transparency, and accountability in foreign policy decision-making processes. Foreign-policy-democratisation also presupposes the enlargement of participation in foreign policy decision-making process to accommodate the input of resurgent actors including opposition groups, non-governmental organisations (NGOs) and regional bodies (Adar, 2015:106; Adar & Schraeder, 2007:2). The concept also means allowing a plurality of civil society voices unhindered access to communicating with concerned government officials responsible for policy-making and implementation (Le Pere & Vickers, 2004:73). The communication between civil society and government entails issues of foreign policy formulation, supporting the development of available options and moulding the nature of the discourse.

Foreign-policy-democratisation equally suggests greater openness and rethinking the nature of existing foreign policy institutions, opinion seeking and lifting the much secrecy which characterises the conduct and management of foreign policy (Taylor, 2004; Nel & Westhuiszen, 2004:1). As a process, democratising foreign policy implies active engagement of various foreign policy decision-making units. These include the Ministry of Foreign Affairs, foreign policy think-tanks, non-governmental organisations (NGOs) and such regional intergovernmental bodies as the ECOWAS.

The notion of democratising foreign policy does not therefore, mean exposing all

strategic information to the public gaze, as direct democracy does not also mean neglect of national security (Taylor, 2004). A democratised foreign policy process only requires an interrogation of what foreign policy options are being pursued, the justification for the choice of decision, why is information withheld from public opinion, and the impact that has on the public (Taylor, 2004). Accordingly, it can be argued in this study that foreign-policy-democratisation signifies opening decision-making processes to censorship and accountability. It is about emancipating foreign policy decision-making processes from absolute executive control and allowing input and constructive interventions from other critical actors ranging from civil society groups to the media and other specialised agencies.

Democratising foreign policy is feasible when a multitude of domestic actors (that is NGOs and opposition groups foster strategic links with international networks to either undermine or strengthen the role of the formal state actors in the policy-making process (Lyons & Khadiagala, 2001). In other words, states' foreign policy decision-making processes assumes the characteristics of democratisation when institutions, such as legislative bodies (at the national and regional levels), civil society groups, the mass media, think-tanks, political parties or interest groups, governmental bureaucracies, non-governmental organisations and regional bodies begin to identify their direct or indirect roles as critical actors in the foreign policy domain.

Interrogating foreign policy-making processes in West African states, Lyons & Khadiagala (2001) and Adar, 2015:106) point out the rising influence of regional bodies, such as, the African Union (AU), ECOWAS and the Southern African Development Community (SADC) on states' foreign policy. In the same way are Non-Governmental and International

Governmental professional organisations also shaping the foreign policy of states. These bodies are created to give more meaning to Africa's corporate and states' actions on issues of internal economic, development, and foreign policy.

The gradual rise in foreign policy actors can be attributed to two key factors (Lyons & Khadiagala, 2001). The first emanates from the internal fragmentation of state sovereignty and authority, as was the case with Liberia and the Democratic Republic of the Congo (DRC) where the civil wars succeeded in propagating multiple centers that stake competing claims and position in regional and international arenas. The second relates to states including Kenya, Zambia, and Togo where fragmented pluralism sets the ruling groups and domestic rivals at the opposite extreme of the foreign policy continuum.

### **ECOWAS Influence on West African States' Foreign Policy Behaviours: The Theoretical Underpinnings**

It is an established fact that regional bodies or Inter-Governmental Organisations (IGOs) have a way of influencing the foreign policy behaviour of states within their operational jurisdiction. This is explicable within certain theoretical postulations and assumptions. This study deploys the institutionalist and structural-functionalist theories to demonstrate how or the extent to which ECOWAS influences the foreign policy of its member states towards democratisation.

The institutionalist approach offers a pluralist interpretation of the international system - that is, it perceives the international system as comprising not only states and their institutions, but also of multifarious non-state actors such international and non-governmental organisations, individuals and groups (Viotti & Kaupi, 2012:12). The theory recognises states as disaggregated entities with various component units that are

constantly subjected to external influences. It presents an image that political and economic issues constitute the focal point of any research. For that reason, the theory promotes the view that the pyramid of international issues is not often dominated by military security which, in a classical sense, is more or less synonymous with national security but it is also characterised by human security issues (Viotti & Kauppi, 2012:12).

