How do Citizenship, Military and Security Dynamics Impact the Development of ECOWAS?

by

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Abstract

Since its formation in 1975, the Economic Community of West African States (ECOWAS) has attained a mixes bag of accomplishments in the area of peace and security. Despite its modest gains in this area, the capacity of the organization has been constantly challenged by emerging and recurring security threats in the West African region. These threats include military instability, drug trafficking, organized crime, terrorism, and piracy which have contributed to human insecurity in West Africa. Informed by a brief analysis on the theories of the Neo-functionalism, Intergovernmentalism and Institutionalism, this paper explores how citizenship, military, and security dynamics impact the development of ECOWAS, and how ECOWAS has responded to the emerging security challenges in the region.

Introduction

Since its establishment, the Economic Community of West Africa (ECOWAS) has faced multiple political, economic and security challenges arising from member states' 'inability' to address these challenges. This is not surprising since the 15 countries that comprise ECOWAS are ranked among the poorest in the world and have weak state capacities. The challenges have led to both interstate and intrastate wars, serious security breakdowns, and miserable living conditions for larger proportions of the populations in the region.

Indeed, since the independence explosion in the 1960s, the region has witnessed two interstate wars, five full-scale civil wars with a regional dimension, and over 40 successful military coups d'état and unconstitutional changes of government, as well as a number of protracted separatist/insurgent conflicts and countless attempted coups. Since the dawn of the new millennium, there have been five successful military coups and other forms of unconstitutional changes of government in the region.

Important efforts have been undertaken by ECOWAS countries aiming at the economic growth of the region, trying to strengthen good governance and democratic constitutional states, while looking to reduce the suffering of the people especially in relation to hunger and diseases. However, the progress made so far is still far short of the needs of the region's population, which has suffered enormous constraints and obstacles arising from the context of permanent conflict, political instability and insecurity. Thus, this paper provides an analysis of how citizenship, military and security dynamics impact the development of ECOWAS. To do so, it explores the relationships between citizenship, military, with security and development in West Africa. It therefore analyzes some critical cases of military instability in the region, namely its impact on citizenship and security in the region. It also examines the responses of ECOWAS to some of the emerging security challenges. This study intends to contribute to the regional policies related to the human security in the region.

The paper is based on an extensive review of existing literature, using qualitative methodology and the explanatory case study approach (to be discussed later) to determine whether links exist between citizenship, military with security dynamics and ECOWAS development. The following major research question is therefore addressed: How do the citizenship, military and security dynamics impact the development of ECOWAS? This question led us to suggest the following alternative and null hypotheses for systematic testing:

H_1: Citizenship, military and security dynamics impact the development of ECOWAS positively.

H_0: Citizenship, military and security dynamics do not impact the development of ECOWAS positively.

The question that immediately emerges here is this: How are the preceding concepts/variables defined? The following paragraphs address this question.

In international law, *nationality* and *citizenship* are now used as synonyms to describe the legal relationship between the state and the individual; the terms can—and will in this text—be used interchangeably. Neither term has any connotation of ethnic or racial content, but is simply the status that gives a person rights and obligations in relation to a particular state.

Citizenship, according to ECOWAS, is that a community of citizens comprises citizens of the regional organization's member states that satisfy the conditions to be defined in a protocol established for citizenship of the community (ECOWAS 1982). Generally, *citizenship* refers to the position or status of being a *citizen* (i.e. a legally recognized subject or national of a state or commonwealth, either native or naturalized) of a particular country.

Military is defined as a country's armed forces. It refers to the physicality of armed forces, their personnel, equipment, and physical area which they occupy.

Security is defined as Human Security that embraces all aspects of the society including economic, political and social dimensions of individual, family, community, local and national life (UNTF HS 2009).

Theoretical Framework and Research Methodology

The theoretical framework that undergirds this study is based on the Neo-functionalism, Intergovernmentalism, and Institutionalism Theories. The Neo-functionalism Theory highlights the relevance of the institutions to be equipped with capabilities for an effective response in terms of security (Bangura and Lamin 2016).

The analysis of security matters in the region is also supported by the recognition of the relevance of international institutions to support the ECOWAS member states in the definition of their policies and programmes in light of international treaties and conventions. Indeed, the Intergovernmental Theory empathizes the major players that the heads of states should have in the integration of the security policies in the region (Bangura and Lamin 2016). In line with the Institutionalism Theory, the relevant institutions should be strengthened for the promotion of peace and human security in the region.

