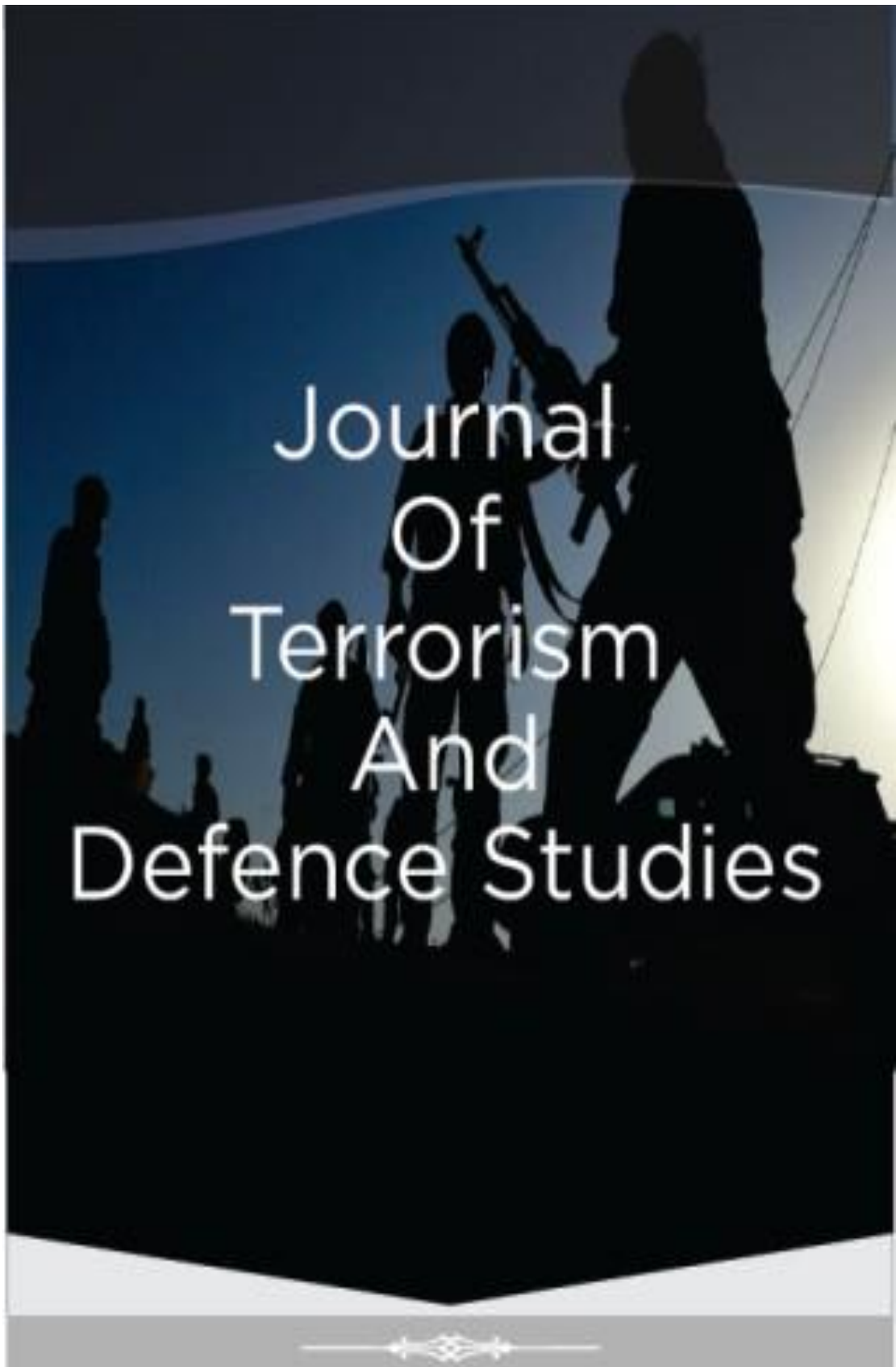




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Editorial Note

Rethinking Security Beyond the Bullet

The Journal of Terrorism and Defence Studies inaugurates this issue with a bracing premise: that security is not merely a tactical problem but a philosophical one. The five articles collected here, spanning Nigerian poverty dynamics, West African coups, and the axiology of peacebuilding, collectively argue that the defence community must move beyond kinetic metrics toward structural and ethical diagnostics.

Nwadike and **Ani's** lead article, *Insecurity and Poverty in Nigeria 1980–2024*, establishes the volume's empirical spine. Using simultaneous equation modelling, they demonstrate that terrorism activity indices directly affect both undernourishment and agricultural output. The policy implication is stark: security spending without poverty reduction is self-limiting. Their call for "security literacy" as a national strategy reframes defence as a civic, not merely coercive, enterprise.