Furthermore, institutionalism endorses the view that active international cooperation is a function of unity and continual friendship. To that extent, the theory recognises all actors (state and non-state players) as being influenced by institutions built up in broader environments (Kumahia, 2013:8). Institutionalism challenges a state-dominated international system, as most issues (economic, health, human rights, security, environmental, social, legal) on the agenda of global governance are technical in nature and impossible to be managed unilaterally by a single state (Viotti & Kauppi, 2012:150). The technical character of such issues and their resilience justifies the need for the establishment of international organisations.

More so, the imperative for the creation of global, continental and regional bodies is the fact that no state is capable of surviving in isolation of others. The ECOWAS is, among other international organisations that present a challenge to the belief that the international system comprises states as the only players. The elements of the supremacy of stronger states, such as Nigeria, is a reality the ECOWAS is still contending with within the limits or powers of its Constitutive Act. Together, these issues compel the need for state forge unity and continual collaboration towards finding solutions to the myriad daily international problems. It is against this background, the like of Haas (1976: 1964) perceives international organisations as formations created with the aim of solving

specific problems. Viotti & Kauppi (1999:216) equally draw attention to the significance of international institutions by considering them as instruments for shaping the behaviour of states positively. Therefore, regional bodies like the ECOWAS provide a platform for member states to achieve mutually beneficial outcomes, which indeed, serves as catalysts for good governance.

The realists hold the notion that society is composed of a bounded, purposive, sovereign and rational actor in various fields of human endeavours (Viotti & Kauppi, 2012; Dougherty & Pfaltgraff, 2001). In the economics discipline, it is individuals or organisations that operate within what seems to be a market scenario, whereas, in the realm of political science, it is sovereign states that operate in a more or less anarchic international environment. The realists interpret institutionalism as encompassing the idea that some fundamental institutional principles must be put in place before systems can operate effectively (North & Thomas, 1973:22-23).

For non-realists like DiMaggio & Powell (1991), international institutions, as regimes, are crucial to the extent that they influence states to behave in specific ways they otherwise would have not ordinarily. Accordingly, institutions are observed by the non-realist thinkers as useful instruments for regulating the behaviour of states and non-state actors (Viotti & Kauppi, 1999:216). It is also in that view regional bodies such as ECOWAS and its Parliamentary Organ becomes handy.

The creation of ECOWAS can also be explained in the structural-functionalist school of thought. The structural-functionalist approach arose during inter-war period from the concerns about the obsolescence of the State as a form of social organisation (Mitrany, 1976; Rosamond, 2000). It regards society as

a complex system with various parts working together to promote solidarity and stability. The ECOWAS is one example of such systems with organs supporting peace and unity in the West African sub-region. Functionalism focuses on collective interests and needs common to both states and non-state actors in the process of global or regional integration (Rosamond, 2000).

Rooted in the liberal/idealist tradition, which began with Kant and went as far as Woodrow Wilson's 'Fourteen Points' Speech, functionalism seeks to build authority based on functions and needs (a supra-territorial concept of authority) that links power with needs, scientific knowledge, expertise and technology (Mitrany, 1976). The theory believes that promoting functional cooperation in socio-cultural, economic, technological and humanitarian spheres is the definitive solution to eliminating conflict. As states integrate into limited functional, technical or industrial areas, knowledge-based international organisations would meet human needs (Mitrany, 1933:101). Corporate governance and material interdependence between states develop their internal dynamics.

Functionalism highlights some underlying assumptions. One is that the integration process takes place within a framework of human freedom; second is that knowledge and expertise are available to meet the needs for which the functional institutions are created and the third is that, states will not undermine the integration process and their source of unity (Mitrany, 1976; Evans & Newnham, 1998). Functional cooperation attains the theory's objective towards global or regional peace through the work of international institutions, which includes such regionally based intergovernmental organisations (IGOs) as ECOWAS, AU, SADC etcetera as well as non-governmental organisations (NGOs).

These intergovernmental institutions assume functions on issues that are technical, military and political in nature that could best be tackled through transnational efforts. The underlying notion is to keep nations actively together, to prevent states from direct use of power between and among them, so as to attain and sustain peace. The ECOWAS is one of such regional intergovernmental organisations that has partially fulfilled these non-political and political objectives. It is these philosophical ideals that also underpin the creation of ECOWAS and its activities.

### **Symptoms of Democratising Foreign Policies in the ECOWAS**

Until the end of the Cold War and the Third Wave of democratisation, foreign policy processes in the previously authoritarian one-party states (Francophone and Anglophone) essentially reflected the whims and caprices of the leaders of respective countries. In the ECOWAS region, a number of countries (including Togo, Benin, Mali, Gabon, Nigeria, Zambia, Guinea, Guinea Bissau and Cote d'Ivoire) experienced authoritarian regimes where democratisation trends did not result in enlargement of participation in foreign policy (Adar, 2015:104; National Research Council, 1992).

