

The Ecowas Protocol, Emerging Military Threats and the Relapse of Democracy in West Africa: Lessons from Cote D’Ivoire and Niger Republic.

SALAU, A. MODIBBO (Phd)

Head, Department of Political Science, Nnasarawa State University, Keffi.,Nigeria-West Africa
ERUNKE CANICE ESIDENE

(RESEARCH ASSISTANT AND DOCTORAL RESEARCHER)

Department of Political Science, Nasarawa State University, Keffi.,Nigeria- West African

E-MAIL: Erunke@Yahoo.Com

RUTH, CALEB LUKA

Department of Political Sciencem , Nasarawa State University, Keffi.,Nigeria-West Africa

INTRODUCTION

Several scholars of International diplomacy and policy analysis (Zounmenou and Loua, 2011 Gbeho, 2011, Erunke 2012; Bah and Kwesi, 2012) have attempted to redefine the increasing roles of the Economic Community of West Africa (ECOWAS), which has of late, traversed the confines of regional economic growth and stability, regional cooperation and trade linkage between and amongst member states within the west Africa sub-region to a more or less political and security concerns. This is ideological persuasion by intelligentsia is informed by the need to expand the socio- economic horizon of the sub-regional group to encompass diverse interests, engender and deepen democratic space, instil good corporate governance and ultimately guarantee continuity in constitutionally sanctioned governance pattern in Africa in line with international best standards and practices. Consequently, the emerging trends of military interregnum and mindless intervention through the barrel of the gun (which of course, is considered to be a culpable aberration) no longer finds a pride of place in the minds and hearts of all well meaning democracy and patriots alike. Hence the dire need and unequivocal quest for a constitutionally validated system of governmental operations in all its contents and character. This tendency informs the distaste for military autocracy, dictatorship and other Unitarianism and the entire philosophies it proclaims, and any attempt to plunge the West African enclave to this ugly monumental soldiering stands to be vigorously resisted with every sense of concern and vindictiveness. However, of recent past the entire Africa state system appears to have relapsed and wondered backward towards the path of the old order of coup d’etat, which is a characteristic of the continental albatross dating back to the early days and years of the emergence of colonialism in the 1960s (Erunke and Lemun,2012). Thus, the defining ideologies of this political era, which was literally domineering, exploitative and repugnant to fundamental social change raised a lot of critical questions in the sub-consciousness of pan - Africanists - the likes of Kwame Nkrumah of Ghana, Nnamdi Azikiwe of Nigeria, Julius Nyerere of Tanzania, W.E.B Du Bois of the black American Negro world, to mention but a few. These radical scholars therefore constituted arrow heads who fought gallantly for the freedom and emancipation of Africa and African Diaspora from the tutelage of slavery (Erunke and Lemun, 2012), therefore fostering the quest for self-determination of the entire black race. Nonetheless the freedom sought for was to help locate and redefine African path to greatness through group consciousness, regional integration and cooperation geared towards setting up widely acceptable group values in the interest of the entire region, nay, continent (Bah and Kwesi, 2012). Aside form the socio-economic dynamics of ECOWAS as an institution, there has been an increasing push to diversify these roles beyond economic integration to matters of politics which has constituted the determining force in the sub-region. Politics in the wider usage here incorporates issues of war, peace, conflict resolution, dialogue and the entire gamut revolving around the preservation of the dictates of the constitution of the land to avoid undue pressures from social forces within the system. Significantly, Loua and Zoumenou (2011) then argued further that first, in 1991, ECOWAS adopted a declaration on political principles that took into consideration governance issues as a way of intensifying peace, guide the constitution of member states as well as enhance security efforts. However, the declaration was never, fully implemented as its scope was limited and hence, lacked critical political support. Moreover, on 24th July, 1993, ECOWAS reviewed its founding Treaty in Cotonou and in 1999, it adopted a protocol relating to the mechanisms for Conflict Prevention, Management, Resolution, Peace-keeping, Security and democratic stability, respectively. It can be argued here by way of observation that all of these developments constituted the institutional and normative transformation process of the organization as far as peace, security and democratic stability is concerned. By extension, however, it can be said that there are a number of innovations in the revised treaty.