Gontor's *Axiology of Peacebuilding* elevates the discourse into political philosophy. The critique of liberal peace orthodoxy that elections and markets do not automatically produce stability is timely given recent coups in Mali, Burkina Faso, Niger, and Guinea-Bissau (the seventh since 2020, which Njoku documents). Gontor's proposal to elevate National Peace Institutions to statutory "Policy Governors" with veto power over conflict-generating legislation is provocative and, in the post-kinetic era, necessary. Peacekeeping opens the gate; axiological governance inhabits the house.

The econometric rigour continues in Nwadike et al.'s VAR analysis of security shocks on Nigerian investment growth (1980–2024). Their finding of positive shock elasticity meaning security disruptions produce measurable, persistent negative responses in investment offers quantitative grounding for what field officers already know: insecurity is a tax on development. The recommendation that security literacy become a "fundamental national strategy" echoes the lead article, suggesting intra-volume consensus.

Njoku's *ECOWAS at 50* provides the geopolitical canvas. Seven coups since 2020, the exit of AES states, jihadist expansion, and renewed great-power resource competition threaten fifty years of regional integration. The Regional Security Complexes framework usefully centers Nigeria as a pivotal state. But the article quietly asks: if ECOMOG's peacekeeping legacy is to survive, what happens when the guarantor state faces its own profound internal crises? That question hangs over the entire issue.

Gontor's second contribution, *Prevention of Post-Election Conflict in Africa*, completes the architecture. Comparing ECOWAS, SADC, IGAD, ECCAS, and AMU, it argues that post-election violence stems not from flawed ballots but from structural injustices exclusion, patrimonialism, and weak accountability. RECs cannot prevent what they cannot diagnose. The insistence on "positive peace" (justice, inclusion, accountability) rather than mere ceasefire is the volume's unifying ethical thread.

Taken together, these five articles move terrorism and defence studies away from exclusive focus on insurgent tactics and toward the deeper question: what makes a political order worth defending? The answer emerging here; value-based governance, security literacy, empowered peace institutions, and regionally anchored conflict prevention is not soft. It is hard in a more demanding way.

Editor

Prof Kelechi Johnmary Ani

General Studies Unit,

Ebonyi State University of ICT Science and Technology,

Oferekpe, Nigeria

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ECOWAS AT 50: RESURGENCE OF COUPS & GEO-POLITICAL CHALLENGES OF THE EMERGING WORLD ORDER

Igwe Kelechi Njoku

Research Fellow, Nigerian Institute of International Affairs,
Lagos State, Nigeria
kessiigwe@gmail.com

Abstract

As the world navigates an era of increasing centres of power and growing tensions between major global powers, West Africa through its regional organization, ECOWAS stands at the threshold of defining the region's international relations agenda. This research examines the geo-political challenges constraining the bloc from achieving its multilateral aspirations for half a century since the 1975 treaty of Lagos and it revised in 1993 to deepen the regional integration process particularly in the areas peace and security. Since 2020, there have been seven (7) coups in the West Africa. Mali opened the floodgates in 2020 and 2021. Guinea witnessed coup in 2021. In 2022, Burkina Faso had two coups while Niger military toppled their government in 2023 and on 26 November 2025, military took total control removing president Umaro Sissoco Embaló of Guinea-Bissau at the eve of election result announcement respectively. Amongst the resurgence of coups and the exit of the AES states, security threats from jihadist movements, economic vulnerabilities and intensified scramble for resources by foreign powers threaten West Africa regional integration. This research adopts the theory of Regional Security Complexes (RSC) for conceptual framework in providing analyses on the mandate of ECOWAS to maintain peace and security for geo-political stability in the region through qualitative and interdisciplinary research methodology. This research recommends that the current leadership of ECOWAS glean from the legacies of the bloc from the path-setting regional peacekeeping operations of ECOMOG and continued military and security collaboration to guardrail protocols and conventions on democracy and good governance in cogitating the future trajectory amid the growing state fragilities in the region. For a progressive confederating union, this research also calls for an increased strategic leadership from Nigeria as a pivotal state in pursuing an ECOWAS of the people for peace and prosperity for all.

Keywords: ECOWAS, Resurgence of Coups, Geo-Politics, Emerging World Order, Regional Security Complexes (RSC)

Introduction

The Economic Community of West African States (ECOWAS) represents one of the most ambitious regional integration efforts on the African continent. Established on May 28, 1975, through the Treaty of Lagos, ECOWAS was born out of a collective vision to foster and encourage economic cooperation and integration among the diverse states of West Africa (ECOWAS,2022). The Treaty sought to promote economic integration through the establishment of a common market, the creation of a free trade area, and the coordination of economic policies and development strategies among member states. The founding members, comprising 15 states, which were Benin, Burkina Faso, Cape Verde, Ivory Coast, Ghana, Guinea, Guinea-Bissau, Liberia, Mali, Niger, Nigeria, Senegal, Sierra Leone, Togo, and Upper Volta (now Burkina Faso) (ECOWAS, 2022). They recognized that regional unity was essential to address the economic and developmental challenges that had plagued the region since the end of colonial rule by pooling resources, harmonizing policies, and promoting trade, ECOWAS aimed to create a prosperous, stable, and self-sustaining region capable of withstanding global economic pressures. A revised version of the treaty was agreed and signed on July 24, 1993 in Cotonou. While the 2001 Protocol on Democracy and Good Governance set frameworks to prevent unconstitutional power shifts (ECOWAS 2001).

