

A Critical Analysis of Liberal Rationale of the ECOWAS Intervention in the Gambia 2016

A Thesis

**Submitted to the Master's Study Program of Political Science at the Faculty of
Social Sciences in partial fulfilment of the requirements for the degree of**

Master of Arts (M.A.)



by:

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UNIVERSITAS ISLAM INTERNASIONAL INDONESIA

DEPOK

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ABSTRACT

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The Economic Community of West African States (ECOWAS) military intervention in The Gambia was a result of president Jammeh's refusal to cede power in 2016 presidential election winner Adama Barrow. The intervention was seen as a successful regional mechanism in promoting democracy in a coup-prone region. The intervention motives are framed in line with maintenance of democratic principle hence the code name of the intervention, “intervention to restore peace”. However, there are no international or regional legal frameworks under which military intervention can be justified in the Gambian situation under the pretext ‘restore democracy’. Thus, ECOWAS undermines its own legal frameworks on justifiable cases of military means and the UN charter as the custodian of international peace and security. This thesis seeks to understand why ECOWAS reject UNSC resolution on political means. This study hypothesizes that, the ECOWAS intervention in The Gambia was influenced by the hegemonic interests of regional powers and the national interests of proximate states with significant stakes in the subregion. The findings reveal that Senegal as a proximity state and the hegemonic interests of Nigeria, result to the rejection of UNSC resolution to a political solution through diplomatic maneuver for a regional consensus on military intervention in the Gambia 2016.

Keywords: *ECOWAS, Military intervention, The Gambia, UNSC Resolution, West Africa*

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CHAPTER I

INTRODUCTION

1.1 Problem Statement

The ECOWAS intervention in the Gambia has been praised as an example of a successful regional intervention that was able to carry out its mandate to facilitate peaceful transfer of power to the winner of the 2016 presidential election Adama Barrow. Scholarly studies Like Hartman (2017), Kreß C, Nußberger B (2017) and Paul D Willians (2017) assert that the ECOWAS success was a result of member states' determination to maintain democracy and good governance in a region prone to coups and political instability, for some it's the legal mechanism, member state interest, and legitimacy of the organization to intervene and maintain democracy in accordance to ECOWAS democratic protocols and good governance.

According to (Odoziobodo & Nnaji, 2018), ignoring legal frameworks was necessary due to the urgent nature of the situation to prevent a potential civil war. However, under international law, military intervention in a sovereign state is strictly regulated. The United Nations Charter (1945) expressly forbids the use of force, in Article 2(4), except in self-defence (Article 51) or if there is a United Nations Security Council (UNSC) authorization under Chapter VII dealing with threats to international peace and security (United Nations, 1945). In the case of the Gambia, ECOWAS could not, at the time of intervention, rely on prior UNSC authorization for its action and, thus, the legality of its action in relation to international law was and remains in question. Additionally, the norm of non-intervention entrenched in Article 4(g) of the AU Constitutive Act (2000) highlights respect for sovereignty and territorial integrity. Disregarding those juridical frameworks may pave the way for similar military interventions by regional organizations in the future without international oversight, threatening to erode global rules of law. This argument is in line with Hartman (2017) and Kreß C, Nußberger B (2017), that, despite the intervention success, there was no legal backing to justify interventions as none of the international legal frameworks existed in the Gambian situation in 2016, however, ECOWAS intervention was a collective commitment to African Solution to African Problem.

Furthermore, Senegal endorsed and called an emergency meeting at the UNSC on the Gambian political crisis, seeking international approval for ECOWAS military intervention without first exhausting diplomatic means, as a result of its interest in political stability in the Gambia. (Omotosho, 2018). Nigeria as a regional hegemony on the other hand provided military air support to the ECOWAS ground troops in line with its long-

standing hegemonic objective as evident in the Liberia, and Sierra Leone interventions. There are several potential consequences of ignoring these legal frameworks. First, it risks undermining the legitimacy of ECOWAS as a rule of law-based organisation whose future diplomatic engagements may be diminished as a result. Second, it could lead to tensions within the international community, especially among major global powers or institutions such as the UN, which may perceive such actions as unilateral and in breach of state sovereignty (Kreß & Nußberger, 2017). Finally, although the Gambian intervention was done in the spirit of post-colonialism as the outcomes were received as positive in Gambia, and thus largely accepted despite the specific legal basis being non-existent, repeatedly bypassing certain legal frameworks may encourage states or other, often more illegal, regional organizations to act the same way and, in the end, we will experience a gradual recurrence of unauthorized interventions and destruction of previously existent international legal spaces.

Furthermore, ECOWAS' justification and success in intervention have surrounded its protocol in maintaining good governance and democratic principles in member states amid instability in the region. The protocol adopted in 2001 provides for mechanisms in which the organization can respond to unconstitutional changes of government in the region and emphasizes democratic principles about election, neutrality of the judiciary, and impartiality of member states security forces. The protocols aim to create a suitable environment for economic development after the realization in the 1980s that, economic development cannot be achieved amid frequent unconstitutional changes of government, unfair elections, and partiality of the security and judiciary across member states, thus this background created a justification for ECOWAS to intervene in The Gambia even at the disapproval of the UNSC.

With that being said, ECOWAS' commitment and determination to maintain democracy and good governance by liberal principles overshadows existing international mechanisms for military intervention. This commitment is embedded in the 2001 protocol on democracy and good governance signed in Dakar. (Protocol on Democracy and Good Governance, 2001). The protocol's establishment is rooted in the region's experience in the Liberian civil war, where the international community's reluctance to intervene resulted in one of the worst human sufferings leading to the death of hundreds of thousands of innocent civilians. The Liberian case resulted in an overflow of conflict in Sierra Leone creating insecurity and instability across the region. Under this backdrop, the UNSC is deemed ineffective and thus a need for a regional liberal framework that prioritizes self-reliance

amid the unreliability of external powers. (John-Mark Iyi, 2013). Reliance on a regional framework to intervene in sovereign member states is argued based on the liberal principle of intervention by invitation, to implement democratic principles when necessary (Buchan & Tsagourias, 2023).

In the West African case, reliance on the international legal framework has cost the lives of thousands due to international reluctance to intervene in Liberia, Sierra Leone, Rwanda and so on. To maintain democracy and good governance, ECOWAS established legal frameworks that aim to reduce reliance on external powers in times of crisis. The protocol on democracy and good governance provided for the maintenance of peace, security and democratic governance, a commitment to liberal values in preventing human suffering as a result of unconstitutional means of governance.

Additionally, the intervention was legally contentious, perceived as based on an invitation from a president-elect who did not yet have effective control over the country (Hartmann, 2017a). Furthermore, “operation restores democracy” is observed to be a breach of Gambia’s sovereignty, as it is not a prerequisite nor justification for a military intervention. The Gambia situation did not constitute any of the reasons for an international military intervention such as the responsibility to protect, humanitarian need, self-defense, breach of international peace and security and UNSC resolution authorization for the use of force. (Taylor B. Seybolt, 2008). While the insights on the overall ECOWAS intervention success are valuable, this study aims to analyze ECOWAS intervention in the use of force despite UNSC resolution 2337 which clearly states, that ECOWAS should find a political solution to the Gambian situation and not through military means. (Adopted by the Security Council at Its 7866th Meeting, on 19 January 2017, 2017).

The puzzle in this study concerns ECOWAS intervention in the Gambian crisis under the pretext of ‘restoring democracy’ as part of the organization’s commitment to maintaining peace and stability in West Africa. Military intervention be it regional or international intervention should abide by both regional and international legal frameworks to be legitimate i.e., authorized by the UNSC. The primary legal framework prohibiting unilateral military intervention without UNSC approval is Article 2(4) of the United Nations Charter (1945), which explicitly forbids the threat or use of force against the territorial integrity or political independence of any state. Article 51 of the Charter of the United Nations states that any attacks are not permitted in any circumstances. In the case of self-defence, the UNSC is mandated to keep international peace and security (United Nations, 1945). And that any regional arrangement should be in accordance to the principle

of the United Nations. The Gambian case was not as a result of an external armed attack, but an international political crisis, and UNSC approval is needed for any international military intervention in an effort to maintain regional stability. Accordingly, the ECOWAS Protocol on Democracy and Good Governance supports the UN Charter provision on the unlawful attack of another UN member in any circumstance without prior consultation and reporting to the UNSC. The report in itself according to article 51, shall not affect the responsibility of the UNSC to decide on the particular issue. Several consequences of military intervention without UNSC approval have the potential to bypass UNSC provisions by regional organizations, ignoring the existing global governance structure. This may lead to regional unilateral military intervention in regional conflicts, bypassing international law. It has the potential to weaken diplomatic efforts prioritising forceful means and undermining peaceful means of resolving international conflicts. ECOWAS intervention ignoring these legal principles has the potential to lose its credibility as a regional player, international condemnation, sanctions and withdrawal of fundings provided by countries that strictly adhere to international legal basis in stabilizing international peace and safety. And lastly, ECOWAS success in ignoring international legal frameworks might encourage other regional organizations to follow its foot step in cases of regional crisis, creating a domino effect, and encourage unauthorised means of military intervention creating further international instability (Kreß & Nußberger, 2017; Hartman, 2017).

The ECOWAS intervention in the Gambia is justified base on the organizations protocol on democracy and good governance, however it fails to adhere to the UN charter and UNSC call for a political solution to the Gambia case in 2016. The UNSC resolution states its resolution was not to be mistaken for a military means of ending the crisis but a political solution. ECOWAS however, went ahead with military intervention and forceful implement its mandate to restore democracy which it considered breach by the former president Yahya Jammeh. This study finds it crucial to determine inconsistencies of ECOWAS seeking UNSC resolution to the Gambian case but ignoring its resolution for a political solution and not the use of force.

1.2 Research Questions:

1. Why did ECOWAS intervene in Gambia despite the UNSC's rejection of a military intervention?

1.3 Research Objective

The objective of this study is to investigate the ECOWAS 2016 military intervention in the Gambia post-presidential election crisis, to determine how the organization's commitment to democratic principles and good governance brought about the intervention's success. ECOWAS' commitment to safeguard democracy in the region is embedded in its protocol on democracy and good governance. The protocol emphasizes members' adherence to democratic principles, free and fair elections, constitutional means to attaining political power and respect for human rights, as a prerequisite for a stable region. Any attempt that the organization deem not in line with these principles faces consequences. The case of Gambia in 2016 is one of many cases that showcases the organization's willingness to safeguard these principles for a stable region. Furthermore, this study analyses the interplay of interest that motivated powerful states to lead a military intervention instead of exhausting diplomatic channels as encouraged by ECOWAS conflict prevention mechanisms and the UNSC resolution to use political means and not military means.