Nevertheless, the principle of gradually introducing super nationality to the implementation of community decisions was one of the major changes introduced. For example, in the preamble of the treaty, ECOWAS

leaders stated that the integration of member states into a viable regional community may demand the partial and gradual pooling of national sovereignties to the community within the context of the collective political will (Loua et al, 2011). It follows logically that the incorporation of a security dimension in the integration project and the bold stance taken so far to address issues of governance and political instability to adopt to changing environments and realities is an attempt to play an effective role in the transformation of West Africa from a poor and war-ridden region to a politically stable entity devoid of military interruption and intervention thereby proposing the region to a socio-economically and politically prosperous entity. It is in the light of this context that the next focus of this paper dwells.

CONTEXTUALIZING THE ECOWAS PROTOCOL AND THE NEW WAVE OF DEMOCRATIC REVIVAL IN WEST AFRICA.

Part of the ideals of promoting virile democratic stability and economic restructuring in the West Africa sub-region was the initiation of what is generally referred to as the ECOWAS protocol (Michela, 2006). Significantly, however, the stipulations of the 1999 protocol clearly addresses fundamentals issues ranging from peace effort to greater accountability in governance and decision making processes that is all –inclusive and democratic in outlook. Dialo (2006) agreed with the notion of greater socio-economic accountability and transparency within the framework of the ECOWAS mechanism above when he noted that to a greater extent, the mechanism sought to improve effectiveness in the operation in the democratic rebirth through popular mandates, peace-building and the overall establishment of ECOWAS institutional capability for sustainable regional harmony and progress. It recognises that economic and social development and the security of peoples and states are inextricably linked and committed to promoting and consolidating democratic governance as well as democratic institution in each member state, protect fundamental human rights and freedoms and the role humanitarian laws; preserve the quality of sovereign states territorial integrity and the political independence of member states. However, Joseph (2008) and Akindes (2000) have argued that there is little doubt about the importance given to the ideals of democracy, political accountability and good governance in the vision of ECOWAS following the collapse of the Berlin Wall and the subsequent changes in the international order. Nonetheless, one of the most progressive instruments adopted to remedy this shortfall is the organizations 2001 Additional Protocol on Democracy and Good Governance. The bottom line of the protocol in the second phase could therefore be seen as a response to an imperative to take a closer look at political causes that breed instability, coup d’etat and wars, which are sometimes simplistically portrayed as ethnic or religious conflicts as well as rebellion and militia activities in opposition to legitimate constitutional governments. Gregory and Baudais (2010) have posited that it was with the view to strengthening the organization that West Africa leaders adopted this protocol to supplement the 1999 mechanism at the 25th summit of heads of state and government held at Dakar, Senegal in 2001.

Unarguably, the section also insists on the necessity to access political power through constitutional means devoid of the barrel of the gun (respect for the constitution), while issuing a warning to leaders who might consider remaining in power unconstitutionally. However, this is a sharp contrast from what the region and indeed Africa has been used to. Again, the protocol makes it clear that every accession to power must be made through free, fair and transparent elections and that there will be zero tolerance for power obtained or maintained by constitutional means. The protocol also reinforced the Lome declaration on unconstitutional changes of government adopted at the 36 ordinary session of the Organization of Africa Unity (O.A.U) held in Togo in July 2000 it is pertinent, however, to recall that prior to 1990 the political domain in West Africa was regulated by two protocols relating to defence, signed in 1978 and 1981 respectively, namely, the protocol of non- Aggression and the protocol relating to mutual assistance of defence. Thus, while the protocol on Non-Aggression sought to implement the O.A.U’s old and discredited stance on non-interference in the internal affairs of states, the protocol relating to mutual assistance of defence made provision for ECOWAS to intervene within the national borders of member states in defence of the territorial integrity of such threatened state thereby making it efficient for any act of aggression, mutiny, rebellion and ultimately, coup d’etat in the region. This fact though, less significant in its approach to forestalling military incursion in African politics in the 21 century owing to the emerging trends of renewed military interference in some parts of the African state system leaves much to be desired in its role to check the excesses of security threats posed to our nascent democratic projects in the entire West Africa region. According to Bah and Kwesi (2012) argued that while there are reasons to question how effectively ECOWAS stated principles translate from theory to practice, ECOWAS has undeniably been very active in promoting regional security and protecting democratic governance from collapse. Thus, since the adoption of the protocol, ECOWAS has overturned military coup in Sierra Leone (1998), Guinea Bissau (2003), Togo (2005) and currently, ECOWAS appears to be leaving no stone unturned to ward off a group of disgruntled soldiers who have toppled the constitutionally recognised government in Mali as well as the attempt by the Tuareg rebel faction to secede and tear the Malian State apart (Aljazeera, 2012). It will also be recalled here that ECOWAS negotiated the departure of Charles Taylor from Liberia during the odd days of his brutal rule in that