In order to respond to the major research question, a qualitative methodology was used, based on the analysis and explanation of a case study which is the West African region (ECOWAS). In this sense, a qualitative approach was used, using direct sources for data collection, interpretation of phenomena and attribution of meanings. In this context, a comparative literature review was done of similar and conflicting literature in order to test the suggested hypotheses. An explanatory case study design (which answers the question 'why?' or 'how?') was employed to identify the factors that cause the phenomena which integrate the theoretical framework, meaning what the impact of *citizenship, military* and *security* dynamics is in the development of ECOWAS and trying to deepen the knowledge of this reality.

The technical procedure was a case study because this procedure represents the preferred strategy when we pose 'how' and 'why' questions and when the focus is on contemporary phenomena embedded in some real-life context (Yin 2014): in this case, citizenship, military and security dynamics in West Africa. An effort was therefore made to attribute to this research a good logical follow-up of the evidence so that the study allows the reader to clearly follow the process of research development from the initial questions to the conclusions.

Citizenship, Security and Development in West Africa

The 'human security' approach argues that threats and challenges to security transcend national defense, and law and order encompass all political, economic and social issues that guarantee a life free from risk and fear (UNTF HS 2009). The focus has shifted from the state to the security of persons; however, these are not mutually exclusive. Security can be thought of as a 'public good', responding to the strategic need to support sustainable human development at the same time as promoting national, regional and global peace and stability. The human security approach has also made it clear that any attempt to address security-related matters needs to be based on consultation and collaboration with different sets of actors and sectors with different interests at national, regional and international levels.

In this context, by analyzing the security dynamics that West Africa has faced since independence, it can be affirmed that insecurity has been one of the biggest obstacles to regional integration and sustainable development of the region, jeopardizing the satisfaction of the basic needs of the people in the region. Indeed, the evidence has demonstrated that security, namely human security, is a fundamental foundation for a sustainable development in West Africa.

In the past, national security in West Africa focused almost exclusively on military concerns, and national security was synonymous with military might or power. A disproportionately high percentage of national resources went into the procurement of military hardware and maintenance of large military forces in the hope of promoting physical security. These were achieved at the expense of quality standard of living for the peoples of West Africa. In spite of the armaments and security apparatus of post-independence West Africa, intra-state or internal conflicts have continued to pose problems to many governments in the region (Grasa and Mateos, 2010). National security therefore appears no longer a military matter alone, as the security of the individual now seems more important than the security of the state in most developing countries, particularly so in our post-cold war world. True security only occurs when people really feel secure. The need for the state to provide common security for all its citizens in the spheres of trade, food, health, monetary matters and peoples' fears on disease, unemployment, poverty, crime and terrorism has become increasingly important to be ignored.

The current challenge that ECOWAS is facing is to translate the dimension of human security in its policies and responses to sustainable development of the region. It means that the ECOWAS policies should focus on its citizens while safeguarding their basic rights to health, education and employment by creating conditions for their effective participation in the development process of the West Africa region. From a 'strictly economic policy', ECOWAS must establish and strengthen a more integrated policy of human development in which the human security dimension would have a key role in the process of economic growth in the region.

Critical Cases of Military Instability in the Region: Impact on Citizenship and Security

To better understand the current security context, in particular human security in West Africa, requires knowing the military instability historical framework and its role as the conditioner of human development of the region. Between 1960 and 2010, West Africa experienced 106 failed and successful coups—many times more than in East Africa (48), Central Africa (35), or Southern Africa (16). The level of coup activity varied considerably within West Africa. Senegal, often held up as an example of political stability in West Africa, and Cabo Verde have never experienced a successful coup. Benin and Burkina Faso have each had seven, Mauritania has had six, Ghana and Sierra Leone have each had five, and Guinea-Bissau and Niger have each had four. Military coups have come about as the result of a number of factors; their origins and forms have varied. They represent another manifestation of the competition for political power, as excluded and marginalized elites in single-party states resorted to military coups to wrest power from incumbents. Indeed, a major cause of coups in West Africa has been ethnic antagonisms 'stemming from cultural plurality and political competition', as well as the existence of strong militaries with a 'factionalized officer corps' (Kposowa and Jenkins 1993:126). Competition among elites inside the military and the civilian government has largely driven coups in the region. By the mid-1960s, military coups had become the method of choice to displace regimes; they remained as such until the wave of democratization in 1990 opened up West Africa's political arena (Young 2004). Coups were also the result of external intervention in the state, either by neighboring states or states farther away. Nkrumah was accused of complicity in the region's first coup, in Togo, with some observers claiming that he wanted to annex Togo (the claim was never substantiated) (Willoughby 2013). Another factor was the role of economic downturns: tightened budgets often meant a reduction in the size of the army or unpaid salaries, both of which could trigger coups (O'Kane 1993).