1.4 Research Significance

The increasing ECOWAS involvement in military interventions has been covered in international relations literature about the legitimacy of the organization and legal instruments justifying such interventions. However, this research aims to broaden the conversation highlighting the inconsistency of ECOWAS and its position not in line with UNSC authorization and members states interest in motivating ECOWAS intervention in the Gambia. This shed more light on understanding ECOWAS's position in this intervention, indicating a complex interplay of democratic commitment as a means for regional stability and members' interest in motivating military intervention. This research will contribute to the discussion of how regional intervention operates within the African context but also how international organizations like ECOWAS might be hijacked by powerful states to pursue their interest. The findings will contribute to the understanding of increasing regional intervention and the intricacies and inconsistency between ECOWAS intervention and UNSC resolution it also indicates adopting regional frameworks to address regional issues instead of relying on international frameworks that have historically failed to bring meaningful solutions to regional conflicts.

CHAPTER II

LITERARY REVIEW

2.1 Literature Review

Regional intervention in Africa over the years has been framed as a necessary means to respond to threats and promote peace and stability. This increasing trend in post-Cold War Africa has defied the principle of non-intervention in the domestic affairs of sovereign states in the name of democracy and good governance. (Hellquist, 2020). Referring to the Gambian case, the rejection of ECOWAS to the UNSC resolution can be elucidated by some factors related to Senegal and Nigeria's political attentiveness. The responsibility of ECOWAS in supporting the security, alongside mitigating human predicament, was the critical cause in relieving the tension. After Yahya Jammeh's denial of stepping down, after his loss in the election, public fear emerged, indicating the national instability, triggering some conflicts, ultimately leading to people's migration and expanding the humanitarian crisis in West Africa. Hence, ECOWAS considered taking an intervening action as a mitigating act to prevent an overwhelming number of conflicts, as previously occurred in Liberia and Sierra Leone (Atuobi & Aning, 2009).

In addition, ECOWAS's prudence in maintaining democratization was excellent evidence to figure out this phenomenon. The role of this organization was as a licenser of democracy, as proved by its well-built posture against unconstitutional alterations of the regime. Permitting Jammeh to defend his regime could have polluted legitimacy, and hence heartened other regimes to repel the transition to democracy. Through reconciliatory action, ECOWAS emphasized its role as the guardian of the norms of democracy (Hartmann, 2017a). Additionally, the limitations of the UNSC in responding effectively to African crises played a role in ECOWAS' decision. The UNSC has often been criticized for its slow bureaucratic processes and the influence of global power politics in determining responses to crises (Williams, 2004). ECOWAS leaders may have viewed immediate military intervention as a necessary step in light of the urgency of the Gambian crisis, rather than waiting for prolonged negotiations that might not yield decisive action. The intervention that took place in Côte d'Ivoire and Mali has shown a form of independent action when regional security is at stake. This intervention holds a critical position on establishing a legal basis, building a fundamental motivation, and achieving the targeted purpose in mitigating the conflict scenarios. Unfortunately, the Gambian's case was classified as a question; finally proved that a significant gap resulted from the existence analysis. In particular, ECOWAS' divergence from existing global norms is partly related to the lack of supervision from the United Nations Security Council (UNSC), particularly for its military

intervention. This fact is one of the main issues that needs to be improved through a balance of diplomatic and military approaches.

Although much of the literature highlights ECOWAS' military intervention in the Gambia as an example of successful crisis resolution, it often focuses on legal frameworks as the primary basis for justifying this action. It includes the organization's commitment to promoting democracy and good governance as articulated in its protocol on democracy and good governance. Although these legal frameworks supply meaningful perspectives, there is still a question relating to a decision taken by ECOWAS in bypassing the UNSC's denial to utilize the coercive approach. In addition, legitimation and pledge owned by ECOWAS, particularly in maintaining this regional security, are predominantly considered an appropriate reason. However, they often fail to take into account the intervening complexities. Preliminary action dealing with the mitigating conflict adjusts its level of intervention to several extensions. Unfortunately, the dependence on these frameworks does not supply an integrated solution to the essential matters: *why did ECOWAS execute a military intervention without the UNSC's approval, based on this fact?*

Hartman (2017) mentioned essential perspectives inserted into the instrumentation of legal granting the mandate of ECOWAS in safeguarding and ensuring democracy and proper administration involving any member state through a pacifistic or military approach. This is a factual finding that ECOWAS has had a substantial role, particularly in defending democracy since the political reforms in the 1990s. Further, Hartman explained the pivotal role played by the 1993 treaty, the 1999 rule designed to prevent a conflict, and the 2001 rule arranged to run the democracy and a well-established administration. These architectures sustained the legitimation owned by ECOWAS to be involved in political instability inside the member states. Additionally, Hartman noted how the adoption of the Responsibility to Protect (R2P) principle aligns with these regional legal instruments, further solidifying ECOWAS' justification for interventions in crises such as the (Hartmann, 2017a).

Further, Tanimu (2024) also confirmed that ECOWAS interventions correspond to regional structures of the African Union and ECOWAS rules. Therefore, its mission has emphasized regional stability and promoted democracy alongside a well-established administration. Moreover, Tanimu described the actual commitment to dealing with the regional instability managed by ECOWAS' intervention in the Gambia. However, while ECOWAS interventions may align with AU frameworks, this does not automatically grant the organization the legal authority to intervene militarily without UNSC approval. The

AU's Constitutive Act (2000), particularly Article 4(h), allows for intervention in cases of war crimes, genocide, and crimes against humanity, but such actions must still conform to international legal standards. Moreover, the AU's Peace and Security Council (PSC), primarily needed to operate based on the UN Charter, verifying the mandatory of UNSC permission prior to military action is undertaken (Kioko, 2003). This means that while AU protocols endorse regional mechanisms for conflict resolution, they do not override the broader international legal order that mandates UNSC approval. ECOWAS realized this weakness, as proved by its effort to ensure the UNSC's permission prior to intervening in the Gambia. Therefore, the argument that ECOWAS' intervention was only authorized by AU frameworks that were trying to ignore another legal requirement, implicating a sanction released by the UNSC (Dersso, 2012)). In summary, Tanimu does not properly calculate the existing international legal architectures authorizing military intervention. This miscalculation is not fully right, since it reflects that ECOWAS need to improve its understanding of the responsibility of global legal rules. Similarly, ECOWAS followed a comparable procedure when seeking approval for intervention in Niger to restore constitutional order (Omar Hammady, 2023). While ECOWAS' legal frameworks provide a foundation for intervention, Tanimu does not address the organization's apparent disregard for international legal obligations, which mandate non-interference without UNSC approval, even under humanitarian circumstances.

Moreover, Basiru (2021) underlined this intervention to express its commitment to defend democracy. The commitment is frequently marked as a reason for the intervention, as an option for disapproval of the UNSC resolution positioned in the background of an organization with a high initiative to intervene in crises. ECOWAS has, on multiple occasions, prioritized swift action over diplomatic processes, particularly when it perceives a direct threat to regional security. This pattern was evident in previous interventions in Liberia (1990), Sierra Leone (1997), and Côte d'Ivoire (2011), where ECOWAS acted with or without UNSC authorization to prevent protracted conflicts and state collapse (Atuobi & Aning, 2009). The seriousness of the Gambian crisis occurred as a failure to authorise the transfer, likely triggering the decision of ECOWAS to utilize military power over prolonged compromises. This commitment is settled in the view that stabilization is fundamental for economic integration. Abdul-Jalilu Ateku (2020) also underlined ECOWAS' principle to safeguard and elevate democracy in West Africa. Furthermore, this organization has a prominent reputation for strengthening political stability as one of its vital achievements (Ateku, 2020). Unfortunately, both of those researchers were unsuccessful in explaining why ECOWAS denies the UNSC resolution, which mainly recommended resolving this

crisis through diplomacy rather than military power. This direction addresses a significant gap in recognizing the problems that occurred during the decision-making process.

A recent publication stressed ECOWAS' dependence on the pacts and rules to explain its involvement, while often denying non-legal factors. As a brief example, ECOWAS's approach significantly rose after Yahya Jammeh's refusal to comply. As one of the closest neighbours of Gambia, Senegal's administration considered Jammeh's action as a direct menace to its country's stabilization. Nigeria also has the same aspiration to support regional domination, and hence, it decided to supply military power during the involvement. Those factors, while secondary, are vital to recognizing the wider scope of ECOWAS' actions. The publication deeply analysed and provides meaningful perspectives into ECOWAS' structures and their position in explaining the 2016 military involvement in Gambia. However, it does not sufficiently address the organization's decision to reject the UNSC resolution. The purpose of this study is to connect this gap through exploring why ECOWAS, despite its request for UNSC approval, proceeded with military intervention contrary to the resolution. Understanding this divergence is essential to analysing the balance between regional autonomy and international legal obligations in the context of ECOWAS' interventions.

2.2 Theoretical Framework and Hypothesis

This study adopts Realism to explain the ECOWAS military intervention under the justification of restoring democracy, despite the UNSC's rejection of the organization's proposed use of force to resolve The Gambia's political crisis in 2016. According to Hedley bull, (2002) states' interests are exclusive of one another, and they are free to pursue their interests without legal or moral restriction. In this context, international military interventions serve as a mechanism to maximize gains and minimize risks in the pursuit of state interests to ensure survival (Kirstein, 2013). Furthermore, in this process of interest pursuance, states find the need to engage in power maximization and they are only satisfied when they can guarantee their security and survival and they will take any measure to alter the current state of power distribution in their favour (Dere, 2019).

This study situates ECOWAS' intervention as a pursuit of member states' national interests. This aligns with Realist assumptions that international interventions are often symptoms of states seeking to shape successor administrations in alignment with their interests or counterweigh rival powers' interests. ECOWAS' intervention in The Gambia can thus be examined as a manifestation of these principles, demonstrating how member

states prioritized survival in the self-help anarchic international system (Anne-Marie Slaughter, 2011).

In some different theories, such as Liberalism, stress on democracy and human rights is covered by official structures. Hartman (2017) insisted that Realism, with its focus on state interests, proposes a convincing lens for evaluating ECOWAS's motives. Particularly, Realism supplies meaningful views into why ECOWAS's direct decision was made in the absence of the UNSC authorization, underlining the cross-section between national stakes and regional intervention. This theoretical concept is derived from wider studies on those interventions that commonly occur in Africa, investigating the crossing of realist laws and ECOWAS' actions in Gambia.

