

Assessment of the Economic Community of West African States (ECOWAS) 1999 and 2001 protocols in the resolution of the Gambian post-election crisis

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ABSTRACT: This study sought to appraise two Economic Community of West African States (ECOWAS) Protocols; the Protocol on Conflict Prevention (1999) and the Democracy and Good Governance Protocol (2001), and how they address the political security challenge in Gambian. In resolving the Gambian crisis, ECOWAS adopted some of its already established protocols such as the ECOWAS Mechanism on Conflict Management, Resolution, Security, and Peacekeeping and the ECOWAS Protocol on Good Governance and Democracy. The study relied on the documentary method. So, data were collected from secondary sources by reviewing various newspapers, journals, textbooks, and online sources. The findings of the study reveal that ECOWAS was very successful in its Conflict Resolution Mechanisms in West Africa especially the use of the Protocol on Conflict Prevention (1999) and the Democracy and Good Governance Protocol (2001) as these helped to address the Political Security challenge in the Gambia. Consequently, this study concludes and recommends that other sub-regional bodies should emulate ECOWAS in adopting their conflict resolution mechanisms within their sub-region. Finally, the paper recommends that ECOWAS should ensure that democratic governance through free, fair, and credible elections, the rule of law, and respect for human rights are fully respected and implemented in her sub-region.

Keywords: Assessment, crisis, post-election, protocol, resolution.

INTRODUCTION

The world is characterized by a complexity of wants, desires, and aspirations, which make nations come together to complement one another and help solve their problems. If countries come together to integrate, they will pull their resources together, and this guarantees to some extent sufficiency and peaceful co-existence. From the dawn of the independence era, virtually all African countries have embraced regional integration and sub-regional blocks on the continent as our case study The Economic Community of West African States (ECOWAS) has undoubtedly remained the most viable integration framework among the countries of West Africa sub-region (Ibrahim and Obiageli, 2017).

The Economic Community of West African States

(ECOWAS) was founded in 1975 with an overarching objective of championing trade and economic cooperation among member countries and facilitating the free movement of people, services, and capital. Weary of the external threats to the peace and stability of the community during the Cold War, ECOWAS adopted the "Protocol on Non-Aggression" and the "Protocol on Mutual Assistance of Defence" in 1978 and 1981, respectively. The pursuit of peaceful settlement of disputes was a complete reflection of the ideology that engendered the 1978 Protocol, in reaffirming the prohibition of the use of force enshrined in Article 2(4) of the United Nations Charter.

Three considerations informed the position of ECOWAS to adopt the idea of a security mechanism in the early

years of its coming into being. "First, the responsibility in maintaining regional peace and security; second, the aspiration of ECOWAS leaders for security, stability, development, and cooperation; and third, exploiting its collective power for its defense". The Protocol relating to "Mutual Assistance on Defence" adopted in 1981 made provisions for a multinational ECOWAS defense force, and stressed the need to give mutual aid for defense against any external armed threat or aggression. The desire to enhance regional security and the attempt to champion military cooperation in the community was influenced by the need to maintain the territorial integrity of the Community (The ECOWAS, 2008).

Internal political crisis in member countries in the post-Cold War era which culminated in civil conflicts compelled the organization to redefine its mission and objectives to include the management of violent conflicts within member states. This necessitated the revision of the original treaty of the organization in 1993 to include the new roles of ECOWAS. The revised treaty, known as The Cotonou Treaty of 1993 introduced new mechanisms, for issues of peace and security, and strengthened existing ECOWAS institutions. Several additional protocols have since been agreed on and eventually ratified that have a more direct relationship with peace, security, governance, and democracy issues. These protocols are the "1999 Mechanism for Conflict Prevention, Management, Resolution, Peacekeeping and Security" and the "Supplementary Protocol on Democracy and Good Governance" in 2001 which form the framework for managing the subregion's security and governance-related problems (The ECOWAS, 2008). The new roles in maintaining peace and stability in the West African community resulted in the establishment of a nexus between security and development. The 1999 Protocol mandates ECOWAS, among other things, to deal with threats posed to peace and security in the sub-region. The "2001 supplementary protocol" gives ECOWAS the oversight responsibility to intervene in member states and impose sanctions in cases of unconstitutional change of government and where there is evidence of massive violation of Human Rights in a member state.