Considered one of the pillar regional blocs, of the continent-wide African Economic Community (AEC), the

stated goal of ECOWAS is to achieve “collective self-sufficiency” for its member states by creating a single large trade bloc by building a full economic and trade union. With the reverse Treaty in 1993, ECOWAS has deepened the regional integration process expanding its mandate to encompass peacekeeping, security, and governance. Guided by principles such as solidarity, collective self-defence, democratic consolidation, and human rights promotion, the confederation has a robust legacy in conflict prevention, peace building, economic harmonization, and regional stability (Igwe, 2025). In addition, interventions in election disputes, military coups, and post-conflict reconstruction and efforts in counter terrorism, public health disaster reduction, and climate change mitigation.

Historically, centered on economic cooperation, ECOWAS has evolved significantly to address emerging political, security, and governance challenges. ECOWAS, today, functions through a complex institutional network, including the authority of heads of state, the Council of Ministers, the ECOWAS Commission, the Community Parliament, and specialised bodies such as the ECOWAS Court of Justice and the West African Health Organisation (WAHO). Based in Abuja, Nigeria, these institutions work collaboratively to advance integration, manage conflicts, and promote regional sustainability (ECOWAS, 2022).

The 50th anniversary commemoration underscored ECOWAS’s dual legacy of achievement and ongoing challenges. However, the journey towards

economic integration has been complex and marked by both achievements and obstacles. ECOWAS has made significant strides in encouraging trade liberalization, infrastructural development, and regional cooperation, but economic disparities, political instability, and global economic shifts have presented ongoing challenges (Ezirim, 2013). Despite notable gains achieved economically, political instability in region hampers further integration process and frameworks with recent tensions from the resurgence of coups which has resulted to military-led governments in West Africa.

Politically, the resurgence of military coups in West Africa also erodes trust in democratic institutions. In addition, the resurgence of military coups raises concerns about the effectiveness and sustainability of democratic institutions (Hoek & Bossuyt, 1993). The resurgence of military coups in West Africa has implications for regional and international relations. It threatens the stability and credibility of West African states, reducing their ability to engage in regional cooperation and international partnerships (Aboagye, 2025). Ultimately, the resurgence of military coups poses a significant challenge to democratic governance. It requires concerted efforts from ECOWAS to address the underlying causes and prevent future coups.

Literature on factors mitigating military intervention in the politics of West African states abounds. These range from corruption by the ruling elite, failure in political leadership, nepotism, growing insecurity and the inability of the ruling class to protect the lives and

property of the citizens, a downturn in the economy resulting in mass poverty and unemployment among the teeming youth, to the inordinate ambition of some military officers to stage coups so as to occupy authoritative positions at the top echelon of the state (Abdulyakeen, 2021). In summary they seized power following the continued deterioration of the security situation, poor economic and social governance in their respective state. These reasons were often in the past given in coup speeches to justify the change of government, whether to oust a democratically elected government or to upstage another military regime. In some African countries, such as the Guinea and Burkina Faso, the military staged coups because, apart from the afore-mentioned internal triggers, some leaders have over-stayed in power, refusing to relinquish power by manipulating their constitutions, to guarantee their stay in power, or outrightly rigging elections, when they stand as presidential candidates, to continue in office (Adelaja, 2023). According to Okwudili and Okeke (2023), disillusionment as a result of insecurity, poor governance, and misplaced priorities of government are at the forefront of the causative factors of the resurgence of military coups in Africa. Hence, the resurgence of military coups in Africa requires urgent steps to enthrone institutionalize good governance in African states. By implication, the inefficiencies of democratic leadership are precipitating factors for the resurgence of military coups in Africa. This research will submits that a successful military coup usually creates a fertile ground for the resurgence of similar coups as these

coups hardly solve the socio-economic or political issues on the ground.

The research demonstrates that ECOWAS has advanced both diplomatic and non-diplomatic measures to respond to the phenomenon. However, while the regional body has appeared proactive in responding to the coups, it has appeared to have little success thus far; a mix of domestic, regional and international geopolitical factors – which the regional body has failed to address – continues to undermine political stability in the region. For a progressive confederating union, this research recommends an increased strategic leadership from Nigeria as a pivotal state in pursuing an ECOWAS of the people for peace and prosperity for all.

Findings reveal that while ECOWAS has made significant strides in fostering economic growth and peacekeeping, its effectiveness has often been hampered by political instability, external dependency, and internal conflicts. For systematic and analytical purposes, this research would be divided into eight (8) parts: Introduction, methodology, conceptual framework: Regional Security Complexes (RSC) theory, Resurgence of Coups, Geo-political Challenges, ECOWAS in the Emerging World Order, Nigeria's Foresighted mission in ECOWAS, Conclusion and recommendation.