There were no means of representation, democratic accountability and consensus formation in governance in those countries, since authoritarian regimes resisted all efforts in the direction of democratic transition, until strong citizen and elite pressures for public dialogue mounted, which led to national conferences (National Research Council, 1992). These national conferences reduced the powers of the incumbent leader, in some cases. In Togo, for example, such conferences accelerated the emergence of what used to be a covert opposition to Gnassingbe Eyadema's autocratic

administration (National Research Council, 1992). In Benin, the first national conference totally condemned and characterised Mathieu Kerekou's regime as repressive, corrupt, illegal and incompetent (National Research Council, 1992).

Among others, the despotic regime of General Sani Abacha in Nigeria also attracted local and international denunciation (Kolawole, 2005). Nonetheless, Nigeria has returned to the family of democratic nations in the world since 1999. The previously repressive political environment in the Nigerian state has become relatively less autocratic in the last twenty years of stable democracy. Continuous democratisation (constitutional governance) is liberalising the public policy domain, with the increasing influence of, for instance, the Legislature (National Assembly), Mass Media and Civil Society Organisations (CSOs) (Osondu-Oti & Tolu, 2016).

Notably, opposition to authoritarian rule grew in the 1990s in most African countries with the Third Wave of democratisation. Ghana under Kwame Nkrumah was no less of an authoritarian regime that was also ousted through military intervention. Opposition to repressive rule proliferated in Ghana as the military which overthrew the Nkrumah regime, in turn, wanted to perpetuate their stay in office (Pinkney, 1997).

In Senegal, the 'personal rule' notion about foreign policy-making and implementation experienced a considerable decline under the government of Abdou Diouf (1981-2000) (Schraeder, 2001). Senegal's foreign policy was emancipated from the whims and caprices of Presidents Leopold Senghor and Abdou Diouf, despite the extensive constitutional powers of the Executive. With the transition to democracy in the 1990s, Senegal's foreign policy institutions, which comprises the Office of the Prime Minister, the Ministries of Foreign Affairs and Defence, the

Legislature, Political Parties, Public Opinion and Civil Society Groups and Senegalese in the diaspora, have become more proactive, influential and impactful in Senegal's foreign affairs (Schraedar, 2001).

In Benin, democratic renewal has considerably phased out Neopatrimonialism (concentration of power in a single ruler) personalisation (appropriation of state institutions and power for personal interest) authoritarianism, regionalism and generationalism (revolving the country's leadership around a specific group of people) (Barkan, 2009; Gazibo, 2012). Democratisation in Benin has not only brought about continuous changes in government through successful elections, but it has also broadened participation among various institutions and foreign policy actors. The number of successful general elections in Benin provides a sufficient basis for one to, at least, argue from a procedural point of view, that democracy is gradually gaining consolidation. This has far-reaching implications on the state's foreign policy behaviour.

Gambia also suffered twenty-three years of dictatorship under President Yaya Jammeh who ruled from 1994 to 2017. Jammeh suppressed press freedom and independent political activities, incapacitated the Gambian economy, brought about democracy deficits and frequent rights abuses in the Gambia (Hartmann, 2017; Global Online Research in Agriculture-AGORA, 2017). In 2013, he withdrew the membership of the Gambia from the Commonwealth of Nations and described it as an 'extension of colonialism' (Telegraph, February 8, 2018). However, Adama Barrow's emergence as a democratically elected President of The Gambia in the 2017 general elections is symbolic of the restoration of democracy, good governance, rule of law, respect for human rights and judicial independence in the Gambia.

### **Activities of the ECOWAS: Implications for Foreign Policy Processes of Member States**

The establishment of ECOWAS and subsequently, the ECOWAS Parliament is indeed a landmark achievement for post-independence and post-Cold War West Africa - a volatile region with recurrent security challenges. Partly, the capricious nature of the West African sub-region inspired the creation of ECOWAS, the Community's Cease-Fire Monitoring Group (ECOMONG) and the Parliament. The formation of ECOMOG was to promote and protect democracy in West Africa. With the creation of ECOMOG, the ECOWAS shifted from its economic objectives to assume a more mediatory role in the political conditions of West African states. The multiple security challenges of the region also propel the pursuit for greater integration, development, and peace and security as matters of top priority to the ECOWAS Community (Nigeria 2011/12:85).