Several countries in the West African sub-region have experienced political crises such as coup d'états, political violence, ethnocentrism, and contestation of political results that necessitated ECOWAS intervention in the past decade. ECOWAS has since applied these Protocols unilaterally or in collaboration with the UN and the AU in resolving the emergent political crises, ranging from electoral disputes and violence to post-election violence even civil wars that occurred in the sub-region (Yabi, 2010). Ivory Coast and the Gambia are some of the countries that experienced varying degrees of constitutional crises in recent times.

In Gambia as a case in point, after the December 1st, 2016 Elections, Yaya Jammeh (the then President)

accepted defeat and promised to peacefully transfer power. But later made a U-turn by rejecting the election results alluding to what he called "serious and unacceptable abnormalities (Ojo *et al.*, 2017). This turn of events received outright condemnation from the international community and ECOWAS. ECOWAS, using its Protocol, took steps to restore democracy. After the initial attempts at mediation failed, the regional organization resulted in the threat of the use of force. The role played by ECOWAS using its protocol of 1999 & 2001 in resolving the political crisis in the Gambia is the central focus of this study.

Conceptual Issues

Conflict

Zartman (2007) sees conflict as an 'exercise in which parties do what they want as long as the cost-benefits ratio stays below a certain level'. He also sees it as a simple contest of parties each trying to impose a unilateral solution to the problem. He argued thus:

... a conscious rival, opponent, or enemy that involves the defense of what one has not, and acquisition may mean the taking away of that which another would like to have (Zartman, 2007:27).

Conflict is also seen by Yabi (2010, p. 311) as a social factual situation in which at least two parties (individuals, groups, states) are involved and strive for goals that can only be reached by one party, and or want to employ incompatible means to achieve a certain goal. It thus implies a struggle over values or claims to status, power, and scarce resources in which the aims of the groups or individuals involved are not only to obtain the desired values but to neutralize, injure, or eliminate rivals. The two words: crisis and conflict, as earlier stated are 'foreign bodies' in human society or relationships. The two situations are disturbances to peaceful co-existence in human society and they cause a dent in harmonious relationships within and without a group.

Conflict resolution

Conflict resolution involves recognition by the clashing parties of one another's interests, needs, perspectives, and continued existence. The most effective forms identify the underlying causes of the conflict and address them through solutions that are mutually satisfactory, self-perpetuating, and sustaining. Conflict resolution can also be practiced with a variety of emphases, including but not limited to cooperation, non-confrontation, non-competition, and positive-sum orientation. Serious challenges are found when parties at times favour, for various reasons,

the continuation of conflict over its resolution. In such cases, the role of external parties can be critical in creating a balance of power, enacting sanctions or incentives, or acting as neutral mediators or invested facilitators. Not all conflicts lend themselves to conflict resolution techniques (Miller, 2005, p. 25).

Concept of regional integration

The concept of regional integration is strongly attached to international relations and politics especially in contemporary global systems. Regional integration could be interpreted to mean a balance of power or strengthening the strength of weaker nations. This is largely because states come together to learn about states with relatively greater powerhouses. States ally to have the advantage of not being attacked or enjoying the protection of the stronger ones among them. Economically, states come to integrate for economic benefits and find common ground to develop the “most favoured nation” status (Deutsch *et al*, 1957; Haas, 1971). This interprets regional integration as dealing with the elimination of tariffs, and boundary barriers and, the free movement of goods and persons within the borders of the integrating nations.

Regional integration as a form of international integration, according to Dauda (2010) means a voluntary association of a permanent nature, grouping in a given geographical area with several sovereign states by reasons of their proximity, community of interests, or cultural, linguistic, historical or spiritual affinities make themselves jointly responsible for the peaceful settlement of disputes, which may arise between them.

One of the pioneer integration scholars (Holthaus, 2018) viewed integration as the collective governance and material interdependence between states. Mitrany felt that states can integrate in limited functional, technical, and/or economic areas. Thus, by implication international agencies would meet human needs, aided by knowledge and expertise; which invariably would attract the loyalty of the populations stimulate their participation, and expand the area of integration (Holthaus, 2018).

However, sub-regional integration in the context of ECOWAS can be defined as the association of the states based upon location in a given geographical area, which is West Africa to promote convergence and over-arching integration of the fifteen member-states of the sub-region, whose terms are fixed by a treaty or other arrangements. The whole essence is to enhance the quality of life of the citizens of the member states.