Although challenges remain, significant progress has been made, as demonstrated in Ghana and Nigeria, the regional trendsetters in terms of coups. Both countries have transitioned to civilian rule as a result of domestic factors, with Ghana heralded as a model for successful democratic transition following several peaceful handovers of power.

It should be noted that the literature and evidence have revealed that colonialism had a telling influence on post-independence civil-military relations and its overall effects on democratic stability in West Africa. The frequency of military interventions and the direct circumstances that stimulated military coups in West African states are varied. The colonial powers have pursued diverse policies in the areas of defense and security cooperation with their former colonies, with mixed outcomes on post-independent defense institutions. Generally, West African countries tend to have weak democratic governance, socio-economic underdevelopment, and insecurity.

These countries are challenged in sustaining their defense sectors with adequate resources and capabilities to ensure that their forces remain accountable to and supportive of civilian institutions. Notwithstanding the challenges, the shifts in the global security environment provide opportunities for West African states to transform their post-colonial security and defense sectors to align with their current defense and security needs. In this regard, efforts at building effective defense institutions must be pursued. Professional, capable, accountable and transparent armed forces, which are subject to civilian oversight and the rule of law, will contribute to improved security, democratic governance and stability in the region.

Emerging Security Challenges in West Africa

Challenges related to transnational organized crime, including drug trafficking, piracy in the Gulf of Guinea, and cross-border security threats in the Sahel, continue to affect West Africa. Among the most serious threats are the continuing attacks by violent extremists in Mali, as well as the Boko Haram insurgency in north-eastern Nigeria that affect the security of the Lake Chad Basin countries (UNOWA 2015).

West Africa remains a region vulnerable to and affected by specific threats in terms of security and transnational organized crime. Current major threats include the use of the region as a transit area for cocaine and heroin; the development of local laboratories for amphetamine-type stimulants (ATS) and precursors; an increase in the local use of all types of drugs; a surge in terrorism-related threats and increasing links between organized crime and terrorism (UNODC 2016); intra-regional and inter-regional trafficking in persons, firearms, cigarettes and fraudulent medicines; smuggling of migrants and maritime crime and piracy in the Gulf of Guinea and along the West African coast (UNODC, 2016). Moreover, while drug consumption is worryingly increasing in the region, efforts to support drug prevention, drug dependence treatment and care in a health-centered framework have been limited so far (UNODC, 2016).

In the course of the last few years, the number of children (any person below eighteen years old) associated with violent extremist groups, including terrorist groups, has also notably increased. Reports indicate that there are thousands of children abducted, recruited, used, or otherwise associated with violent extremist groups, including terrorist groups all over the world. In the West African region, children represent a specific target group for the purposes of recruitment (UNODC 2016).

Another worrying trend is the growing links between organized crime and terrorism. United Nations Security Council Resolution 2195 notes that 'terrorists benefit from transnational organized crime in some regions, including from the trafficking of arms, persons, drugs, and artefacts and from the illicit trade in natural resources including gold and other precious metals and stones, minerals, wildlife, charcoal and oil, as well as from kidnapping for ransom and other crimes including extortion and bank robbery' (UNSC 2014).

In May of 2015, the Secretary-General of the United Nations stated that 'the impact on international peace and security of terrorists benefiting from transnational organized crime is increasing, since their interactions may enable them to accumulate the financial and political resources to rival sovereign States' while 'high levels of violence and crime are undermining the legitimacy of States (understood as both trust in the State and the State's ability to protect and comply with the rule of law)' (UNSC 2015).