Methodology

This study is essentially qualitative in nature and relies mainly on secondary sources, which include books, journals, chapters, monographs, websites, and internet materials, among others. To have a comprehensive grasp of the

subject matter, literature on the formation of ECOWAS, histories of coups and geopolitical challenges in Africa and analysis on the evolving global order were all consulted. The relevance of these sources to the subject matter made them exclusive to be examine in this research. Content and discourse analysis were adopted in analyzing and making sense of the subject matter.

Conceptual Framework: Regional Security Complexes (RSC) theory

The research utilizes the Regional Security Complexes (RSC) theory, which is a dynamic conceptual framework that is highly applicable to the context of how ECOWAS, through its normative 2001 Supplementary Protocol on Democracy and Good Governance set frameworks to prevent unconstitutional power shifts to successfully coordinate peace, security, and geopolitical stability in West Africa. In the Supplementary Protocol Section I on Constitutional Convergence Principles in Article 1 outlined ECOWAS foresight position to deal with eventuality of coups in the region. They includes:

- (b) Every accession to power must be made through free, fair and transparent elections.
- (c) Zero tolerance for power obtained or maintained by unconstitutional means.
- (d) Popular participation in decision-making, strict adherence to democratic principles and decentralisation of power at all levels of governance.
- (e) The armed forces must be apolitical and must be under the command of a legally constituted political authority; no serving member of the armed forces may seek to run for elective political (ECOWAS 2001).

According to the RSC theory, which is explained by Buzan and Waeaver (2003), regional units, as subsystems of the international system, are the best level to analyze, explain, and predict security dynamics. It discards not only the overly narrow perspective of state-centric models but also the excessively broad perspective of global frameworks because threats to security, the nature of those threats, and responses to these threats all differ greatly among regions. Rather, RSC theory points out that states, in a proximity context and with interdependent security interests, enter complexes whereby their security policies and practices are mutually constitutive.

This trans-state view does not undermine the role or agency of individual states; instead, it highlights the fact that states remain the key players, and they are the ones who shape and react to the securitization processes in their regional setting (Buzan &Waeber, 2003). In this context, ECOWAS through the 2001 Supplementary Protocol on Democracy and Good Governance set frameworks to prevent unconstitutional power shifts —represents a regional solution to security that is no longer constrained by the limits of individual states but rather takes advantage of common standards, shared interests, and shared means. By grounding its mandate in normative ideals, ECOWAS uses RSC dynamics to promote peace and political accountability and develop trans-border security approaches that suit the West African context of interactions and insecurity patterns.

The ECOWAS 2001 Supplementary Protocol on Democracy and Good

Governance is concerned with peace, security, and geopolitical stability that embodies the practicality of the RSC theory in the West African multilateral system. ECOWAS aims at enhancing governance, accountability, and transparency, as well as the regional peacebuilding, conflict resolution, and reconciliation mechanisms under the 2001 Protocol on Democracy and Good Governance. This is in line with RSC's theoretic focus on regional institutions that help mediate cross-border security threats, including terrorism, violent extremism, and organized crime, which cannot be effectively addressed by the individual African states (Adeleke, 2023; Murithi, 2020; Okeke, 2023). The fact that the threat of transboundary terrorist networks remains a constant challenge necessitates the adoption of a multilateral, cooperative approach at the REC level as well as the ECOWAS.

In addition, RSC theory can be used to describe how normative and institutional practices of ECOWAS contribute to the construction of a common security space whereby the security logic of states merges, collective agency forms, and regional strategic coherence is viable. By placing the 2001 Supplementary Protocol on Democracy and Good Governance in this theoretical framework, the position of ECOWAS is reconceptualized: no longer a convening body, but the hub of the West African security regime. In this regard, RSC theory brings into view the changing boundaries of regional agency in contemporary international relations and explains how ECOWAS pursues regional peace, stability, and geopolitical integrity within the emerging order.

Resurgence of Coups in West Africa

A coup is an abrupt and unlawful seizure of power from a constituted government often by a small group of aggrieved military personnel. According to Powell and Thyne (2011), it is an *“illegal and overt attempt by the military or other elites within the state apparatus to unseat the sitting executive.”* Singh (2022) defines, a coup *“as an unexpected, savage and unlawful capture of force from an administration by a little gathering of backstabbers, generally from the military or security powers”*. Africa witnessed her first military coup in 1952 in Egypt following the revolution that toppled King Farouk I by the Free Officers Movement (Poljarevic, 2009). Historically, of 55 states in Africa, 45 have had at least one coup attempt and out of 492 attempted or successful coups carried out around the world since 1950, Africa has seen over 200, the most of any region, with 109 of them successful (Duzor& Williamson, 2023). The highest number of successful coups in Africa occurred at the peak of the U.S. - Soviet Cold War rivalry with a record of over sixty coups stretching from 1946 to 1991 (Duzor& Williamson, 2023).