THE ECONOMIC COMMUNITY OF WEST AFRICAN STATES (ECOWAS) TREATISE AND PROTOCOLS

The ECOWAS's original purpose was to stimulate

economic cooperation and regional integration in the West African Sub-region, but it has assumed a more political role where it played the role of a communitarian security organization due to the increasing rate of prolonged internal conflicts in the sub-region at the beginning of the 1990s. ECOWAS's “1993 revised treaty, its 1999 protocol on the Mechanism for Conflict Prevention, and its 2001 Protocol on “Democracy and Good Governance” legally and formally establish ECOWAS's mandate of promoting democracy and good governance to implement what was later called the “Responsibility to Protect (R2P)”. The Gambia has been a member of the ECOWAS since its inception in 1975 (Ibrahim and Obiageli, 2017).

ECOWAS also created protocols that helped in the achievement of its regional integration goal in West Africa. Thus from 1978 to 2021, a total of 54 protocols have been signed. Out of these, 49 had already entered into force as of 3rd October 2021 while 5 were yet to enter as of October 3, 2021. The Table 1 gave the summary of the protocols

GAMBIA POLITICAL HISTORY AND 2016 POST-ELECTION IMPASSE

The political history of Gambia

The Gambia was the last West African country granted independence in 1965. The country was granted independence following the agreements between the British and the governments of Gambia in July 1964 (US Department of State- UDS 2008; Perfect, 2010). Thus, the Gambia was granted independence on the 18th of February, as a constitutional monarchy within the commonwealth with a new constitution, indigenous political parties were formed hence, the Peoples Protectorate Party (PPP) in 1959 was renamed the People's Progressive Party to validate its modern and national identifications by a group of educated provincials who were determined to prevent the transfer of political power to the urban elite (Fletcher, 2019). The PPP was formed to add up to the already existing Colony parties; the Democratic Party (DP), the United Party (UP), and the Muslim Congress Party (MCP). Hence, the Gambia at independence was said to be practicing multiparty democracy. In October 1963, “Sir David (later Dawda) K. Jawara” became the prime minister and was the head of the Gambian administration while the Head of State was Queen Elizabeth II (Edie, 2019; Fletcher, 2019). The nation was transformed into a republic in April 1970 following a new constitution, approved in a referendum with Jawara becoming Gambia's first President. He governed The Gambia from 1970 to 1994. The Jawara regime, which had been in power for three decades was toppled in a bloodless coup led by Yahya Jammeh and a group of junior army officers in 1994 and remained in power up till 2016.

Table 1. The ECOWAS 1999 & 2001 Protocols.

S/N	Protocol or convention	Venue and date of signature	Date of entry into force
39	Protocol A/P1/12/99 relating to the Mechanism for Conflict Prevention, Management, Resolution, Peace-keeping and Security	Lomé, 10th December, 1999	10th December, 1999
40	Protocol A/SP1/12/01 on Democracy and Good Governance supplementary to the Protocol relating to mechanisms for Conflict Prevention, Peace-keeping and Security	Dakar, 21st December, 2001	20th February, 2008

Source: ECOWAS Annual Report, Annex (2012:15).

The December 2016 Elections and the post-election crisis

On the 1st of December 2016, the Gambians went to the polls again to exercise their franchise in the presidential elections. Three candidates contested the elections. These include Yahya Jammeh of the “Alliance for Patriotic Reorientation and Construction”; Mr. Adama Barrow (who succeeded Darboe as leader of the opposition) of Coalition 2016 (made up of seven political parties and one independent candidate) and Mama Kandeh of the Gambia Democratic Congress (Economist Intelligence, 2016).

Alieu MomarNjie, chief of the “Independent Electoral Commission (IEC) declared the opposition candidate, Barrow, the winner of the December 1st elections by a significant margin of 50,000 votes out of 551,583 casts on the 2nd of December. This came as a surprise to almost everyone including the international community. Barrow ranked first with 43.3% of the votes, Jammeh, with 39.6 percent of the votes and Mama Kandah won the remaining 17 percent. Before the official results were declared, Jammeh congratulated Adama Barrow for winning and further conceded defeat in a television speech on the 2nd of December (ECOWAS, 2016a; pp. 7-8). He was commended by the regional and international community for accepting defeat and promised not to challenge the electoral outcome when he returned to his farm (Diallo, 2016).