In sum, four major emerging security threats have been identified in the West African sub region: (1) drug trafficking and organized crime, (2) terrorism, (3) challenges to democratic governance, and (4) piracy. It must be also noted that at the global level the 'emerging threats' are not new issues. Nonetheless, they have gained prominence in West Africa in recent years due to the significant scale in which they are beginning to be felt in the region and the consequent challenges to regional stability that they now pose.

ECOWAS' Responses

When ECOWAS was established 40 years ago, it was primarily an economic organization without a security mandate. Realizing that conflict and insecurity were major obstacles to economic development, ECOWAS developed its main conflict prevention and management frameworks and tools, namely the *Protocol Relating to the Mechanism for Conflict Prevention, Management, Resolution, Peacekeeping and Security* (1999) and the *Protocol on Democracy and Good Governance* (2001). Together, they formed the basis for the *ECOWAS Conflict and Prevention Framework* (2008). Whereas the former focuses mostly on conflict management, the latter emphasizes conflict prevention. The organization's capabilities include the Mediation and Security Council, under which the Council of the Wise, the ECOWAS Standby Force (ESF), and the Defense and Security Commission reside. Within the ECOWAS Commission, the Office of the Commissioner for Political Affairs, Peace and Security and its three directorates (Political Affairs, Early Warning, and Peacekeeping and Regional Security) are responsible for issues related to peace and security (Lucey and Arewa 2016).

Analyzing ECOWAS' responses to challenges to peace and security in the last ten years suggests that the institution's conflict prevention tools are currently stronger than its conflict management tools. These aspects are discussed in the following subsections.

Armed Conflict

ECOWAS as an institution has been notably absent militarily in the two major armed conflicts ravaging the region in the last five years, namely the crisis in Mali and the Boko Haram insurgency.

Some analysts say that these situations are related to the organization's lack of financial and logistical resources to deploy the ESF in Mali (Tejpar and de Albuquerque 2016). ECOWAS has also had little or no involvement in the military response to *Boko Haram*, the armed group that has been launching attacks against targets in Nigeria since 2009. The main reason pointed out for this absence of ESF is that Nigeria has not requested any military support from ECOWAS. This is partly due to Nigeria being by far the most powerful ECOWAS member state militarily, something that makes ECOWAS' military assistance less vital (Tejpar and de Albuquerque 2016). The reason is also partly linked to Nigeria's national pride and preponderant role in the region and reluctance to accept help from smaller member states (Tejpar and de Albuquerque 2016).

Another reason pointed by experts for why ECOWAS is not involved in the fight against Boko Haram is that the violence has spread to neighboring countries (Cameroon, Chad and Niger), which are outside of ECOWAS (Tejpar and de Albuquerque 2016). The apprehension by ECOWAS may therefore hinge on the belief that it would be accused of interfering in the affairs of other regional organizations and intruding into a task that is more suited for the African Union.

Transnational Crime

Transnational trafficking in people, drugs, small arms and light weapons (SALW) and other illicit goods continue to undermine state building and contribute to regional insecurity. However, the free movement of people and trade of goods, a founding principle of ECOWAS, make dealing with these issues more difficult for the organisation. Nevertheless, in 2006, ECOWAS adopted a Convention on Small Arms and Light Weapons, their Ammunition and Other Related Materials, and launched a small arms initiative (ECOSAP) based in Bamako, Mali, as a capacity-building programme to assist member states and civil society organizations in dealing with the problem of proliferation of SALW. Unfortunately, few visible results have come out of these initiatives, due largely to weak border controls and a generally weak security sector (Tejpar and de Albuquerque 2016).

In relation to the legal and programmatic tools to fight illegal drugs and organized crime, the ECOWAS Heads of State and Government in 2008 adopted t*he* ECOWAS Regional Action Plan against Illicit Drug Trafficking, Abuse and Organized Crimes and Political Declaration against Illicit Drug Trafficking, Abuse and Organized Crimes. In September of 2016, the ECOWAS adopted a Drug Action Plan to Address Illicit Drug Trafficking and Organized Crimes in the West Africa (2016-2020) as a common strategic framework to guide the work of the ECOWAS member states in countering illicit drug trafficking, organized crimes, and drug abuse in the region (UNODC, 2016).