One significant aspect of military coup emergence and resurgence in Africa over the years has been the question of causal factors and the rationale for military coups by coup plotters. The answer to this question is rooted in African leadership, politics, retrogressive economies and the perpetual underdevelopment of African countries caused by widespread corruption, ethnic and religious politics and resource conflict. However, the fourth wave of democratic revolutions

across Africa which started from 1990s witnessed the replacement of military juntas with freely elected governments, was considered a pragmatic shift in the African governance project. ‘The door of military coup is closed’ was the maxim that followed the wave of democratic dispensation that swept through Africa (Chilaka, 2022).

Comparatively, Africa witnessed greater milestone of democratic consolidation after the end of the cold war to the dawn of the 21st century. Meanwhile before the recent resurgence of coups, coups in the continent had been declining in term of quality democratic governance for much of the past two decades. From 1991 to 2000, Africa witnessed sixteen (16) successful coups out of forty-three (43) coup attempts. Sixteen (16) successful coups from twenty one (21) attempts between 2001 and 2019 (Ogbonna, 2024).

The resurgence of coups in West Africa posts a serious challenge to the leadership of ECOWAS. Since 2020, there have been seven (7) coups in the West Africa. Mali opened the floodgates in August 2020 with a coup by a group of Malian colonels led by Assimi Goita and followed up with another coup against an interim administration in May 2021 (Igwe, 2025). Guinea followed with a military coup against President Alpha Conde in September 2021. Burkina Faso joined this pattern of collapsing governments, with two military coups in 2022. While on July 26, 2023, Niger’s presidential guard toppled Mohamed Bazoum on August 30, 2023 and on 26 November 2025, Guinea Bissau’s military took total control removing President Umaro

Sissoco Embaló at the eve of election result announcement after a closely contested presidential race respectively (Igwe, 2025). However, the stage coup in Guinea Bissau is claim to be from military officers loyal to President Umaro Sissoco Embaló and Nigeria on behalf of the ECOWAS responded swiftly with the protecting the opposition leader at the Nigerian embassy and requested an ECOWAS troop deployment to provide security for opposition candidate. ECOWAS also suspending Guinea Bissau from all its decision making bodies until the restoration of full and effective constitutional order in the country. Nigeria's swift intervention and ECOWAS response further strengthens

the concept and principle of Regional Security Complexes in West African security affairs. The intervention greatly limited the excess of the shambolic coup from further regional security and geopolitical implications. Since the beginning of 2022, The Gambia, Guinea-Bissau, and Sierra Leone have all witnessed failed coup attempts. Amongst the resurgence of coups and the exit of the Alliance of Sahel States (*Alliance des États du Sahe*) (AES) which comprises of Burkina Faso, Mali and Niger, security threats from jihadist movements, economic vulnerabilities and intensified scramble for resources by foreign powers threaten West Africa regional integration (Igwe, 2025).

Successful coup d'état in West Africa since 2020

S/NO	Date of Coup	State	President ousted	Coup Leader
1	November 26, 2025	Guinea-Bissau	Umaro Sissoco Embaló	General Dinis Incanha
2	July 26, 2023	Niger Republic	Mohamed Bazoum	Gen Abdourahamane Tchiani
3	January 2022 September 30, 2022	Burkina Faso	Roch Marc Kabore Lt. Colonel Paul Henri Damiba	Lt. Colonel Paul Henri Damiba Captain Ibrahim Traore
4	September 2021	Guinea	Alpha Conde	Lt. Colonel Mamady Doumbouya
5	August, 2020 – May, 2021	Mali	Ibrahim Boubacar Keita	Colonel Assimi Goita

As debates intensify over the need for a military junta to return power to a constitutionally elected government or organise democratic transition program, ECOWAS leadership at the 50th commemoration anniversary expressed strong optimism that the junta states will return to the bloc. The only surviving founding father and former Nigerian Head of State, 1966-1967, Gen Yakubu Gowon, GCFR stressed that “we hope one day, yes, something will happen and they will join us, even if we can add the name, another S, to mean Sahel, to ECOWAS” (Gowon, 2025).

However, the immediate factor that led to the resurgence of coups in West Africa are majorly categorized into two distinction factors, firsts, domestic factors claims of deterioration of the security situation, poor economic and social governance within the region. Secondly, neo-colonial factor involving the French government who leverages on colonial ties to pursue her imperial interests often with the civilian government. It is noteworthy to mention that six (6) coups excluding Guinea Bissau from seven (7) coups since 2020 are all Francophone West African state which are now severing tie with the former colonial overlords (Igwe, 2025).

The French Factor

France is believed to have a vile grip on the economies of her former colonies through some post independence treaties that serve her cynical advantage, and which are meant to keep these countries perpetually under her control. The military juntas in countries like Guinea, Burkina Faso, Mali and Niger have delinked from France by

repudiating some of these obnoxious post independence treaties. It is believed that the development drives of these Francophone West African state have been hampered by this malevolent grip that France has had on them (Lawal, 2024). Thus, the revolutionary fervor shown by the military rulers in these countries, if sustained and accompanied by dramatic changes in the governance of these West African states, will be a serious challenge to the whole idea of democracy being the best form of government for West African states.