On the 5th of December, the Independent Electoral Commission (IEC) readjusted the election results stating that some miscounting had occurred previously leading to a reduction in the total number of votes won by each candidate. They issued the revised results reaffirming Adama Barrow’s victory (Jah, 2016). There was a turn of events on the 9th of December as Jammeh rejected the result and promised not to cede power to the legitimate winner of the elections. He (Jammeh) went further by deploying troops on the 10th of December on the streets of Banjul as an indication of control of the security apparatus. He also deployed the military on the 13th of December to the offices of the Electoral Commission (EC). The military prevented the EC personnel from having access to the building. Jammeh was by no means prepared to cede power to Barrow by the 18th of January

2017 which legally and supposedly, should mark the end of his tenure (Al Jazeera, 2016). Jammeh’s rejection of the election outcome and call for fresh elections came possibly out of fears of prosecution (Owiso and Nakandha, 2023). Fatoumata Jallow- Tambajang a principal coalition member (now the vice president of the coalition government) called for the prosecution of Jammeh within a year of leaving office and warned that he had enough resources to cause a possible insurrection to oppose the new government. Also, Hamat Bah in a radio interview, stated that the new government would set up a commission of inquiry to look into Jammeh’s human rights abuses (Owiso and Nakandha, 2023).

ECOWAS RESPONSE TO THE GAMBIAN POST-ELECTION IMPASSE OF 2016

ECOWAS activation of the 1999 and 2001 protocol on conflict prevention and democracy and good governance

To start with, Election Observation is part of the ECOWAS mandate, although it requires an invitation from national authorities, and it a quite an unusual step. In the case of The Gambia 2016 election, President Jammeh refused to allow the ECOWAS Observation Team to monitor the December 2016 presidential elections (ECOWAS, 2001; ECOWAS, 2016c).

When Jammeh rejected the presidential election result and refused to abdicate power which led to a political crisis, ECOWAS leaders steadfastly stated their preference for a diplomatic solution in the post-election crisis while keeping the credible threat of deployment on the table. The leaders firmly rebuffed Jammeh’s efforts to justify his continuation in power. ECOWAS on 13th December 2016 sent some ECOWAS leaders to meet The Gambian President, key among them were then Nigeria’s president Muhammadu Buhari, Liberia president Ellen Johnson Sirleaf, and Ghana’s President, Nana Akufo-Addo and his predecessor, John Dramani Mahama, launched a series of diplomatic initiatives to persuade Jammeh to step aside. They cited articles 9 and 45 of the 1999 and 2001 protocols on Democracy and Good

Governance, which state that any refusal by an incumbent to relinquish power to the winner of a democratic election or create any constitutional or legal amendments that violate the principles of democratic transition is considered “unconstitutional changes of government” that will trigger “appropriate sanctions from the ECOWAS (ECOWAS 2016a, ECOWAS 2016b, Abebe and Fomband, 2021).

This dispatched a delegation of Heads of State of Nigeria, Liberia, Ghana, and the former president of Ghana to Banjul on December 13 to broker an agreement with President Jammeh failed, ECOWAS organized Fiftieth Ordinary Session of The ECOWAS Authority of Heads of State and Government in Abuja.

The Gambia political crisis and the Fiftieth Ordinary Session of the ECOWAS Authority of Heads of State and Government

On 17th December 2016, there was an extra-extraordinary session of The ECOWAS Authority of Heads of State and Government, in Abuja, Federal Republic of Nigeria. The summit was also attended by the UN Secretary-General's Special Representative for West Africa, Dr. Mohamed Ibn Chambas, and the special representative of the UN Secretary-General for Guinea Bissau and Head of UNIOGBIS, Mr. Brahim Modibo Touré, as well as representatives of the Chairperson of the African Union Commission and the Commission of the West African Economic and Monetary Union (UEMOA) as observers (ECOWAS, 2016d).

At the end of their 50th ordinary session, leaders of West African countries, ECOWAS, took decisions on the situation in The Gambia as follows; the leaders called on Gambian leader, Yahya Jammeh, to ensure the president-elect is sworn in on January 19th, 2017 in conformity with the Gambian constitution and ECOWAS Article 9 of the 1999 and 2001 protocols which reads that; the party and/or candidate who loses the elections shall concede defeat to the political party and/or candidate finally declared the winner, following the guidelines and within the deadline stipulated by the law. In substance, the summit resolved among others, the following points:

1. The Authority considered the worrying political situation in The Gambia arising from the decision of His Excellency President Yahya Jammeh to reject the results of the presidential election of 1st December 2016 which had resulted in the election of Mr. Adama Barrow as the president-elect of The Gambia.
2. The Authority called on President Yahya Jammeh to accept the result of the polls and refrain from any action likely to compromise the transition and peaceful transfer of power to the President-elect.