To address maritime security and prevent and fight piracy, ECOWAS has established an Integrated Maritime Strategy that, among other things, seeks to establish three maritime zones. The first Zone (Zone E) to be set up includes areas judged by some to be the epicenter of piracy in the Gulf of Guinea. It includes the waters of Nigeria, Niger, Benin and Togo and a monitoring center in Cotonou, Benin. The second Maritime Zone (Zone F) is hosted by Ghana has Burkina Faso, Côte d'Ivoire, Guinea, Liberia and Sierra Leone as other member states, while Maritime Zone G, made up of Capo Verde, Gambia, Guinea Bissau, Senegal and Mali is hosted by Capo Verde (ECOWAS 2014).The operationalization of the ECOWAS Maritime Zones is part of the implementation of the broader Gulf of Guinea maritime initiatives. It is also part of the broader scope of the ECOWAS Maritime Security Management mechanism, which seeks to achieve among others, enhanced information/intelligence exchange, training and capacity building, including basic and improved specialized training for staff dealing with maritime security and establishment and expansion of operational networks among law enforcement entities operating at all seaports and major river border posts in member states. This is to enable each member state to protect its exclusive economic zone and contribute to the collective maritime security in the region through joint patrols among others (ECOWAS 2014).

Regional networks such as the West African Network of Central Authorities and Prosecutors against Organized Crime (WACAP) and the Regional Judicial Cooperation Platform for Sahel countries (Sahel Platform) were highlighted by UNODC as successful regional initiatives to be further analysed for potential replication (UNODC 2016). The Inter-Governmental Action Group against Money Laundering in West Africa (GIABA) was also established by the ECOWAS Authority of Heads of State and Government in the year 2000; it is responsible for strengthening the capacity of member states towards the prevention and control of money laundering and terrorist financing in the region. Indeed, several initiatives and some progress have been made by ECOWAS aiming at reinforcing the regional security response, in particular the fight against drug trafficking, organized crime, terrorism and piracy in the region (UNODC 2016). Nevertheless, so far, the responses provided at the regional level to the nature and extent of crime and drug-related issues have not matched the gravity of such challenges. Anyway, it is recognized that the primary responsibility for addressing the challenges that threaten peace and security in the region pertains to governments and the role and strong will of ECOWAS, including the development partners to support member states in addressing the scourges that often extend beyond West Africa (UNODC 2016).

Conclusion and Recommendations

The paper set out to explore how citizenship, military and security dynamics impact the development of ECOWAS. It has looked at the main security challenges in West Africa since independence, focusing on armed conflicts, drug trafficking, organized crime, terrorism, and piracy as the main threats to human security in West Africa region.

While recognizing the efforts made by ECOAWS to respond to the main security challenges in the region, the results achieved so far are still far from responding to the impact of the problem in the region. Poor governance, insecurity, conflicts, poverty and economic disparities among and within countries of the region are providing ample opportunities for trans-national organized crime, as is evidenced in the widespread illicit trafficking in drugs, persons, money, arms, and natural resources. The links between drug trafficking, international criminal organizations and terrorism been not only unveiled but in certain case acknowledged as major threats to the human security at local, national and regional levels.

In light of these findings, the alternative hypothesis tested in this paper must be rejected—i.e. H_1: Citizenship, military and security dynamics impact the development of ECOWAS positively. Thus, the null hypothesis must be accepted—i.e. H_0: Citizenship, military and security dynamics do not impact the development of ECOWAS positively.

In this context, it is suggested that the sustainable development of ECOWAS member states will be guaranteed if the regional and national policies in the field of security are formulated by integrating the basic needs of people, especially the most vulnerable groups. Also, it is suggested that any economic policy must integrate the social dimension in order to ensure the economic gains aligned with the basic needs of people.

In addition, within the framework of sustainable development in West Africa, institution-building is a fundamental condition to ensure the provision of basic services to the population. The people should participate actively in every stage of the formulation of the development policies, thereby ensuring more participation and inclusion in development programs in the region. In this sense, with security being more than just the absence of violent conflicts, governments and state security agencies would be well advised to confront these threats with additional means to the traditional law-enforcement instruments. The involvement of parliaments, civil society organizations and even religious movements and authorities in the development discourse is likely to add value to these efforts.

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