Geo-political Challenges

In recent years, West Africa has been confronted with new security challenges, including the rise of terrorism and organized crime, particularly in the Sahel region. Groups such as Boko Haram, Al-Qaeda in the Islamic Maghreb (AQIM), and the Islamic State in the Greater Sahara (ISGS) have increasingly targeted countries such as Nigeria, Mali, and Burkina Faso, destabilizing the region and exacerbating existing political and economic vulnerabilities. In response to these emerging threats, ECOWAS has shown resilience by adapting its security strategies to address the changing nature of conflict (Ibrahim & Ahmad, 2020; De Souza, 2015). ECOWAS has strengthened its collaboration with regional and international partners, including the African Union (AU), the United Nations (UN), and the European Union (EU), to coordinate efforts against terrorism and organized crime. The creation of the ECOWAS Counter-Terrorism Strategy and the establishment of the Regional Centre for Small Arms (RECSA) are examples

of ECOWAS's efforts to combat the proliferation of weapons and address the root causes of extremism and instability in the region. Furthermore, ECOWAS has worked to build the capacity of national security forces through training and support programs, ensuring that member states are better equipped to handle the increasing security threats. The organization has also sought to address the socio-economic factors that fuel extremism, such as poverty and lack of education, through its development initiatives (Akinyemi, 2023).

Geo-politically, France has historically held significant economic interests in West Africa, often leading to tensions with the realization of ECOWAS's goals. France's influence over former colonies through trade, currency control, and resource extraction has allowed it to maintain economic dominance in the region (Onyia, 1993). By promoting its own economic and geopolitical interests, France has sometimes undermined ECOWAS's efforts toward regional integration and autonomy. The use of the CFA franc, for example, ties many West African economies to France, limiting their financial sovereignty. France's support for bilateral agreements and trade deals also often bypasses ECOWAS frameworks. Additionally, French military and political involvement in West African conflicts has helped maintain its influence, hindering the full integration of ECOWAS's security and political goals. France's actions can be seen as limiting the independence of ECOWAS member states (Igwe, 2025), preventing them from achieving unified economic and political autonomy (Lawal, 2024). These factors illustrate

France's role in complicating ECOWAS's realization as a fully integrated regional body. Differences in economic policy, fiscal discipline, and political will among member states have slowed progress. For example, countries like Nigeria, which has the largest economy in the region, have been reluctant to commit to a single currency until they are assured that other countries are ready to meet the necessary economic and fiscal criteria (Akinyemi, 2023). Additionally, there have been concerns over the ability of some member states to meet the macroeconomic convergence criteria required for the introduction of the Eco. Despite these challenges, ECOWAS has continued to push for the introduction of the Eco, viewing it as a vital step toward achieving deeper economic integration and strengthening the region's global competitiveness. The proposed Eco currency could be a game-changer for West Africa's economic future, facilitating cross-border trade, reducing transaction costs, and enhancing the region's economic resilience (Ikeonu, 2018; Ibeanu, 2022; Akinyemi, 2023).

Trajectory

Since the dawn of the 21st century, ECOWAS has demonstrated its relevance through initiatives such as: the ECOWAS Standby Force for peacekeeping; Protocols on democracy, free movement of goods and persons, and humanitarian assistance; the establishment of a single market, customs union, and the ECOWAS Bank for Investment and Development; issues on ECOWAS Single Currency, ECO in collaboration with the West African Monetary Agency (WAMA) (ECOWAS, 2024). The single West

African Gas Pipeline Project (Nigeria-Morocco Gas Pipeline Project) as African Atlantic Gas Pipeline Project (AAGP); Interventions in election disputes, military coups, and post-conflict reconstruction; Efforts to counter the activities of Terrorist Armed Groups (TAGs) and Violent Extremists, against transnational organised crime and criminality, disaster reduction, and climate change mitigation amongst many others (ECOWAS, 2024).

Despite these achievements, ECOWAS faces mounting challenges that threaten its effectiveness, including: Security crises (terrorism, insurgency, piracy, and border insecurity); Political instability (military coups, democratic backsliding, sit-tight leadership); Economic and integration setbacks (lagging trade harmonisation, resource induced conflicts); Geopolitical tensions (the withdrawal of Mali, Burkina Faso, and Niger to form the Alliance of the Sahel States). Amid overwhelming geo-political challenges, the bloc still boasts a stellar track-record of peace missions through the establishment of ECOMOG in 1990, majorly to intervene in the civil war in Liberia (1989–97) and the Sierra Leonean Civil War (1991–2002) and resolving the Mano rivers crisis.