country. Taylor was later granted asylum in Nigeria by the Obasanjo administration within which he (Taylor) stayed in Calabar with his family members until he was finally arrested as he tried to escape from Calabar through Benue State. Taylors incarceration by the international criminal court (ICC) at the Hague up to May 2012, where he has been sentenced to 50 years in jail was facilitated by a combine team of security men in Nigeria manning the Katsina- Ala-Taraba roads. He was caught disguised in form of a woman trying to escape ICC arrest for war crime in Sierra- Leona years back. Again, ECOWAS has deployed two peace operations: the ECOWAS mission in Cote D'Ivoire (2003) and ECOWAS mission in Liberia (2003). ECOWAS collaboration with the United Nations, France and the United States in the two deployments, with troops from both missions subsequently re-hatted to the follow-on UN-led mission (Bah and Kwesi, 2012). However, despite the attention given to ECOWAS collaboration with the UN its deployments in these countries, ECOWAS key role in resolving the political crisis in Togo (2005), Guinea (2007) and the on-going squabbles in Mali (2012) portends the most striking display of its ability to invoke its new instruments to deal with intra-state conflict either before they erupt on when they eventually happen. This democratic value aimed at redefining Africa political landscape constitutes a variable tool for socio-political recovery which will ultimately translate to a common regional peace, tranquillity and sustainability and by extension, enhance good governance. This is the focus of the next discuss.

ECOWAS REGIONAL VALUE SYSTEM ON DEMOCRATICY AND DEMOCRATIC CONSOLIDATION.

The most cherished norms for good governance in the post-war era in the world today revolves around creating a workable political institutions in line with certain acceptable best practices, constitutionalism and respect for fundamental ethos of mankind in general. The trajectory of coup and counter coup is therefore seriously frowned at and hence, looked upon as counter productive and antithetical to meaningful socio-economic and political development. However, the African experience of the past shows that since the independence of majority of West countries in the early 1960s, the region has experienced numerous coup d'etat, with military coup the rule rather than the exception.

It is clear from the excerpts above that military coup in whatever form is grossly unacceptable and therefore must not be condoned since the logic of military interference breeds more antagonism to meaningful development than any system of government. The military brass rather stalls democratic processes, impugn societal value systems, stirs up ethnic strife and secession (the very instance of the Malian episode where the Tuareg rebels have now taken up the opportunity to tear the country apart is apt in this description); strangles meaningful development and, above all, pariahdize the state system to run in form of a one way traffic. This is not healthy for societal growth progress and sustainability. However, as earlier mentioned in this study, and following the conception of ECOWAS in 1975, the organization did not position itself as an umpire set to promote good governance. Its main objectives by way of its core values until the 1990s was economic integration. Since then, however, there have been many efforts at both continental and regional levels to generate governance as one of its cardinal value systems, to create institutions and to adopt mechanism to tackle some of the continent's more pernicious intra-security lock jam (ECOWAS Protocol, 2000). Nonetheless, a brief retrospection backward will reveal to the average political historian that in the early 1970s, several West African leaders understood the need to define common norms that could steer regional initiatives for the promotion of socio-economic development and the improvement of living conditions through the process of integration. In this context, the creation of ECOWAS on 26 May, 1975 was aimed at realising this singular vision, even though emphasis was placed on economic integration. Today, however, after more than three decades of existence, ECOWAS appears to have established an impressive normative and institutional framework to realize the core objective and value principles of not only regional economic integration but also of good governance, democratic stability and continuity, peace and security, etc. All of these have however been overtaken by events going by the increasing spate of emerging military intrusion, war, blood – letting, terrorism, political instability, rebellion etc, in recent times. It can however be argued that with its newly ratified (2010) Conflict Prevention Framework (ECPF), ECOWAS has established a consolidated normative arsenal that provided guidelines for meeting the challenges of the multifaceted regional Skirmishes and Security breaches by way of the new trends of military incursion in the region and war or outright was as a result of power tussles. The above ECPF approach of ECOWAS deals with structural prevention as part of peace - building activities, such as the promotion of political and institutional governance, socio – economic development and a campaign to enhance the culture of democratic ethos, constitutionalism and peace in the region (ECOWAS Document, 2010).