With ECOMOG and the Community Parliament serving as organs, the ECOWAS remains one regional formation that has been proactively involved in crisis situations in West Africa since its inception in 1975 (Adar, 2015: 113-114). It has a long history of interventions in inter or intrastate conflicts within its enclave. The ECOWAS interventions in Liberia (1990 and 2003) and Sierra Leone (1997) set the precedent for subsequent interventions, such as witnessed in Cote d'Ivoire (2003), Guinea Bissau (2005-2010), Togo (2005) (Adar, 2015: 114; Tavares 2011). Those in Mali (2013) and Gambia (2017) are the most recent examples of interventions where the ECOWAS Community had to leverage on its stand-by monitoring forces to restore peace and order.

Each member state has been instrumental in protecting the welfare and interest of the Community in their specific ways that reflect the need for functional cooperation within the

region. As the country with the highest population and Gross Domestic Product (GDP) within the ECOWAS Community, Nigeria has been playing a dominant role in the affairs of the region (Adetula, 2014). With an estimated GDP of \$243, 985B, Nigeria accounts for well over 51% of West Africa's GDP (Okeke-Uzodike, Amao & Akinola, 2013:3). The country therefore, occupies a very strategic position within the West African sub-region, Geo-politically and socio-economically. Nigeria's geo-strategic position and other elements of national power naturally place her at a vantage point to exert increasing influence on the affairs of states within the ECOWAS.

Nigeria's dominance in the Liberia and Sierra Leone peace processes was indicative of the presence and continuity of power politics within the ECOWAS multilateral framework (Adibe, 2001:38). This study nonetheless, considers the actions of ECOWAS from the normative significance of the body itself, which lies in the choice of collective actions over unilateralism within the West African Community. The Community's involvement in resolving the conflicts in Liberia conforms with the ethos of Pan Africanism (Adibe, 2001). This also implies that as much as Africans have the ability and right to define as well as take charge of their destiny, they can also adopt the kind of foreign policy that suits them. ECOWAS involvement in sub-regional conflict and security management does not only bring to the fore its commitment to the pursuit of collective security or a common economic development agenda and the possibility of a communal foreign policy, but it also helps in nurturing the democratic tenets binding on member states that have ratified major protocols, such as, Protocol on the Mechanism for Conflict Prevention (1999); and the contract relating to Democracy and Good Governance (2001) of the revised ECOWAS Treaty (1993).

Arguments pointing to the gradual evolution of a common foreign policy within the ECOWAS finds sustenance in the security and economic challenges confronting the entire Community. Africa in its entirety is faced with collective security and economic challenges that rouse the necessity for the pursuit of a shared foreign policy agenda. The mutual cultural experiences between the Francophone and Anglophone member states of ECOWAS also reinforce the possibility of a common foreign policy. There is no significant difference in the way of life of the people of West Africa. The porous network of international borders also contributes to the cultural similarities and connections compelling and promoting a sustained Afro-international relation.

These issue areas (economic, security, cultural and political) constitute the various components that the foreign policy of any state entails (Inamete, 2001:148; Schraeder, 2001: 41). Since its establishment, ECOWAS has been penetrating the security and economic facets of member states' foreign policies. Substantiating this line of argument, scholars (such as Adar, 2015:102) observes that the internal contexts of states are capable of influencing the foreign policy decision-making processes of regional organisations, such as ECOWAS, in this case. Similarly, Schraeder (2001:50) points out the progressive decline of the 'personal role' phenomenon in the foreign policy-making processes of Francophone West African States, especially as democratisation continue to take root in the region.

The role of ECOWAS in democratising the foreign policy processes of Western African states partly derives from some of its key protocols. The Protocol on the Mechanism for Conflict Prevention (1999) of the revised ECOWAS Treaty (1993) and that on Democracy and Good Governance (2001) are critical pointers to the Organisation's increasing role in member states' foreign

policies. For example, the Protocol on Democracy and Good Governance (2001) provides for certain norms and principles which include accountability, transparency, and professionalism that are essential elements of democracy (Centre for Democratic Control of Armed Forces-DCAF, 2011; ECOWAS Treaty, 1993).

The 2001 Protocol on Democracy and Good Governance came into force in 2008, following its ratification by 9 out of 16 ECOWAS member states (Hartmann, 2017). This implies that a larger number of ECOWAS states are legally bound by the provisions of both the ECOWAS treaty and the 2001 protocol. These protocols formally preserve ECOWAS' commitment to democracy, promotion of good governance and the Responsibility to Protect (R2P) interests of its member states and the people (Hartmann, 2017). The protocols establish the normative foundation for a more democratic (civilian) control of the region's security services. They also determine the political, economic and cultural dimensions of the domestic and foreign policies of the ECOWAS states. Such protocols also offer the ECOWAS its legal mandate to contend with local political issues of member states.