The most pressing issue for ECOWAS geo-politically at the dawn of it half of a century of its formation is to decisively mitigate the surge of coup in the region and formulate a sustainable diplomatic framework of engagement with Alliance of Sahel States (Aboagye, 2025). The AES comprising of Burkina Faso, Mali and Niger which on September 16, 2023, exited from

ECOWAS with ECOWAS owing to the deep rooted regional security and economic ties between the blocs with ECOWAS acknowledging the notification of their withdrawal in accordance with the provision of Article 91 of ECOWAS Revised Treaty of 1993. The three states officially ceased to be members of ECOWAS from 29th January 2025. However, the ECOWAS authority decided to set the period from 29th January 2025 to 29th July 2025 as a transitional period to keep doors open for their reconsideration (Aboagye, 2025). These withdrawals are believed to forestall the ongoing progress consolidated collectively on regional security in fighting Islamic jihadist, terror and insurgent groups. Their withdrawal is a major strategic shift in dictating the emerging order in West Africa as their departure reflects a complex web of security concerns, geopolitical realignments and institutional failures, and it brought with it a new configuration in the region following the decline of the G5 Sahel.

This geo-political challenge exposes the need for the bloc to re-examine existing mechanisms for regional integration and its cooperation architecture. While the consequences of this strategic exit are still difficult to measure, their withdrawal definitely has disrupted the collaborative partnership in joint security operations, free trade and movement of goods and services that has made ECOWAS Africa's most advanced regional bloc, founded on principles of political cooperation, economic integration, and collective security (Igwe, 2025).

The withdrawal of the AES from ECOWAS is a result of a multifaceted set of circumstances, primarily instigated by ECOWAS's inadequate response to the Niger coup in July 2023. This response included hasty and indiscriminate sanctions, as well as threats of military intervention, which highlighted a significant disconnect between institutional actions and the actual regional context, particularly in light of the stalled governance reforms since 2015 (Igwe, 2025). The crisis has unveiled more profound challenges: ECOWAS's inability to effectively combat terrorism and insurgency in the Sahel, issues of economic marginalisation linked to the CFA franc, and concerns regarding sovereignty in relation to perceived French and Western dominance in ECOWAS's decision-making processes. Furthermore, the increasing influence of Russia in the region has offered these western African states alternative partnerships, thereby diminishing their reliance on traditional Western alliances and potentially expediting their plans for withdrawal. Similarly, several African policymakers have feared Russia's presence and the volumes of arms supplied to African countries. The Stockholm International Peace Research Institute (SIPRI) report between 2018 and 2022 affirms that 40% of Africa's weapons imports were from Russia, 16% from the US, 9.8% from China and 7.6% from France (Yemisi, 2024). Although the continent is blighted by wars and insurgencies, the fear of whether these arms will translate into security or contribute to its fragility remains a concern.

The resurgence of coups in West Africa has revealed the inherent weaknesses of ECOWAS: a dependence on sanctions without sufficient diplomatic efforts, inadequate management of political transitions and security issues, and ineffective communication with the populations impacted. These errors highlight a disconcerting reality: the organisation's conventional methods of influence—namely sanctions, isolation, and military threats—have become counterproductive in a situation that necessitates the resolution of legitimate concerns, especially as member states possess alternative diplomatic and security avenues. Additionally, ECOWAS's failure to adequately acknowledge the evolving geopolitical landscape in the Sahel and its lack of engagement with civic actors have compromised its credibility and legitimacy.

ECOWAS in the Emerging Global Order

The trajectory of the geo-political reality in West Africa contributes to the signal trends of the emerging world order as the globe transits from a unipolar order to a multipolar order characterised by the rise of plural hegemonies and the consequence of renewed geopolitical and geostrategic competition unfolding in the world and mirrored in the region (Bolaji, 2022). We see this fracturing affecting institutions from the European Union (beginning with Brexit and the growing strength of rightwing political parties) to ECOWAS (with the exit of AES). These profound shifts in the geostrategic context are still unfolding, and the full structure of the world order to come is still taking shape, with

significant implications for the Global South and beyond (Bolaji, 2022).

The emerging new global Order offers West Africa and Africa huge opportunity to dictating the direction of the global international system as the complexities of global resource governance is transforming leading to an accelerated demand on Africa's natural resources. Conflicts in other parts of the world have also widened the prospect for Africa as a viable alternative for global resources especially for energy solutions. In the contestation of an increasing multipolarity in the international system Africa once again like in the Cold War era has become a prioritised region for scramble for power and resources by the major powers. The world is highly interested in Africa for its endowed extractive natural resources (Igwe, 2025). The 65% of uncultivated arable land for agriculture will determine the future of food security for the world population of 9.7 billion by 2050. The future of energy transition, for a world powered largely by renewable energy will depend on Africa. Africa has the largest deposits of green minerals for renewable energies and metals for the manufacturing of solar panels, battery energy storage systems and electric vehicles which will empower green economies of the world towards net zero emissions (Igwe, 2025).