In 2011, Doyle & Recchia contributed a chapter to the book *'Liberalism in International Relations. International Encyclopaedia of Political Science*. According to the book chapter, international military interventions are often moral imperatives, particularly when responding to human rights violations or protracted civil wars. Those involvements, ideally governed by the UNSC, are directed to suppress civilian casualties and incline international security (Doyle & Recchia, 2011). Unfortunately, ECOWAS's disapproval of the UNSC resolution not to be involved in military power needs further evaluation linked to organizational motives. Instead, the motivations of initiating member states—driven by their specific geopolitical interests—provide a more robust explanation for ECOWAS' rejection of UNSC directives.

To explain ECOWAS's rejection of the UNSC resolution not to intervene, we need to move beyond observing organizational motives and consider how motivations of initiators within ECOWAS to intervene in member states' affairs could be used as a determinant of its rejection of UNSC resolution not to use force in the Gambia. Existing studies focus on the motives of regional and international organizations in military intervention but cannot explain why a regional organization can reject a UNSC resolution and use force in its member states' affairs. Furthermore, existing studies emphasize regional frameworks and commitment to safeguarding democracy Benjamin (2017), Hartman (2018). While this is crucial, it does not address why ECOWAS contravened the UNSC resolution against military intervention.

Building on the above argument, this study hypothesizes that, the ECOWAS intervention in The Gambia was influenced by the hegemonic interests of regional powers and the national interests of proximate states with significant stakes in the subregion.

Proximate states, often expressed as their close and geographical relation and background interrelation, classify economic as well as political interests of their nearest countries (Shapiro & Knobe, 2021). These stakes come from the shared boundary and the geopolitical inheritance of colonial borders, forming interlaced dynamics that are hard to deny (González & Bortolotti, 2023). As an example, countries positioned in proximity to a lower nearest country may consider the closing as an extension of their sphere of influence, an insight that is able to cause pressures concerning jurisdiction and management. The leadership in such proximate states remains cautious in their engagement, as these dynamics can result in challenges to the sovereignty of the smaller state (González & Bortolotti, 2023).

Whereas, *regional hegemons* are indicated by their dominations in the economy, military power and predominant roles in the regional decision-making process, aiming to stabilize the regional order (Weyland, 2016). These countries frequently emphasize stability not only as the main principle but also as an instrument of defending their domination and assuring that any movements in regional dynamics fit in with their strategic targets (mckeil, 2022). In this context, such hegemons use their dominance to influence multilateral decisions, as well as shape the outcomes of interventions, whether through diplomacy or the use of force under the guise of regional unity. Thus, the ECOWAS intervention in The Gambia reflects the convergence of these factors, driven by hegemonic interests tied to regional dominance and national interests related to geographical proximity and historical interconnectedness. The analysis considers the independent variable as the hegemonic and national interests within ECOWAS, while the dependent variable remains the ECOWAS military intervention in The Gambia.

From a Realist perspective, interventions are strategic acts of national interest, as demonstrated in the failure of the international community to intervene during the Rwandan genocide in 1994, where the absence of vital state interests led to inaction (Obeng-Baah et al., 2023). Sorana-Christina Juda (2012) in her thesis, *'Saving Strangers in Libya: Traditional and Alternative Discourses on Humanitarian Intervention'*, analyses the Libyan intervention and observes that, the international response to the Ghaddafi regime was not merely on humanitarian grounds, but driven by the strategic interest of intervening countries (Sorana-Cristina Jude, 2012). The humanitarian justification on moral grounds was a license to enhance dominant state power and secure national interest for the United States, France and Britain. This aligns with the Realist understanding that humanitarian justifications often serve as mechanisms for enhancing dominant state power and securing

national interests. The intervention would not have happened if the vital interest of the initiators was not at stake. This is reflected in the selective intervention approach of the powerful states, for example in the Rwanda genocide, the first Liberia Civil War, Sierra Leone and many other conflicts that saw more humanitarian suffering and needed assistance in comparison to Libya.

Material power, particularly military capabilities, is central to foreign policy under Realism, as posited by Hans Morgenthau (Williams, 2004). States engage in cost-benefit analyses to align geopolitical interests, and interventions only occur when such interests are at stake. Regional interventions, as in the case of ECOWAS, serve to advance the interests of dominant states. A study by Scholvin (2014), illustrated this in Nigeria's leadership of ECOWAS during the Liberian Civil War in 1990, where Nigeria contributed over 10,000 troops to prevent regional spillovers, maintain stability, and assert its dominance (Salami B. Olawale, 2015). This intervention showcased Nigeria's broader foreign policy goals as a regional leader, often masking national interests under humanitarian or organizational rhetoric (Oshewolo, 2019). While most studies saw the Nigerian-led intervention as a result of the reluctance from the international community to stop another atrocity in Africa, the intervention in humanitarian growth came at grave human and material costs (Amos Ojo Adedeji, 2023), raising questions about ECOWAS' capability to resolve conflict in the region amid inexperience in conflict management and lack of human and capital resources. However, Nigeria demonstrated its dominance, stopped the war and mostly kept external powers out of West Africa being its most important motive in the intervention (Scholvin, 2014).

Additionally, Realism suggested that regional powers, like Nigeria and Senegal in the case of The Gambia, use organizations to consolidate influence and shape conflict outcomes favourably (Shaw, 2014). David and Dane (2008) argued that interventions often favour one conflict party to ensure a post-conflict scenario aligned with the intervenor's interests (Carment & Rowlands, 2003). The very reason Western interventions for example in West Africa are facing a pushback is because of pursuance of their desired interest, favouring a particular leader to run a country after a conflict. In that context, foreign powers attempt to change the leader or the type of government, the economic system of the country, or certain policies of the government in their favour (Gent, n.d.). Requesting approval and authorization from the United Nations Security Council by intervenors is similar to justifying military intervention based on humanitarian grounds, however, the very nature of the UNSC in many interventions is to justify legal grounds to intervene. UNSC

authorization can be ignored by powerful states, especially in an instant of highly desired interest at stake. From the realist perspective as Allison (2009) notes, the UNSC is not an absolute prerequisite for international or regional intervention (Allison, 2009), states seek authorization only to justify intervention, gain support and avoid criticism which can undermine their motives. Under this condition, survival is of the most important thus pursuing material interest rather than moral motives. To achieve this, the ultimate aim is to maximize power and thus military intervention becomes a tool for survival in the anarchic and self-help situation (Binder, 2009).

International military intervention is usually an indication of a deep-rooted state motivation in the pursuit of interest (Szende, 2012). Organizations simply serve as means of the powerful or intervention initiators to ascertain power and promote interest. Since interests vary, its pursuit at the regional level mostly is to side with a party to a conflict and influence the conflict situation in a way that guarantees the national interest of the intervenor(s) (Bellamy, 2003). In the case of ECOWAS, this means that the focus for Senegal and Nigeria is based on their national interest considerations rather than ethical or moral imperatives. This is evident in previous ECOWAS interventions in Liberia, Sierra Leone and Ivory Coast where Nigeria as the initiator of all the interventions, supports a fraction of the conflicts in exchange for a guaranteed interest (Odoziobodo & Nnaji, 2018).

CHAPTER III RESEARCH METHODOLOGY

3.1 Qualitative Research Method

To address the research question here, this research resort to qualitative research method otherwise behind the desk research, which entails the analysis of primary and secondary data sources like government reports, interviews, scholarly articles, news, briefings, resolutions and books. The study employs realism to analyze ECOWAS rejection of UNSC resolution and an effort to implement democratic principles for peace and stability in the region. The study also analyses how powerful states' interest can drive the institutions in this case ECOWAS in pursuit of their interest. This research will contribute to the discussion of how democratic principles operate within the African context but also how regional organizations might be hijacked by powerful states to suite their interest. Hegemonic interest which might have influence the intervention will also be discussed, contributing to understanding of ECOWAS' ability in intervention as a regional organization proving valuable insights on future interventions in the region.

In order to chronologically narrate the ECOWAS intervention, this study uses a case study method which entails a detail examination and observation of a case over the period of 2016 to 2017 of the ECOWAS intervention in Gambia. It aims explore a phenomenon within its context using different data sources. As an empirical study, case study investigates a contemporary phenomenon within its real-life context, especially when the boundaries between phenomenon and context are not clearly evident. And in order to understand the context in which ECOWAS intervened in the Gambia, a case study is preferred because it not only studies the case but the context in which the phenomenon occurred.

This qualitative case study as an approach to research helps facilitates the exploration of a phenomenon within context using a variety of data sources. This ensures that the issue is not explored through one lens, but rather a variety of lenses which allows for multiple facets of the phenomenon to be revealed and understood. In order to be able to answer the research question why did ECOWAS intervene in Gambia despite the UNSC's rejection of a military intervention? This study finds it important to look at the organizational setting and decision-making process of the organization in order to understand the factors that led to ECOWAS military intervention, this study find it important to look at the motive behind the intervenors opting for military intervention instead of a peaceful solution. This study uses case study because the focus here is to

understand ‘why’ ECOWAS chose military means, and the answer is within the context that the organization operates that determined or influenced its decision. Thus, a case study fits as a methodology to understand this phenomenon.

This study first explores the ECOWAS intervention and how it came about, this entails the presidential election and the rejection of the result by the incumbent followed by the regional and international condemnation of the rejection by Jammeh. The military intervention is discussed in detail, its justification and the legal backing as in accordance to the ECOWAS protocol on good governance and democracy. This protocol established to uphold liberal principles in an effort to bring stability in the region. The interplay of states interest is also discussed shedding more insight to the nuances of the motives that drive the intervention in the Gambia. All of these serves as data points to understanding the case under study here.