The Head of State and Government further agreed on the following:

- a) To uphold the result of the 1st December 2016 election in the Republic of The Gambia.
- b) Guarantee the safety and protection of the President-elect Mr. Adama Barrow.
- c) That all heads of state will attend the inauguration of the President-elect Adama Barrow who must be sworn in on 19th January 2017 in conformity with the Gambian constitution.
- d) To respect the will of the Gambian people as expressed by the Presidential election results of 1st December 2016.
- e) g) Requests the endorsement of the AU and the UN on all decisions taken on the matter of The Gambia and also requests their support for the mediation efforts of ECOWAS including the provision of technical assistance where required.
- f) h) The authority shall take all necessary actions to enforce the results of the 1st December 2016 elections (ECOWAS, 2016d).

ECOWAS activation of legitimate threat in The Gambia as an Instrument in the 1999 and 2001 Protocols on Conflict Prevention and Democracy and Good Governance

On 14 January 2017, the regional military planners were urgently called to the Nigerian Armed Forces and Staff College in Jaji, Kaduna State to prepare options (Nigeria played host to the ECOWAS Standby Force mechanism). As these were being worked out, ECOWAS announced that it would send a presidential delegation to Gambia to attend Barrow's swearing-in on January 19 and that on that date, it would cease to recognize Jammeh as president. The African Union (AU) also adopted that position on January 17, warning Jammeh of “serious consequences if his actions cause any crisis that could lead to political disorder and humanitarian and human rights disasters, including loss of innocent lives and destruction of properties” (Hartmann, 2017).

On January 18, regional leaders announced their intent to deploy forces to Gambia, under the banner of the Economic Community of West African States Military Intervention in Gambia (ECOMIG), to enforce the election results. The United Nations Security Council promptly authorized Senegal's request on behalf of ECOWAS to intervene. The decision invoked ECOWAS's supplementary Protocol on Democracy and Good Governance, which allows “zero tolerance for power obtained or maintained by unconstitutional means”. It also invoked Article 25 of the ECOWAS Mechanism for Conflict Prevention, Management, Resolution, Peacekeeping, and Security, which authorizes military intervention if “democracy is abruptly brought to an end by any means or where there is a massive violation of human rights in a member state” (Hartmann, 2017).

ECOMIG was mandated to “facilitate the exit of Yahya Jammeh, restore the popular will of The Gambian people as expressed in the December 1st elections, and create conditions for normalizing the political and humanitarian situation in Gambia”. The force under the ECOWAS command (led by a Senegalese military commander) consisted of 7,000 troops from Senegal, Nigeria, Ghana, Mali, and Togo along with air and naval assets.

The quick mobilization of this sizeable force in a short space of time was due to several factors. With Senegal surrounding Gambia on almost all sides, the deployment of land, air, and naval assets was logistically feasible. ECOWAS forces regularly train together and have a good understanding of one another’s strengths. Moreover, planning for a potential regional intervention had begun after previous refugee outflows had placed strains on the region. Finally, ECOWAS had established standard operating procedures after previous interventions in the region, starting with Liberia in 1989, and more recently, in 2011, when ECOWAS intervened in Côte d’Ivoire to oust the defeated president Laurent Gbagbo and allowed democratically elected leader, Alassane Ouattara, to take office (Hartmann, 2017).

In Gambia, the possibility of violence was real. A state of emergency was declared, senior officials fled into exile, and the election winner, Adama Barrow, evacuated to Senegal. A defiant Jammeh called ECOWAS’s moves a “declaration of war” and promised military retaliation. ECOWAS leaders, however, steadfastly stated their preference for a diplomatic solution while keeping the credible threat of deployment on the table. Additionally, they declared that ECOMIG was there solely to facilitate a peaceful exit and create conditions for a political transition. This underscored their view that the crisis was not military, but political.

As Jammeh seemed to not indicate that he would step down, ECOWAS sent the Mauritanian president, Mohamed Abdel Aziz, to Banjul in a last-ditch effort to persuade Jammeh to step aside. As the January 19 deadline approached, there was no agreement in sight. Ground forces from Senegal, Nigeria, Ghana, Mali, and Togo, backed by Nigerian air and naval support and Senegalese field artillery, massed at the Senegal-Gambia border, and declare that they would move in if a political solution was not found. The next day, the forces crossed the border on orders to march on Banjul, at that point Jammeh finally stepped down (Nantulya, 2017).