Furthermore, ECOWAS promotes democratic development within its jurisdiction and also mandate member states (especially those that have ratified the necessary protocols) to fulfill the core principles of democratic governance. The 2001 Protocol on Democracy and Good Governance defines 12 constitutional principles that are common to all its member states. For example, Articles 1b and 1c of the Democracy and Good Governance Protocol (2001) states that every accession to power must be made through elections, thereby, reflecting the principle of zero tolerance for power obtained through unconstitutional means (ECOWAS, 2001). This protocol also empowers ECOWAS to enforce sanctions

including suspension of decision-making rights within its operational area and any other interventions which the Mediation and Security Council and the Authority of Heads of State and Government may deem fit, in case democracy is brought to an abrupt end by any means (Hartmann, 2017).

The adoption of pro-democracy norms further gives the ECOWAS greater impetus to assert its right to intervene in domestic political conflicts. The organisation has also been instrumental in shaping perceptions of the international community as to who the real winner of the 2010 presidential election in *Côte d'Ivoire* was, during the 2010/11 constitutional debacle (Mehler, 2012; Aning & Edu-Afful, 2016). On the day of Laurent Gbagbo's inauguration, the ECOWAS Commission also publicly condemned all attempts to oppose the general will of the Ivorian people. The Authority of Heads of State and Government of ECOWAS (who was openly on the side of Alassane Ouattara, the opposition candidate) also reaffirmed this position. The ECOWAS also threatened Laurent Gbagbo's administration with a military invasion and went further to commence preparations for it. Military action was subsequently carried out by French and the United Nations forces (Abatan & Spies 2016).

Through the Community Parliament, ECOWAS has also been instrumental in regulating the behaviours of member states, to conform to good governance practices. The regulation of state behaviours within such an institutional framework as the ECOWAS echoes the extent to which an institutional environment establishes rules, norms and routines as official guidelines for ethical conduct and social behaviour, which is what the institutionalist doctrine promotes. ECOWAS is symbolic of such institutions for democracy promotion and good governance. By

extension, the regional body has been influential in developing the institutionalisation of foreign policy democratisation in Western Africa

## CONCLUSION

As a regional organisation, ECOWAS has, through its actions, demonstrated its relevance and impact on promoting the domestic and regional interests of respective member states. The ECOWAS Monitoring Group (ECOMOG) was conceived mainly to help and protect democracy in the West African sub-region, due to the consistent crises (internal and external) facing the sub-region (Okafor & Okafor, 2015:125). This partly contributes to the shift in the objectives of ECOWAS from its primarily economic to a more mediatory role in addition to military involvement in the politics of states in the West African sub-region. The ECOWAS has succeeded in opposing democratic reversals in West Africa, using the ECOWAS Court, its mediation and reconciliation roles, military actions as well as the defense of democracy through promotion of human rights.

The organisation's role in endorsing regional economic integration which subsequently, expanded to accommodate, military/security, political and cultural concerns, further stresses its significant role in broadening participation in foreign policy decision-making processes of Western African States. Security remains a critical component of the foreign policy of many states including those within the ECOWAS framework. Thus, when ECOWAS tries to ensure regional stability by military means (using ECOMOG), the body is directly dealing with an issue area that poses mutual security threats and challenges to the entire Community.

The increasingly more political activities which ECOWAS assume in the region, directly and indirectly, echo the foreign policy dimensions

of its role within the Community. With the ratification of such protocols or contracts regarding Democracy and Good Governance (2001), ECOWAS has adopted pro-democratic and anti-coup norms to enhance democracy promotion. Though the implementation of these protocols particularly, the one concerning strengthening Democracy and Good Governance (2001) at the national levels in the ECOWAS Community has been slow to some extent, relative progress in that direction is however, being observed since the Third Wave of democratisation began in the 1990s.

Also, the rising index of successful democratic transitions within the ECOWAS Community and beyond is indicative of the steady progress in the direction of democratisation (civilianisation of governments) which foreign policy implications are far-reaching. The actions of ECOWAS bespeak its desire to ensure that wellbeing of its member states and the people of the entire Community is secured. This partly, constitutes a fragment of the greater good which a democratised foreign policy seeks to promote that is also entrenched in the core values of ECOWAS. It is to that extent, this study underscores the interventionist role of ECOWAS and its gradual influence on democratising participation in foreign policy-making processes.

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