CHAPTER IV DISCUSSION AND FINDINGS

4.1 The interplay of interest in the ECOWAS military intervention in the Gambia

The ECOWAS intervention in the Gambia 2016 post presidential election, restored democratic rule which has been absent since the coming in to power of former president Yahya Jammeh through a bloodless coup in 1994. His rule saw the deaths and exile of many political opponents who oppose his style of governance in this tiny West African States once known and respected for its support for human right and rule of law. Jammeh's time in office eroded democratic principles and in 2016, his rejection of the election result led to an international condemnation and eventually to ECOWAS intervention, led by Senegal and Nigeria which saw his exile to Equatorial Guinea. The interventions success had been tied to regional commitment to democratic means of attaining political power and the regional legal frameworks available to ECOWAS. This study however finds that, the motives of the intervention's use of military force rejecting UNSC resolution not to use force, was driven by member states' interest who saw the situation as an opportunity to pursue a long-standing national interest in the region. This study finds that the rejection of the UNSC resolution against military intervention was largely influenced by the national interests of Senegal and Nigeria. Senegal, as one of the close neighbours of Gambia, had long viewed Jammeh's regime as a destabilizing factor, particularly due to allegations that he supported separatist movements in Senegal's Casamance region (Faye, 2017). Then, excluding Jammeh was a part of Senegal's strategic stake, and hence, it recreated a main character in persuading ECOWAS to make a conclusive decision. Nigeria, on the other hand, is the predominant power, viewing the involvement as a chance to re-clarify its hegemony in West Africa and strengthen its long-term commitment to regional stabilization (Adebajo & Mustapha, 2008). Both countries actively pushed ECOWAS to override the UNSC resolution, arguing that a military intervention was necessary to prevent protracted instability. Through diplomatic manoeuvring within ECOWAS, they framed the crisis as an urgent security threat requiring immediate action, thereby sidelining the UNSC resolution for a political settlement (Omosho, 2018). By utilizing their influences in the economy, military power, and political stability alongside ECOWAS, Senegal and Nigeria ensured that the organization progressed with the involvement without UNSC administration.

Particular instances of diplomatic steering further explain how Senegal and Nigeria affected ECOWAS to disapprove the UNSC resolution. As the non-permanent member of

the UNSC, Senegal held a substantial role in forming the talks around the Gambia's crisis. It called for an emergency UNSC meeting and circulated a draft resolution that initially included language allowing for "all necessary measures," which implicitly sanctioned military intervention (Michelle Nichols, 2017). Although resistance emerged from other UNSC members, Senegal utilised its diplomatic approach to align with the wide-ranging international assistance for ECOWAS' posture while performing behind the scenes to defend the regional agreement in line with military power. On the other hand, Nigeria committed to high-level diplomacy with some vital ECOWAS member states to integrate assistance for involvement. President Muhammadu Buhari, acting as the ECOWAS mediator in the Gambian crisis, played a dual role, publicly advocating for a peaceful resolution while privately supporting a military strategy if Jammeh refused to step down. Nigerian representatives conducted closed-door discussions with some regional leaders, stressing the importance of ECOWAS to claim its administration and trustworthiness, specifically after Jammeh's rejection to turn over power in spite of diplomatic enticements (Omotosho, 2018). In addition, Nigeria committed military and logistical assistance to ECOWAS forces, amplifying its involvement as the final resort. These efforts guaranteed that, in spite of the formal implementation of a UNSC resolution emphasizing political perspectives, ECOWAS members were united in unity to operate the military power as the most potent problem solver.

The discussion on the ECOWAS intervention in the Gambia has drawn extensively on the legal basis that warrant the intervention. The ECOWAS legal frameworks inspired by the Liberian civil war and political unrest in the post-cold war till late 1990s indicating the organization's continued commitment to promote peace and stability in the region. This commitment and adoption of the protocols on conflict prevention mechanism and democracy and good governance in 1993 to its revised protocols in 2001 serves as the basis and justification for military intervention in the Gambia. The UNSC however on the contrary rejected the use of force, as none of the conditions that warrants the use of force was absent in the Gambian case. Jammeh's rejection of the election result was not a threat to international or regional peace, there was no humanitarian catastrophe, nor was there a legitimate call for international support to an internal political crisis.

4.2 Rejection of UNSC resolution for a political solution to the Gambian Political crisis

Senegal, a non-permanent member of the U.N Security Council as of January 1st, 2016 to December 31st, 2017 (UN, 2015), called the United Nations Security Council on

an emergency meeting to discuss on The Gambian political crisis (Reuters, 2016). The Senegalese representative circulated a draft resolution calling on the United Nation Security Council's support to the regional organization ECOWAS in its "commitment to take all necessary measures" (Michelle Nichols, 2017), and remove former president Yahya Jammeh from power for Adama Barrow to take over as the will of the people and an outcome of the December 1st election 2016. "By all means" was regarded by UNSC members as not excluding military intervention while the Gambian case at that stage, does not constitutions any of the situations that warrants an international military intervention. Instead, the language of the draft was softened, for the U.N Security Council support to ECOWAS "by political means first" and call on Jammeh to respect the will of the people of The Gambia as expressed in the results of 1st December elections."(Michelle Nichols, 2017). The fifteen (15) member United States Security Council unanimously adopted the revised resolution to support ECOWAS in its commitment to making sure Adama Barrow takes power but by political means first and not the use of force as stated in Senegal's earlier draft. At this stage, Senegal's intervention in the Gambian crisis was already deeply intertwined with its own strategic interests. Senegal viewed Jammeh's regime as a regional security concern, particularly due to his alleged support for the separatist movement in Senegal's Casamance region (Faye, 2017). By spearheading discussions at the UNSC, Senegal aimed not only to restore democratic rule in The Gambia but also to eliminate a long-standing political adversary whose actions threatened Senegalese national security. This correlation between Senegal's diplomatic push at the UNSC and its vested interest in Gambian affairs became evident when Senegal actively lobbied for stronger intervention language in the draft resolution. Although the final UNSC resolution softened the wording to prioritize political means, Senegal's persistent advocacy for ECOWAS intervention demonstrated its intent to link regional stability in The Gambia directly to its own security concerns (Omotosho, 2018).

Senegal's advocacy for military intervention was evident in several key diplomatic engagements and statements from its leadership. President Macky Sall played a central role in pushing for a decisive response, making direct appeals to ECOWAS heads of state and emphasizing that Jammeh's refusal to step down constituted a threat to regional security. Senegalese Foreign Minister Mankeur Ndiaye was instrumental in rallying international and regional support, holding consultations with representatives from France and the African Union to garner backing for ECOWAS' military preparedness (Lamin Jahateh, 2017). Additionally, Senegalese military officials coordinated closely with Nigeria, which shared similar views on the necessity of force if diplomatic efforts failed. The deployment

of Senegalese troops to The Gambia's border prior to the intervention signalled its readiness to act, reinforcing its persistent efforts to frame military action as a legitimate course of action. Within ECOWAS, Senegal's diplomats consistently pushed for a stronger stance, engaging with regional allies such as Ghana and Côte d'Ivoire to build consensus on the need for immediate intervention should Jammeh refuse to cede power (Michelle Nichols, 2017). These coordinated efforts solidified Senegal's role as the principal advocate for military intervention within both ECOWAS and the broader international community.

At the regional level, even before circulation of the draft resolution, ECOWAS prepares military intervention despite no UNSC authorization on the use of force, and Senegal was to lead the intervention (Adam Withnall, 2016). The then president of ECOWAS Marcel de Souza prior to the UNSC draft resolution gave Yahya Jammeh an ultimatum, to peacefully transfer power to the 2016 election winner or face a standby ECOWAS military to be led by Senegal (Adam Withnall, 2016). In the case of Senegal, its warning to Jammeh came prior to the announcement by the ECOWAS president. Senegal's Foreign Minister, Mankeur Ndiaye, request Jammeh to respect the outcome of the election as the will of The Gambian people and "solemnly" caution him not to harm Senegal's interest or its citizens in the Country (Reuters, 2016). This to no doubt was an indication that Senegal seeks to secure its interest than just maintaining a peaceful Gambia, whose unrest could mean the loss of lives of Senegalese and the creation of a security problem in the sub-region. Dr. Ceesay a political science lecturer at the University of the Gambia in an interview said, the political crisis of late 2016 was an opportunity for Senegal through ECOWAS to implement its long-awaited national interest agendas. Twenty-four hours before the end of Jammeh's term in office 19 December 2016, Senegalese ground troops were located at the Senegal-Gambia border. "If no political solution is found, we will step in," Colonel Abdou Ndiaye, a spokesman for the Senegalese military (UNHCR, 2017). While Senegal composes of the ground troops and heavy weaponry, the Nigerian counterpart provided military air support and naval war ship.

Fearing for their lives many Gambians flee to Senegal as the ECOWAS Military Intervention forces entered The Gambian territory (Hartmann, 2017b). On 19TH January 2017, Adama Barrow was sworn in at the Gambian Embassy in the Senegalese capital Dakar, on this same day, U.N. Security Council resolution 2337 (2017) was adopted and ECOWAS was recognized to solve the crisis through political means and not the use of force (Svicevic, 2018). However, Senegalese-led ECOWAS troops marched towards the capital city of Banjul, meanwhile. Adama Barrow in his swearing speech as Gambia's new

president, call on all security forces in the country to remain in their barracks and not to mount any resistance towards the ECOWAS forces headed for Banjul.

It was not clear how Barrow will take over control of the country, however as troops were closing in on Jammeh or any of his potential defenders, HE. President Mohamed Ould Abdel Aziz of the Islamic Republic of Mauritania and HE. President Alpha Conde of the Republic of Guinea Conakry landed at the Banjul international airport, in an effort to convince Jammeh not to resist the ECOWAS forces and give Gambian's and Adama barrow for a new Gambia. This last negotiation proofed fruitful and a joint declaration was reached between ECOWAS, African Union, and UN to give peace a chance in The Gambia (United Nations, 2017). The declaration includes terms drawn by Jammeh to depart the country base on the terms to respect, dignity, security, and rights as a former head of state of The Gambia as in accordance with the 1977 Gambian Constitution. And also, for ECOWAS, AU, UN to work with The Gambian government to guarantee dignity, security, safety and rights of former president Jammeh's immediate family, cabinet members, government officials, security officials and party supporters and loyalists, and also for Jammeh to return to his country as he wishes in accordance with international human rights (United Nations, 2017).

Jammeh left the Gambia on the 21st of January 2017 with ECOWAS, AU and UN guarantee for dignity, security, and safety for him and his immediate family. *In order to assist a peaceful and orderly transition and transfer of power and the establishment of a new government, HE. Former President Jammeh will temporarily leave The Gambia on 21st January 2017, without any prejudice to his rights as a citizen, a former President and a Political Party Leader* (United Nations, 2017). The joint statement pave way for Jammeh and many concerns that he will never be indicted for human right violations under his rule.