THE ECOWAS PROTOCOL AND TRENDS OF POLITICAL UPHEAVALS IN NIGER AND COTE D'VOIRE.

In the twilights of the year 2001, the ECOWAS protocol made provision for anticipated political crisis in Niger by designing appropriate sanctions to be imposed where domestic or regional norms of good governance are

breached, at least at circumstances where legitimate government is truncated and unconstitutional governmental changes made. Erunke and Kigbu (2012) argued that *the key protocol provisions are contained in Articles 2 and 45. According to Article 2(1), no substantial modification shall be made to the electoral laws in the last six (6) months before the elections, except with the consent of a majority of political actors. Where it appears that this norms may be breached, ECOWAS could resort to the good offices of the Mediation and Security Council and the Panel of the Wise (Council of Elders) to engage political actors and remind them of their legal commitment to regional norms. If these initiatives fails and unconstitutional removal of a democratically elected government comes about, Article 45 enables ECOWAS to impose sanctions (2012:28).*

The foregoing analyses underscores the democratic imperatives in West Africa and it is clear from the Provision of the Protocol that any governance summersault by illegitimate government is to be resisted with all intents and purposes. However, going by the history of abuse of power in West Africa since the 1960s and the various conflicts that have emanated from governance problems, coup d'etat, human right abuses and political exclusion gives this arrangement particular pride of place. The choice of Niger and Cote D'voire is apt because it demonstrates the doggedness of ECOWAS as an institution to deal with imminent potential factors that could reverse African democratic space. First, the relevance of Niger and Cote D'Ivoire shows that ECOWAS stance in these countries appears to be unprecedented. For example, Loua et al (2012) argued that the regional organization suspended Niger for the failure of its incumbent President to abide by democratic principles and described his regime as unconstitutional. Secondly, and in the case of Cote D'Ivoire, ECOWAS validated the electoral victory of the opposition candidate despite claims to the contrary by the incumbent, and resolved to remove the latter from office even by military force in case diplomatic efforts fail to yield desired results. In these two clear instances, it can be said that ECOWAS maintained its principled stance even though it found itself constrained as regards military intervention because of disagreements among its members that exposed the relative vulnerability of the regional fusion.

By extension however, Niger Republic embarked on a process of democratisation in 1991 following a historical national conference and multiparty elections inspired by the experience of Benin (Zounmenou and Loua, 2012). This process was interrupted in 1996 by a military coup and was followed by about three years of unconstitutional rule. Thus, the assassination in 1999 of President Ibrahim Bare Mainassara paved the way for a return to unconstitutional order. The elected government led by President Mamadou Tandja then served for ten years in the context of political stability and democratic dispensation. A military coup by General Salou Djibo on 18 February, 2010 was the culmination of a series of actions aimed at undermining democracy in the country. Again, even though President Tandja has ruled the country with wide and benevolent support of a coalition of Political parties, it can be said that very sharp disagreement emerged when he indicated his intention to tinker with the constitution to guarantee his third term agenda. Thus, the ensuing division of the ruling coalition party made it pretty difficult to pass the controversial amendment through parliament. And was very difficult to understand the direction of his two – term government which many critics said barely put the Niger's economy in its right footing. It is however instructive to note that the Niger's 1999 constitution contains provision that makes it particularly difficult to change the constitution.

In the midst of all those challenges, President Tanja argued that he needed three more years to complete his reforms, but opposition leaders believed very well that Niger's problems were two immense to be resolved by a 71 – years – old in just three additional years. The notion behind this unusual opposition was hinged on the fact that Tandja's attempt to stay in power indefinitely was motivated more by the parochial, self-centred interests of his administration than by concerns about national development. All of these arguments go side by side with the very many allegations of corruption and mis-appropriation of public fund levelled against Tandja and his team of political gladiators. These allegations further discredited him and were later to sound a death knell on his manoeuvres and subsequent ouster from office as President (Gbeho, 2011). Several arguments, however, have cropped up to the effect that Tandja paid little or no heed to neither the calls from opposition parties and civil society leaders, nor to the multiple missions from ECOWAS, the African union (AU) and the country's development partners who urged him to refrain from violating his country's constitution and throwing Niger into unnecessary turmoil. Again, the fact that Tandja held a referendum within the prescribed six-month period established by the ECOWAS protocol provided the organization with the authority to intervene. Thus, as early as June 2009, the ECOWAS commission warned that Niger could face sanctions if Tandja forged ahead with the referendum to remove the term limit and retain power beyond 2009 (Bah and Kwesi, 2012). On 21 July that same year, a delegation composed of ECOWAS, AU and United Nations (UN) representatives visited Niger to reiterate their position to the presidential initiative. Conversely, the ECOWAS decision in October 2009 to suspend Niger's membership was taken in accordance with the provisions of Article 45 of the 2001 Additional Protocol. Niger's authorities reacted to this suspension by sending a team of 26 high-profile politicians to tour the region in order to explain the situation to West African leaders. They had little success in conveying an image of president Tandja as a man of peace and dialogue (ECOWAS Brief, 2011). Nonetheless, regional