West African state possesses large amount of Uranium needed for renewable energies enhance the fierce scramble by the major powers for geo-political influence and leverage over these resources coupled with the

abundance of gas and other valuable extractive resources in the region.

Nigeria's Foresighted Mission in ECOWAS

For West Africa, ECOWAS must rise to the occasion in pursuing regional interests against the odds. The unraveling tensions between ECOWAS and the breakaway AES offers Nigeria, a pivotal power in the region, an excellent opportunity to reassert its strategic leadership coupled with the growing anti-French sentiment in West Africa. Nigeria's strategic leadership in ECOWAS is greatly needed now amid pressure, despite its legacy from internal security weaknesses and external shifts in African dynamics. Nigeria as a pivotal power in the region should consolidate on its 4D foreign policy strategy of democracy to navigate these dynamics in maintaining stability, and continue championing multilateral joint task force operations as a frontline state for regional security.

With the void created by France's waning neo-colonial influence, Nigeria should displace France and step up its strategic leadership mandate to defend ECOWAS regional interest against neo-colonial and imperial foreign powers as the Francophone West African states are strengthening relations with alternative partners like Russia and Turkey to tackle their economic and security challenges. Nigeria, because of its foreign policy heritage in Africa, and in West Africa, in particular, has remained a huge stumbling block for the French complete domination of West African politics amid Nigeria's bid for greater regional integration (Igwe, 2025). Leveraging the severing of military ties

and diplomatic rows between France and some of its former colonies, Nigeria should pursue a visionary blueprint for a sustainable regional integration as ECOWAS embarks on towards its centenary to ignite hope for posterity in West Africa amid its current geo-political challenges. Nigeria remains a pivotal power in the region and retains the strategic potential to champion an ECOWAS of the people for peace and prosperity for all towards the bloc's centenary.

Conclusion

The foresights and resilience of the founding fathers at ECOWAS formation still reign supreme beyond the waves of the geo-political challenges of the emerging global order. ECOWAS has strived and survived different global orders from its formation in 1975 at the peak of the cold war to its end in the beginning of the 1990s, member state did not disrupt regional peace and security but rather it was maintain with Nigerian leadership with ECOMOG intervening in Liberia, Sierra Leone and Mano River Crisis. The menace of the resurgence of coups in West Africa is a challenge that requires strategic and collective leadership for the short and long term for the sustainability of democracy in West Africa. ECOWAS has not failed; but like other multilateral organisations, such as the United Nations (UN), faces challenges that are huge but surmountable. For the bloc to adjust to the unfolding geo-political challenges, ECOWAS should mark the difference between regional lofty ideals and the reality on the ground, a reality that demands decisive multilateral policies to achieve greater posterity heading into the next 50 years. That

ECOWAS and its greater parts in the Sahel are confronted with serious challenges, including circumvention of constituted term limit, democratic reversal, physical disintegration, bad leadership, economic crisis, climate change, youth unemployment, poverty, terrorism, and insecurity suggests that the leadership must be frank in demanding good and responsible governance from member states. Finally, ECOWAS should deepen its multilateral policies to the grassroots level to be more appealing to the citizens of member states and strategically position itself to pursue a citizen-centred ECOWAS of the people.

Recommendation

(I) To Promote Good Governance, Democracy, and Political Stability, ECOWAS must continue to be a staunch advocate for democratic governance, rule of law, and human rights across the region. Strengthening electoral processes, supporting political reforms, and holding governments accountable for democratic backsliding will ensure political stability in the region. Holding member state governments accountable also means intervening to halt the trend of circumvention of constituted term limit in the constitutions of member states.

(II) ECOWAS should enhance its diplomatic efforts in engaging robustly with junta states and the AES in West Africa. Comparatively the sanctions mechanisms to deter military coups and unconstitutional changes of government, as seen in recent years have not yielded much result as deterrence. ECOWAS needs to be more

connected to the peoples of West Africa beyond it confederal framework.

(III) ECOWAS has been instrumental in conflict resolution and peacekeeping efforts in the past. It should continue to strengthen its ECOWAS Standby Force (ESF), ensuring that it is adequately funded, well-equipped, and capable of responding rapidly to crises. Going forward the region must create a specialized regional funds for peace support operations to handle asymmetric threats like terrorism and organized crime in the Sahel, moving beyond traditional peacekeeping to counter-insurgency.

(IV) Additionally, ECOWAS must invest in early warning systems to prevent conflicts before they escalate, while promoting regional dialogue and

mediation. Strengthening institutions that uphold transparency, fight corruption, and ensure the efficient use of public resources is crucial. ECOWAS should invest in fostering governance best practices among its member states, ensuring effective management of public services, and reducing inequalities.

(V). As the biggest power and Africa largest democracy, Nigeria remains the bastion of democracy in West Africa and should leverage on the legacies and heritage of it foreign policy in Africa to play a more leading role in championing and pursuing a visionary blueprint for a sustainable regional integration as ECOWAS embarks on its centenary journey to ignite hope for posterity in West Africa amid its current geo-political challenges.

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