For ECOWAS, Jammeh's removal from office is non-negotiable, he has to leave power willingly or will be force to leave. It was clear from the onset when Senegalese forces were spotted at the Gambia border that, even the UNSC resolution was not going to safe Yahya Jammeh as ECOWAS was determined to remove him from power by force. As the then ECOWAS president said in an interview, "We have done it in the past. We currently have troops in Guinea-Bissau with the ECOMIB mission. We have had troops in Mali. And therefore, it is a possible solution" (BBC, 2016b). For Jammeh, resisting and engaging in battle would not favour him, due to the small size and ill equip of the national army, his ministers resign on a daily basis, his army chief advise his men not to resist the intervention. A clash with the Senegalese ground forces and the Nigerian naval and air support would

have been a catastrophe (Rémi Carlier, 2017). Jammeh calls the intervention as an act of war but eventually demand for the safeguard of his dignity, security and right to return to the Gambia at his will without any prejudice, this was accepted by UN, AU and ECOWAS joint declaration which saw his depart to Equatorial Guinea.

4.2 National Interest of Senegal and Nigeria as a motivation for the Intervention

Senegal has always been seen as the big brother in the subregion this is due to its economic might, larger population and military strength. In spite of its might, Senegal's economic success is partly dependent on the cooperation of its neighbors. The country's security also heavily reliant on cooperation from its neighbors especially the Gambia, this is due to the country's historic linkage to Gambia, Mali, Guinea, and Bissau. Its population is also culturally and socially connected with the people of the Gambian, separated by the British and the French for control and trade domination. Integration of the two territories has failed on several attempts however; Senegal the big brother has never stopped pursuing integration or a closer relation. Gambia on the other hand, cautions its sovereignty under threat for any closer relation with Senegal, and this has created a tense and sour relations between the two. From the first republic to the second, all administration in Gambia had a mix of promising good relation ending to a bitter one and mostly leading to border closure, trade restriction, deliberate increase of border crossing tariffs, leading to diplomatic and political disagreements among others.

4.3 Strategic Motivations Behind Nigeria and Senegal's Rejection of the UNSC Resolution

Nigeria and Senegal's rejection of the United Nations Security Council (UNSC) resolution on The Gambia's 2017 political crisis was driven by deeply entrenched national interests that extended beyond the immediate goal of restoring democracy. Their insistence on military intervention, despite the UNSC's preference for a diplomatic resolution, was shaped by both historical and strategic considerations. For Senegal, Yahya Jammeh's regime had long been a destabilizing factor, allegedly supporting the separatist Movement of Democratic Forces of Casamance (MFDC), which threatened Senegal's territorial integrity (Faye, 2017). The prolonged conflict in Casamance had created significant security challenges for Senegal, making Jammeh's removal a matter of national security rather than merely a democratic concern. On the other hand, Nigeria, as the dominant regional power, saw the intervention as an opportunity to assert its hegemonic influence in West Africa and reinforce ECOWAS as an autonomous regional security body, free from

external constraints (Adebajo & Mustapha, 2008). These interests held a conclusive decision in forming ECOWAS' controlling, leading to the refusal of the UNSC resolution advising political bargains rather than a military approach.

The well-planned consideration of both states was a real example of their diplomatic approaches alongside ECOWAS and their military plans ahead of the involvement. Senegal, leveraging its position as a non-permanent member of the UNSC, actively lobbied for a stronger stance against Jammeh, advocating for language in the draft resolution that would allow military intervention if he refused to step down (Michelle Nichols, 2017). However, when the final resolution was softened to emphasize political means, Senegal intensified its efforts within ECOWAS, convincing member states that swift military action was necessary to prevent a prolonged crisis. President Macky Sall's government played a leading role in coordinating the intervention, with Senegalese military forces taking the lead in planning and executing the deployment under ECOWAS' mandate (Omotosho, 2018). Additionally, diplomatic channels were used to rally support from other West African nations, emphasizing the need for a decisive response to ensure regional stability.

Nigeria's role in the rejection of the UNSC resolution was similarly driven by its broader foreign policy objectives. As a country that had historically taken the lead in West African interventions—including Liberia (1990), Sierra Leone (1997), and Côte d'Ivoire (2011)—Nigeria viewed the Gambian crisis as an opportunity to reinforce its leadership role within ECOWAS (Adebajo & Mustapha, 2008). Acting as the ECOWAS mediator, President Muhammadu Buhari, kept up a binary approach: openly assisting talks while assuring that military plans were going on should Jammeh refuse to turn over power. Meanwhile, Geoffrey Onyeama, the Nigerian Foreign Minister, resonated with this attitude, stressing that ECOWAS shall perform properly in the face of resistance from a member state (Lamin Jahateh, 2017). Behind the consultation, Nigerian representatives interrelated with Senegalese counterparts to ensure that the army forces were organized to deploy, guaranteeing military and financial assistance from other ECOWAS members. General Abayomi Olonisakin, Nigeria's Chief of Defence Staff, held a vital position in the design of the operation, coordinating with the Senegalese armed forces commanders to complete strategies for the involvement.

The non-acceptance of the UNSC resolution was seen as a remark on the power relations inside ECOWAS, where Nigeria and Senegal practised vital influence in forming the regional rejoinder to crises. Both countries made their decision as substantial to

stabilizing the regional environment, yet their fundamentals were further bound to national attentiveness. Senegal sought to eliminate a political adversary who had long threatened its internal security, while Nigeria aimed to reaffirm its dominance in West African affairs and preserve ECOWAS' autonomy from external interference. Through strategic diplomacy and military preparedness, both nations ensured that ECOWAS proceeded with intervention, overriding the UNSC's emphasis on political negotiations. This intervention not only reshaped the political landscape of The Gambia but also reinforced the precedent of regional powers prioritizing their interests over international directives in matters of West African security and governance.

4.4 Jammeh's Unilateral Approach Challenged Senegal's Economic Interest

The Gambia is of economic importance and a corridor of trade for Senegal if allowed to establish free movement and the needed infrastructure. Since Gambia is like a pointing finger into to Senegal, all economic activities occurring between Southern (resource rich region of Senegal) and Northern (Senegalese capital Dakar) is easier if allowed to travel through Gambia, a 420-kilometre travel by road. However, if not allowed to use Gambia as a crossing point from south to north, Senegalese trucks have to make a detour of ten hours travel and about 1000-kilometer making it almost impossible, expensive and time consuming (BBC, 2016a). In 2016 alone before the presidential election, dozens of border closures were reported and an increment of truck levy from 500 USD to 700 USD, this led to almost three months of border blockade, leading to disruption of supply on basic household needs in both Senegal and Gambia. The former president Yahya Jammeh's presidency restricts and, in many occasions, unilaterally increase tariffs that Senegalese trucks have to pay when passing through Gambia leading to frequent border closures. The lack of political will to build the needed infrastructures to connect the two countries as always pushed by Senegal makes relations unpredictable between the two countries. As Jammeh saw any infrastructural development with regards to border crossing in to Gambia, in Senegal's interest leading to an integration of some sort that undermines Gambia's sovereignty.

For Jammeh, Senegal will continue to pursue its integration agenda through connecting the two countries in terms of infrastructures, connecting business to business, and making the cross-border trade easier (Personal Interview, 2020). He sees this interborder trade benefiting Senegal more than it does for Gambia, thus Senegalese trucks need to be paying more levy especially those carrying, mostly carrying basic needs like rice, vegetables, fuel and so on. The CEO of The Gambia Chamber of Commerce Aliou

Secka, at the opening of the Senegambia Bridge which was constructed right after Jammeh was exiled, indicated that, over the past years, Gambia exported far less than what it imports from Senegal which is worth millions of dollars and hopefully with the opening of the Senegambia Bridge, Gambia now has a leverage to export and balance trade between the two countries (Abdoulie John, 2019). The Jammeh administration fear and even the population fears that one day with more and more operations in different sectors, it will be consumed by Senegal undermining its sovereignty. And all administrations from independence, were very cautious of Senegal in this regard and for Senegal, the lack of political will from Gambia to integrate gradually is important to its economic growth, and security.

According to Jeggan Senghor (2008) in his book *The Politics of Senegambian Integration 1958-1994*, integration in the Senegambia region is regarded as a threat to national interest, this is because the rewards of statehood and sovereignty are immediate compared to integration which is very distant, it is perceived as a threat (Senghor, 2008). For Senegal, the rewards of pursuing integration with Gambia are immediate i.e., its prioritization of economic interest and security, whereas for Gambia it terms any security and economic cooperation with Senegal benefiting Senegal more. These different priorities to the entire integration of the region creates tension (Zanker, 2024). All administrations in Gambia had their tactics how to navigate Senegal pursuance of its interest, Jammeh became the most uncompromised. He uses the geographic position of Gambia dividing Senegal in to North and South as a leverage, unilateral border closures, increase of border crossing tariffs for Senegalese truckers and a safe haven for ongoing separatist movement in the south of Senegal. And as a result, frequently disrupts Senegal's cross border trade in the entire region (Diallo et al., 2024), and its hampers its ability to find a solution to the southern separatist movement which they have been fighting for decades.

Furthermore, Jammeh as an advocate of Pan- Africanism, sees all former French colonies as still being control by France and therefore was reluctant to engage Senegal in to any meaningful cooperating to build the needed infrastructure to ease the difficulties for traders in the region.

Figure 1 The cross-border trade and economic interest of Senegal



Source: From “Senegal truckers tired of taking the long way around The Gambia”, by Dia, Sinarinzi., (2016,04,13).

The figure above shows a map of the cross-border routes between Gambia and Senegal. The black line indicating a 420km land and river crossing journey for Senegalese trucks carrying basic essential from north to south or south to north. The red line indicating a detour of about 1000km of land and unpaved roads that trucks have to use in instance of border closures, and no truck uses the detour when the border is closed due to the uncertainties. As long as the borders will not be close for ever, waiting sounds more promising for drivers.

After the exile of Jammeh, Senegal renewed talks with Gambia on implementing the construction of the Senegambia Bridge, which for the past twenty-two years under the leadership of Yahya Jammeh could not materialise. The coming to power of Adama Barrow in 2016, commenced construction to public within only two years despite strong criticism. The bridge connects Senegal’s marginalize and conflict turn South through Gambia making it the easiest and fastest for economic activities but most importantly, reduce time for truckers and facilitate trade and development in isolated southern areas of Senegal, who have longed protested the negligence of the central government on basic infrastructure

resulting to the continued rebellion in the area against the government, turning it ungovernable and a security concern for the central government (Elian Peltier, 2022), (more on this rebellion in subsequent sections). The bridge brings Senegalese military at the proximity of the separatist movement making it easy to launch attacks on their hideouts. Senegal's involvement in the project have raised criticism with its above interests which Gambia's revenue collected previously from trucks crossing its territory will drop significantly, and as per the contract agreement, Gambia cannot for the next twenty-five years, build any bridge along its rivers, railway, or any transport network that may compete with the Senegambia bridge on revenue collection, resulting to loss of revenue earned by the bridge (OP The Gambia, n.d.).