On January 22, 2017, Yahya Jammeh abdicated power after 22 years in power. His departure was not voluntary, but rather the result of active diplomatic and ultimately military pressure from the Economic Community of West African States (ECOWAS). In the process, a major political and humanitarian crisis for the region was averted. While the episode has been largely overshadowed by other exigencies on the continent, the ECOWAS handling of the Gambia crisis holds many valuable lessons for regional

security cooperation in Africa and upholds presidential term limits among member states, countering a trend seen elsewhere in Africa (Burke, 2017; Nantulya, 2017).

Jammeh received a guarantee approved by the ECOWAS, the African Union, and the United Nations. The ECOWAS, African Union, and the United Nations made commitments with the Gambian government to ensure “the dignity, security, safety, and rights” of Jammeh and his immediate family and members of his regime. They are also to ensure that no legislative actions are taken against Jammeh, his immediate family, and the regime and also to prevent their assets from being seized. The ECOWAS, African Union, and the United Nations are also to make sure that there is no intimidation, witch-hunting, or harassment of Jammeh’s regime among others. Jammeh left for exile in Equatorial Guinea on the 21st of January 2017 where he will neither be arrested nor prosecuted for his past criminal offenses and human rights abuse (Nantulya, 2017; Africa Research Bulletin, 2017).

President-elect Barrow who had left for Senegal after the Africa-France summit in Mali for his safety was sworn into power in the Gambia’s Embassy in Senegal. The ECOWAS forces then safeguarded the Gambian territory and per the request of Barrow, they stayed in the Gambia for three months (Hartmann, 2017).

FINDINGS AND RECOMMENDATIONS

This study focused on the role played by ECOWAS in resolving post-election crises in the Gambian 2016 electoral using the 1999 and 2001 protocols following Jammeh’s refusal to cede power to Adama Barrow after initially accepting defeat. The adoption of the 1999 Mechanism and the 2001 supplementary protocol on democracy and good governance gave ECOWAS the political will, justification, and legitimacy to intervene in the Gambian 2016/2017 crisis. In the end, through the use of these protocols by ECOWAS, democracy was restored in the country. Arising from the findings above, this study presents the following recommendations:

1. ECOWAS peace and security roles in West Africa must be commended. As it has been shown in the work, ECOWAS has largely been consistent in operationalizing its protocols on conflict prevention and good governance and it has gained international acclaim in standing firm against unconstitutional change of government. However, the study therefore recommends that ECOWAS should review its conflict prevention diplomacy and early warning mechanisms and begin warning the main actors in elections about the possible consequences of their intransigence should there be any.
2. The ECOWAS member states will need to respond more proactively to electoral conflicts and risks alongside intrastate conflicts. This also raises the

issue of the role of the international community in supporting ECOWAS military and peace operations in the region.

3. ECOWAS in playing its role in peace, conflict, and security in Africa, there is a need for collaboration with civil society organizations. Civil Society Organizations should not only concentrate on capacity building for political parties on how best elections can be conducted. Much attention should be preparing political parties for life after they have lost elections. This could be done by emphasizing peaceful resolution of post-election conflicts.
4. The press has a role to play due to its presence among societies and communities where elections are conducted. Often the press in West Africa pays attention to projecting political candidates and carrying out polls on which candidate or political party is most likely to win. The act and omission of the press often become sources of conflict and violence. The press can do a very important service to the West African community if they also highlight areas of potential conflicts and possibly conflict arousers. When the press pays attention to where conflicts may occur and the probable forms they may take, they may invariably shame political parties and activists into good political behavior.
5. ECOWAS is made up of post-colonial states. One of its weaknesses is its over-dependence and over-reliance on its former colonizers. This phenomenon has been identified in the literature as neo-colonialism. For sure, there is an emerging global normative consensus. However, ECOWAS stands to lose its independence and credibility if it is seen largely as condoning the preferences of its former colonial masters. This was evident in ECOWAS' collaboration with France during the Ivorian crisis. It would have been more helpful if ECOWAS had led throughout the Ivorian crisis. It will therefore be helpful for ECOWAS to own the processes of managing political crises in the sub-region without its deference to France.
6. The international community must accept its responsibilities in supporting peacekeeping efforts in West Africa and that in the face of the current global financial crisis "peacekeeping cannot be only an ECOWAS affair".
7. The fundamental step is for ECOWAS member states to undergo radical transformation along participatory democratic and developmental lines under visionary leadership and move the region toward popular ownership of the peace and security agenda. It must match its rhetoric of peace, security, and development with sustainable practice.

CONFLICT OF INTERESTS

The authors declare that they have no conflict of interest.

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