The lack of proper and strategic infrastructural development in Gambia would make it hard for Senegal to make any meaningful economic progress to sustain its rapid development. Its southern regions with rich natural resource and fertile soil, supply majority of food supplies and raw materials to the north where the capital city is located. Trying to detour Gambia will make it costly and time consuming. According to Khan, the Senegalese since after independence have been working relentlessly to stabilise Gambia's economy. Influence policies and coordinate economic activities_(Mariama Khan, 2019). And for Gambia, a closer relations might mean been swallowed by the bigger brother and its sovereignty undermined. A stable Gambia means a stable Senegal, and the reverse means, Senegal's south will push for independence from the north, and possibly making the country ungovernable.

4.5 Jammeh's Continued Stay a Security Concern for Senegal

Senegal's intervention in The Gambia isn't new in the region, though on a different level. In 1998, Senegal for the first time as a foreign country intervened in Guinea-Bissau to help the then government to stop an eminent coup. The then President Joao Bernardo Vieira sacked his General Ansumane Mane as the armed forces chief of staff accusing him of supplying arms and supporting the MFDC in Casamance a separatist group in southern Senegal who have been demanding independence from Senegal. Mane revolted against the government and this according to the then President of Senegal Abdou Diouf, the Guinea-Bissau President seek for a military help and they will respond by sending Senegalese forces to help the government (Ali B. Ali-Dinar, 1998). The Senegalese government did ask for the support of ECOWAS but was turn down, "you don't go in and call on ECOWAS to legitimize an intervention" (Personal Interview, 2019). This isn't much different from the intervention in The Gambia, although Senegal have learned its lesson and knows that

if they had to intervene without the support of ECOWAS and the endorsement of the international community, the situation might turn out to be like that of Guinea-Bissau where many Senegalese soldiers lost their lives in the hands of the coup plotters who knew the country better off than the Senegalese. In the case of Gambia, it is well known that the government of Jammeh was a headache of all the administration that had share the same period. Jammeh use to threaten them that he has missiles and at some point, they believe it and were afraid of Jammeh (Personal Interview, 2019), this is true because Gambia is known as a hub for arms trade in West Africa, therefore Senegal would be reluctant to launch any military intervention even if Adama Barrow requested for intervention by invitation, but with the involvement of ECOWAS Senegal was willing and quickly prepare its forces and entered the Gambia soil ignoring the UNSC resolution.

The separatist rebel group Movement of Casamance Democratic Forces (MFDC) has since in the 1980s been benefiting from illegal timber trade, and drug trafficking to fund their activities. The trading of these illegal goods passes through The Gambia and to other larger markets. For Senegal, improving stronger ties with The Gambia is the best possible solution to end this illegal trade as fighting them for such a long time has yield no result (Kamissa Camara, 2017). This indicates a clearly stated interest of Senegal when it comes to achieving its security interest in The Gambia. The former Gambian president Yahya Jammeh, has been accused on several occasions of giving help to the Casamance rebellion in the southern part of Senegal, and there were concerns the rebellion can use The Gambia as a launching ground, because of the easy access across the border to the north crossing the River Gambia, which will make launching an attack much easier. As Dakar can easily be accessible in the case of an attack through The Gambia River, therefore, Senegal has leverage by helping Adama Barrow to take power, and build a cordial relation with him of which they did not have with the former president as discussed earlier (Personal Interview, 2020).

One might argue that, stabilising Gambia is not a priority in Senegal because, Senegal could have helped stop the 1994 military coup led by Jammeh which could have destabilise Gambia and possibly Senegal. My observation is that, Senegal never enjoyed any lasted good relations with all administrations in Gambia and at the time of the 1994 military coup led by Jammeh, Senegal and Gambia were already at logger heads. Poor diplomatic relations between the two countries at the time of the coup discouraged Senegal from taking action, and also Jawara, the first president of the Gambia, was very cautious of Senegal, he sees Senegal as always wanting to integrate Gambia but never wanted Gambian

officials to lead any post integrated region (Saine, 1996a). Jawara became unreliable for the Senegalese integration agenda, and the 1994 coup was a promising event leading to a much reliable administration. However, only for Senegal to realise that, Jammeh was even more unreliable than his predecessor.

After the 1994 bloodless coup, Jammeh resign from the military and won presidential election in 1996, he quickly restored relations with Senegal. His Senegalese counterpart Abdou Diouf the then president of Senegal, gave his full support to the new government. This was due to Jammeh's promise that, he will restore the stained relation with Senegal, as a pan African sympathiser, he supports cordial relations with the Senegalese government, on grounds that, colonial powers separated a region that was once one people, culture and shared the same languages. Abdou Diouf in return assured Jammeh that Senegal "will not tolerate anybody attempting subversive or hostile action directed against the government of The Gambia". Even the biggest opposition political party in Senegal at the time *Partie Democratique Senegalais* led by Abdoulaye Wade who later succeeded Abdou Diouf, show his unwavering support to Jammeh (Saine, 1996b).

Senegal's support for Jammeh deteriorates when they realise his style of government contradicts the relatively stable democratic governance in Senegal. Jammeh went after former government's officials, imprison without trial, torture and disappearance of those who criticise his administration's conduct, and soon after, his policies often clashed with Senegal's interests, leading to diplomatic tensions. For instance, his support for separatist movements in Senegal's Southern Casamance region exacerbated hostilities (Awosusi & Lenn, 2019). Jammeh became more and more unpredictable. The hope that establishing relations between the two countries and strengthen ties to work on a reciprocal basis soon faded. The administrations of both Abdou Diouf and Abdoulaye Wade did not live long to mend ties with Jammeh. His term in office saw three administrations in Senegal. Macky Sall who was elected in 2012, fall in to the same rabbit hole as his predecessors. It became a policy priority to mend ties with Jammeh as this was the only way to find a solution to the Casamance rebellion in the South.

The rebellion brought external influences in to Senegal which undermine the government's ability to disarm them. Left with no option but to step up its military campaign in an effort to flush the rebellion or tire it down. Worsening economic conditions in the region led to the free flow of arms from other parts of the world in to the possession of the rebellion and this means arms acquisition of the rebellion became a means of income to dealers. An estimated eight million small arms and light weapons circulation in West

Africa making it easier for the rebellion better equipped in to lurching attacks on shops, villages, soldiers, and government loyalist as they call them. This arm dealing, Wade blamed on Libya, Ukraine, China and Russia passing through Gambia (Gehrold & Neu, 2010). This made the government to give priority to military means to end the conflict however, this only aggravated the situation and attacks mounted from both sides. The overall complexity and security threat lies in the rebellions reliance on the so called 3B Axis which consist of the a political, economic and infrastructural connection in the sub-region (Stefan Gehrold, 2010), an axis of cannabis, arms, illegal logging and many other illegal activities that are aimed at funding the rebellion.

When Macky Sall came to office in Senegal 2012, his top priority was to med the strained relation with Gambia. His first foreign visit was to Gambia and Jammeh assured him of his support to establish a cordial relation between the two countries and end the long sour relations that existed between them, and said that the conflict between them does not serve the interest of any. Jammeh explained that during the time of Abdoulaye Wade, Macky's predecessor, he wanted to put hands together to put an end to their differences but he put a condition that, "I made it very clear to him that he has to reciprocate by also expelling all Gambian dissidents including former Chief of Defence Staff, the alleged mastermind of a 2006 coup in The Gambia, but Wade told him that he is a democrat and human rights advocate and would not extradite any dissident to The Gambia,"(Lamin B. Darboe, 2012). Jammeh showed his willingness to work with Macky Sall but base on conditions as his predecessors as a starting point to transform the political relation between the two countries. Furthermore, he assured to fight against threats and security concerns that face them. Five to six months down the line, Jammeh executed two Senegalese nationals, a woman, Tabara Samba, and a man, Djibril Ba, (The Guardian, 2012), this sent a shock wave across Senegal and Macky Sall denounced and call on Jammeh to return to reason and stop all death row prisoners from execution. The Senegalese Government was dismayed for the reason that, they were not informed of the execution and summoned the Gambian ambassador that relations will turn to worst if Jammeh carried on with the execution (BBC, 2012).

Over the past, Jammeh have been a challenge to Senegal's interest, accusing Senegalese President Abdoulaye Wade and Macky Sall of harbouring dissidents who had intended to overthrow him, such like Solders, human right activist, and in turn the Senegalese also suspect Jammeh of supporting, arming, funding and sheltering the separatist movement in the Casamance region of Senegal (Kamissa Camara, 2017).

According to Professor Abdoulaye Sane, Jammeh at some point had helped the rebels, and some living in Gambia, became part of the security forces and even some guarding him. This the Senegalese leadership didn't take lightly and none of the Presidents took this lightly (Personal Interview, 2019). As trainings and skills acquired by these individuals pose a significant threat to Senegal and peace in the entire region. Therefore, Senegal as a big brother in the region, wouldn't tolerate any action that threatens the security and peace in the region. Some Iranian Weapons were seized in 2011 (David Lewis, 2012), which find their way to the region via Gambia was a huge concern and Senegal immediately cut ties with Iran.

Over the years Senegal had been able to maintain a relatively peaceful neighbourliness with Gambia under the Jawara government, the first President of The Gambia. Relations although at some point troubling. Senegal was able to secure some cooperation and closer relation, and their efforts to gradually integrate the two countries starting with Senegal responsible for security of a possible confederation with larger arm force, and also representing Gambian in its foreign services. This integration agenda led to a confederation in 1982 however, it was dissolved in 1989. The Gambian counterparts wanted the presidency of the confederation to be on a rotational basis, however, Senegal as having a bigger population, economy, wanted only the vice presidency given to Gambia and the presidency to Senegal. These agreements could have given Senegal the chance to control the entirety of the region and have easy access to the Casamance region. Which it finds difficult due to the geographic location of Gambia cutting them apart. This would also mean access to the natural rich Casamance, crush the rebellion and cut off external influences which compromise its security. The coming of Jammeh initially renewed hopes for a closer relation but he made it even more difficult for Senegal to achieve its interest and even became a new source of threat, instability in the region and a challenge to the Senegalese leadership and power (Gustav Skjold Bang Dahl, 2018).

Senegal Jammeh as a threat as he has contentiously threatened to close borders and cut off transport between the two countries, threaten to launch missiles to Senegal, threaten to execute more Senegalese citizens under death Sentence and castigate their leadership on several occasions (Wally, 2019). These threats really concern Senegal, especially when there had been reports of killings, disappearance, and execution of Senegalese nationals without informing Dakar, and his support to the MDFC (Personal Interview, 2019). Senegal sees his lost to election as a way to quickly get rid of him by seeking support of UNSC through the draft resolution to remove Jammeh, and this Senegal did not hesitate to lead

the military operation as Jammeh could have brought instability in the region. For Senegal, ECOWAS approval for intervention was just enough and the UNSC resolution was only secondary.

With the above heighten tension with Jammeh since coming in to office, Senegal saw the 2016 presidential election outcome as the last chance to get rid of Jammeh. He has been an unpredictable and unreliable neighbour for three administrations in Senegal. Jammeh's grip on power for 22 years has made relations with Senegal even worse compared to his predecessor, he gave support to the rebellion in Southern Senegal by training them, harbouring them at his palace and even serving as body guards for him. His support for the rebels is to distract Senegal pushing for greater integration which will bring Gambia and Senegal even closer economically, security, and thereby undermining Gambia sovereignty. His border closures over the years have brought economic setbacks and frustrations for cross border trade in the sub-region given that fact that, Gambia is a hub for both sea and land transport hub in the region. For Senegal, Jammeh or any administration in Gambia need to be cooperative and for security and economic progress base on mutual consensus. However, Yahya Jammeh has done the opposite and goes further making unilateral policies and decisions that affect economic and security in the neighbourhood. Senegal saw his lost as an opportunity to finally take him out, willingly or the use of force, even at the disapproval of UNSC as long as Nigeria give the necessary support under the ECOWAS banner.

4.6 Nigeria's Interests in Rejecting the UNSC Resolution on the Gambian crisis

The 2017 political instability in The Gambia prompted the United Nations Security Council (UNSC) proposed diplomatic engagement to restore order, envisioning a swift resolution to the unfolding conflict. However, Nigeria, as a dominant player within the Economic Community of West African States (ECOWAS), diverged from this approach, choosing to advocate for a military engagement instead. This rejection of UNSC diplomatic to military intervention stemmed from Nigeria's broader hegemonic interests to reinforce its leadership role in ECOWAS while ensuring that member states could resolve their disputes autonomously, preserving the legitimacy and efficacy of regional governance mechanisms. Nigeria's intervention was also driven by its strategic interests in maintaining influence over West African affairs. Historically, Nigeria has played a leading role in regional interventions, as seen in its past military engagements in Liberia (1990), Sierra Leone (1997), and Côte d'Ivoire (2011) (Adebajo & Mustapha, 2008). By grabbing a conclusive result in Gambia, Nigeria proposed to reiterate its position as de facto leader of

ECOWAS and to show its capability to take action separately from the external relations, such as the UNSC. The conducive situation in Gambia was vital for Nigeria's wider-ranging economic and political goals, specifically in assuring a peaceful situation for trade, investment, and diplomatic relations. Through military involvement rather than diplomatic approaches, Nigeria was considered to harden ECOWAS as a powerful regional entity, qualified to tackle crises without uncontrolled dependence on external players (Omotosho, 2018). Nigeria's assistance for ECOWAS' involvement, despite the non-acceptance of the UNSC, underlines its priorities in regional autonomy rather than international mandates. This aligns with Nigeria's vision of ECOWAS as an independent mechanism for addressing conflict.

Nigeria's advocacy for military intervention was evident in both diplomatic and strategic engagements led by key government officials. President Muhammadu Buhari, as the ECOWAS mediator for The Gambia, played a dual role; while publicly supporting diplomatic engagement, he privately backed military preparedness in case Jammeh refused to step down. Nigerian Foreign Minister Geoffrey Onyeama was also a vocal proponent of military action, emphasizing in regional discussions that force might be necessary if diplomatic efforts failed (Lamin Jahateh, 2017). At the ECOWAS Annual Summit held in Abuja, Nigeria lobbied for a military intervention strategy, with Vice President Yemi Osinbajo engaging with leaders from Ghana, Senegal, and Côte d'Ivoire to secure regional consensus (Adebajo & Mustapha, 2008). The Nigerian armed forces commander, General Abayomi Olonisakin, consolidated military plans with Senegalese counterparts, assuring that ECOWAS forces were designed to act rapidly. Nigeria's funding assistance to support the military involvement, particularly addressed on logistics and operational backup. Again, it was proved that Nigeria placed itself as a vital player in the military involvement, enhancing its regional domination while excluding the UNSC's proclivity for a proper diplomatic resolution.

The political turbulence in The Gambia presented a significant challenge not only for the nation but also for the broader West African region and international bodies like the United Nations Security Council. Amidst escalating tensions following the controversial presidential elections, ECOWAS swiftly intervened, underlining its commitment to regional stability. Meanwhile, the UNSC recognized the crisis, the driving role of ECOWAS reveals a bias in points of view on dispute resolution, advising for armed forces involvement. The intricacies of the Gambian circumstances, marked by years of dictatorship and leading to a controversial election, required a sophisticated response rather

than the conventional UNSC's approach frequently missed (Omotosho, 2018). This context put emphasis on Nigeria's stance in rejecting the UNSC resolution, emphasizing solutions tailored to the unique dynamics of West African conflicts, rather than relying on extra-regional military involvement (María Rodríguez Alcázar, 20198), (Serigne Cheikh Modou Kara Cisse, 2019).

4.7 Nigeria's Hegemonic Interest in The West African Region

Nigeria's interest in ECOWAS intervention in The Gambia is rooted in its historical role as a self-entitled regional security provider embedded in its foreign policy, advocacy for 'African solutions to African problems' (Omotuyi, 2021). As a regional hegemon, Nigeria has been advocating for stability in the region evident in its initiation of the first ECOWAS intervention in Liberia and Sierra Leone, Guinea, and Ivory Coast. Although these interventions were under the banner of ECOWAS, Nigeria initially contributed in both cases more than 90 percent of troops. This is due to lack of consensus to intervene in the internal affairs of member states and the absence of UNSC approval for such interventions. However, since its first intervention in Liberia, Nigeria has been able to cement and earn a name for its relentless contribution to regional stability. Its failure in trying to gather support to intervene in conflict torn countries led to the establishment of the Economic Community of West African States Monitoring Group (ECOMOG) in Banjul 1990 which up till date, facilitates all ECOWAS intervention including the Gambian case. Nigeria's hegemonic aspirations also played a central role in its rejection of the UNSC resolution favouring diplomatic means over military intervention. Given its historical precedent of leading regional interventions without direct UNSC authorization, Nigeria saw the Gambian crisis as another opportunity to reinforce its influence over ECOWAS decision-making. Accepting the UNSC's diplomatic approach would have constrained Nigeria's ability to act decisively and independently in West African affairs, potentially undermining its long-established leadership role. Moreover, by aligning with Senegal's push for intervention, Nigeria ensured that the ECOWAS response to the Gambian crisis reflected its strategic priorities rather than being dictated by external powers like the UNSC (Adebajo, 2008). Thus, Nigeria's rejection of the UNSC resolution was not merely about restoring democracy in The Gambia but about maintaining its authority as the dominant regional power with the capacity to shape ECOWAS interventions according to its interests. According to Adekeye Adebajo (2002), the establishment of ECOMOG as a regional multilateral force goes against ECOWAS' legal requirements propose by Nigeria on humanitarian grounds to validate its intervention motives in member states affairs (Adekeye Adebajo, 2002).

Nigeria's emphasis on "African solutions to African problems" serves a dual purpose. It reflects a genuine commitment to regional autonomy advancing its interests as a leader in a potentially autonomous African region. By taking a prominent role in interventions like the ECOWAS mission in The Gambia, Nigeria strengthens its position as the key driver of African unity and self-reliance, paving the way for its leadership in any future ECOWAS autonomous region. The push for "African solutions to African problems" also reflects a desire to reduce reliance on external powers like the UN or Western nations, reducing them to only financiers and showcasing ECOWAS as a viable, autonomous regional actor under its leadership. Having experienced and spearheaded the first and all ECOWAS military intervention, Nigeria learned that, in order for its continued leadership, it has to play a pivotal role in shaping the trajectory of ECOWAS, demonstrating its willingness to assert leadership in promoting peace and security in West Africa. Amid member states concerns on intervention in internal affairs of sovereign states, Nigeria has been able to use humanitarian reason to rally support from Anglophone countries to intervene (Olabisi D. Akinkugbe, 2020), (Rebecca Matey, 2019). This historical aspirations for regional leadership and hegemony, relying extensively on its economic resources and demographic weight in shaping regional policy (Oladimeji Talibu, 2016), underpinning its desire to exert influence and control political and economic policies within West Africa promoting trade relations and stability, aligning with its national interests (Merran Hulse, 2016).

Nigeria's military and diplomatic efforts were crucial in supporting ECOWAS's action in Gambia. Although Senegal leads the ground troops due to its proximity to the Gambia, Nigeria provided Naval and Military air support to the intervention, which included the threat of military intervention to ensure the peaceful transition of power from Yahya Jammeh to Adama Barrow. It provided significant military resources and personnel to ECOWAS, enhancing the organization's capacity to respond to the Gambian crisis effectively. The support given to ECOWAS militarily and resource mobilization capability show how committed Nigeria is in regional security rooted in its national interest and echoed through its foreign policy. In an interview following the intervention in Gambia, Nigeria's Information Minister Mohammed Idris said his country "remains committed to fostering regional stability and will continue to lead efforts to address insecurity and other transnational challenges" (Arab News, 2024). According to Eka Ikpe (2017) Nigeria's economic progress and leadership has face setbacks in the 1990s due to instability and protracted civil wars in the region, however repositioning itself as a committed regional security stabilizer, influencing policies in ECOWAS and keeping extra-regional

interventions at bay, it aims to ensure regional stability through its leadership in the region (Ikpe, 2017).

With the realization that instability is the root cause of economic setbacks in the region, it becomes a foreign policy objective. Nigeria's military interest in West Africa is deeply rooted in its foreign policy objectives, which emphasize regional security and stability. Since gaining independence in 1960, Nigeria has prioritized regional security as a fundamental foreign policy goal, actively engaging in conflict mediation and intervention through the Economic Community of West African States (ECOWAS), (Dr. Joseph C. Ebegbulem, 2020). Its role as a regional leader is further underscored by its involvement in various West African institutions, such as the Lake Chad Basin Commission and the Gulf of Guinea Commission, where it seeks to address issues like political instability (Nikez & Nwalie, 2023). The country's interventions, particularly through the ECOWAS Ceasefire Monitoring Group (ECOMOG), have been pivotal in managing crises in countries like Liberia and Sierra Leone and recently Gambia, highlighting Nigeria's interest and influence in the region (Elizabeth, 2013).

Additionally, Nigeria's foreign policy, which has historically focused on African integration and unity, has been instrumental in its regional diplomacy and as seen in its leadership against apartheid in South Africa and its commitment to peacekeeping in West Africa. According to Remmy (2018) in his book *The Role of Nigeria in Restoring Peace in West Africa*, notes that, after emerging from a civil war that lasted between four years, Nigeria emerged building the necessary capacity to be a major role player in the region and world at large. Foreign policy objectives to be a regional leader became addressing conflict (Remmy Chuks Nweke, 2010) Overall, Nigeria's military interest in West Africa is characterized by its leadership role within ECOWAS, its strategic interventions in regional conflicts, and its broader foreign policy objectives aimed at promoting stability and security across the continent (Sedzro, 2023).

4.8 Nigeria's historic leadership and hegemonic interest in ECOWAS

Historical background has placed Nigeria as the supremacy holder in West Africa, utilizing ECOWAS as an effective regional instrument to extend its influence. Its role in the last involvement, which occurred in Liberia and Sierra Leone, shows its attentiveness to defend the stability of this region to maintain its leadership role. ECOWAS serves as a pivotal platform through which Nigeria's historical leadership and hegemonic aspirations in the region materialize. Established in 1975, ECOWAS emerged not only as a mechanism for economic cooperation but also established legal frameworks for political stability and

security in member states. Nigeria, as the largest country in West Africa by both population and economy, has long assumed a preeminent role in the establishment of ECOWAS frameworks. This dominance and leadership characterized by its active involvement in peacekeeping missions, advocacy for regional integration, and the promotion of democratic governance as a pre-requisite for a stable region.

The establishment of the Economic Community of West African States Monitoring Group (ECOMOG) in 1990 at the capital city of Banjul Gambia, was initiated by Nigeria during the Liberian civil war. It came at a time when Francophone countries reject Nigeria's call for a military intervention in Liberia amid international community's reluctance. Francophone nations, often wary of Anglophone dominance headed by Nigeria, hesitant to endorse a military approach that deviated from traditional non-interference principles, a proxy for Nigeria and reflecting a broader scepticism towards regional military engagements (Mortimer, 1996). Nigeria convinced Anglophobe countries and ECOMOG was born. Its first intervention justified under the protection of human right violations in Liberia. Contrary to human right justifications, Olukayode (2019) argued that, Nigeria's military intervention in the Liberian civil war (1990-1997) and the restoration of democracy in Sierra Leone in 1998 lacked international legitimacy (Bakare, 2019), it was however, the nurturing and advancement of Nigeria's interests. According to the human right watch report (1993), all of the countries involved in the intervention were headed by military dictators. Nigeria led the intervention as an aspiration for a regional superpower, the conflict was no longer regarded as international conflict due to tens of thousands of refugee crisis, and the fear of overflow of the conflict prompted Nigeria to immediately call for ECOWAS intervention (hrw, 1993).

Moreover, Nigeria's hegemonic interest is intricately tied to its national security concerns and economic ambitions, with the realization that, its economic progress and diversification to meet its growth demand, is hugely reliant on a stable and peaceful region, thus driving it to foster a leadership style that positions it as the regional arbiter. Understanding this dynamic provides essential insights into its influence on the collective evolution of ECOWAS and the broader West African geopolitical landscape. Research done by Paul and Dennis (2017), using time series data from 1999 to 2016, their findings reveal a positive and significant relationship between political stability and economic growth. This indicates that as political stability increases in the region, economic growth in Nigeria also tends to improve and vice versa (Nomor & Lorembor, 2017). In times of instability for example in the Liberia, and Sierra Leone interventions, nations tend to allocate more resources to defence, diverting funds from essential sectors which can stifle economic

growth (Ades & Chua, 1997). And in order to attain regional stability, Nigeria has spearheaded all ECOWAS military interventions to prevent protracted civil war as in Liberia and beyond.

Nigeria perceives the Gambian crisis an opportunity to reinforce its authority in regional matters. Its initiatives aimed at conflict resolution and peacekeeping within member states, asserting its foreign policy on collective security. However, ECOWAS institutional weakness in the 1990s, including lack of consensus of member states on policy issues, and external influences, particularly from France, who has been backing Francophone countries to take caution of Nigeria's rise, hindered effective decision-making among ECOWAS members, challenging implementation of policies to address security issues as noted by (Vafolay Mbandoe Tulay, 2023). According to Amobire Akolga B.A., Nigeria however has leveraged its economic and military capabilities to influence ECOWAS policies significantly, and often acting as a stabilizing force in West Africa. In Liberia for example, Nigeria could not gain consensus to intervene amid atrocities committed by factions in the conflict (Amobire Akolga B.A., 2020). With its hegemonic ambitions and a clear foreign policy to address security issues in the region, it single handedly persuade Anglophone countries and led the Liberian intervention without UNSC approval for intervention (Kehinde Damilola Abolarin, 2024). Similarly in the Gambia case, Nigeria simply went along illustrating its leadership capability in the region to autonomously implement military intervention without international backing.

CHAPTER V

CONCLUSION

The ECOWAS involvement in The Gambia in 2016 epitomizes the complex nexus between regional cooperation, national interests, and the broader quest for stability in West Africa. While the involvement has been admired as a model of effective regional action to restore democracy, a related investigation proves that the interplay of member states' interests critically formed its implementation and results. This binary of determined and the obvious commitment to Western-style democracy and the pursuit of national strategic objectives underscores the nuanced dynamics of regional interventions in Africa.

The roles of Senegal and Nigeria, as the vital players in the ECOWAS mission, light up how national concerns can trigger regional involvement. For Senegal, the closeness to The Gambia made the crisis an immediate security concern. Yahya Jammeh's regime posed both economic and political summons, from obstructing vital trade routes to allegedly supporting the Casamance separatist rebellion. By winning the involvement, Senegal considered neutralizing these menaces, securing its borders, and enhancing regional stability that aligned with its economic and geopolitical goals. The following inauguration of the Senegambia Bridge after Jammeh's expulsion reflected the restart fundamental effort and underlined Senegal's prioritization of cross-border infrastructure to support trade and security.

On the other hand, Nigeria's intervention was upheld by its dominance of desires and devotion to maintaining leadership within ECOWAS. Having a hegemonic regional relation, Nigeria's advice for military involvement indicated its aspiration to strengthen the principle of "African ways out to African issues", while defending its impact rather than regional security and administrative structure. Through supplying remarkable military and logistics assistance to the duty, Nigeria presented its preparedness to reinforce ECOWAS's conformity as a regional player and reduce dependence on external powers like the United Nations Security Council (UNSC).

Whereas ECOWAS's involvement was formulated as a part of maintaining democratic authority, it also raised major questions relating to the pressure between peace and order in a particular area, as well as supremacy. The Gambian crisis did not fulfil conservative global law thresholds for armed forces involvement, such as a disturbance of global peace or a humanitarian crisis. Nevertheless, ECOWAS proceeded without explicit UNSC authorization, citing its Protocol on Democracy and Good Governance. This decision underscores the growing trend of regional bodies bypassing global frameworks to

address localized issues more effectively amid reluctance from international organization to address regional conflicts as was the case in Liberia and Sierra Leone. Unfortunately, regional involvement is not lacking in importance. Through mediation in Gambia, for instance, ECOWAS has arranged a model for emphasizing regional structures rather than globally accepted rules, limiting the authorization of the international system by denying the UNSC decision not to emphasize the military approach. While this approach allowed ECOWAS to act decisively, it also highlighted the organization's susceptibility to the interests of dominant member states. Involvement of Senegal and Nigeria's leaders, assumed as contributory in gaining their goals, enhances the potency for localized mechanisms to be capitalized as instruments of diplomacy, performing the core interests of influential players under fake collaboration and beneficent justification.

The success story gained from the Gambian involvement has driven the stabilization of the region, extending the future planning. First, it fortified ECOWAS's role as an active safeguard of democracy and effective management, strengthening its trustworthiness as a regional institution capable of achieving conclusive results. This enhanced legitimacy is likely to encourage member states to uphold democratic norms, knowing that breaches could invite regional intervention.

The involvement showed the necessity of regional cooperation in handling security menaces required to be prioritized. Through collecting resources and enhancing the integrated system, ECOWAS could address the weaknesses of international architectures and rapidly respond to a regional crisis. This system of self-support fits with the "African solutions to African Problems" spirit and promotes a blueprint for rising challenges in this region. Unfortunately, the involvement also expressed susceptibility in ECOWAS's procedure. The rank of national interests by states of pre-eminence, such as Senegal and Nigeria, could make another smaller member state to feel distant, which may distinguish the organization in a new campaign of the most dominant members. This perspective could erode credibility and unity within ECOWAS, limiting its capability to work jointly in the future. Furthermore, the involvement's concerns on reestablishing democracy, although admirable, obscure the gaping fundamental issues that contributed to the instability, that was occurred in Gambia, resulting some summons such as limited institutional capacity, economic imbalance, and dependence on unified and individually tailored format of administration remaining unevaluated, endangering stabilization. Without sustained efforts to tackle these root causes, the gains achieved through military intervention could prove short-lived.

Involvement of the ECOWAS in Gambia supplies meaningful lessons for anticipated regional actions. The importance of balance between recognizing state independence and keeping up regional stability is one of the vital points that should be considered. Meanwhile, the organizational motives to act resolutely were vital in preventing a potential crisis; it must also ensure that such actions are based on strong legal foundations and ethical perspectives to defend authenticity. Then, the involvement underlines the necessity of evaluating the root causes of conflict. Through a systematic program relating to building democratic administration, ECOWAS should promote professional development that enhances organizations, offers inclusive growth, and advances political reconciliation. This comprehensive approach is critical to guaranteeing that the outcome forms durable peace and stability. This involvement underlines the need for openness and diversity applied in the decision-making framework. In addition, advancing a sense of belonging among all member states should be consistently promoted. Therefore, ECOWAS can anticipate the negative perception of hegemony by strong players and strengthen its credibility as a regional association.

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