leaders understood that Tandja was buying time and that his insistence on remaining in power beyond his constitutional term in the face of great national opposition undermined not only the democratisation process in Niger and credibility of ECOWAS, but also threatened national and regional peace and stability. Closely linked to his strategy of buying time was an amnesty deal Tandja proposed to Tuareg insurgents, a crisis difficult to handle against the backdrop of political and civil society opposition. Moreover, a new constitution controversially adopted by Niger in 2009 concentrated power in the hands of Tandja allowing him to remain in power until December, 2012. It removed the term limit and suppressed the position of Prime Minister. It provided for a bi – cameral legislature with a National Assembly and a Senate, as against unicameral system under the 1998 constitution. Scholars of with emotional diplomacy and policy relations have argued that this was the context in which ECOWAS appointed a mediation team led by the former Nigeria President, General Abdulsalam Abubakar to find a consensual solution to the crisis and create an atmosphere conducive to the restoration of democratic governance, the respect for the rule of law and the creation of an opportunity for all political actors and the citizenry to participate in the electoral process. It was thus the mediator's aim to reverse, through political dialogue, all of the controversial initiatives taken by Tandja, including the new constitution that removed the term limitation clause. The mediation team soon came to the realization that without Tandja being prepared to make concessions, no progress could be made. Even the mediator's proposed plan to maintain the President in power while a Prime Minister from the opposition was appointed for a transition period during which a new constitution could be written and fresh elections held, failed. The mediation process was brought to end on 18th February, 2010 when a group of military officers believed to have been disillusioned by the status quo seized power in a coup that claimed the lives of at least ten people.

ECOWAS AND THE CRISIS IN COTE D'IVOIRE: MATTERS ARISING.

For adequate understanding of the role of ECOWAS in Cote D'Ivoire, the crisis in that part of the world will be looked at in two distinct phases. On the one hand, is the role played by the regional organization as peace-keeper in the first instance and, secondly as the active facilitator and implementer of peace agreement. Nonetheless, the history of democratic trajectory in Cote D'Ivoire was replete with uncertainties ranging from the political economic and socio – cultural planks. Social critics have argued that for several years after its independence in 1960, Cote D'Ivoire was ruled by Felix Houphouet – Boigny as its first President. On the economic level he advocated the proper use of land resources by all residents in Cote D'Ivoire, irrespective of their origins or nationality, while on the political level, his rulership was accentuated by an over – bearing dominance of the then ruling party the Democratic party of Cote D'Ivoire (PDCI). By extension, his prolonged years in office was characterized by the blatant absence and rape of all indices of good governance, accountability and responsiveness; a one – party system and a wild disgust for opposition platforms. Consequently, his perceived open door policy towards migrant ensured some kind of social stability and provided the country with the labour force needed to achieve considerable economic governance, stability and progress. However, despite the obvious advantages of the open door policy, it did not stand the test of time, and so, could not survive after Boigny's demise in 1993 (Zounmenou and Loua, 2011). Arguments are rife to the effect that during Houphouet - Boigny's last years in office, the impact of shrinking commodity prices and inflation reduced the government's ability to respond to the increasing demands of a significant youth sector in search of socio – economic opportunities. Side by side this argument is the fact that the situation was compounded by rising inter-national demand for political liberalization at a time of socio- economic deterioration characterized by unemployment, a massive reduction in public spending, rising national debt and rampant corruption (Bah and Kwesi, 2012). Again, the strong social agitation that ensued created a volatile situation that propelled Boigny to launch a controlled and half – hearted process of democratisation that included the introduction of kangaroo political pluralism and trade unionism (which of course represents the social dimension of democratic renaissance earlier propagated by the regime as mentioned from the opening remarks in this section) that could not necessarily project virile democratic agenda in populist terms. Erunke (2012) and Zounmenou et al (2012) have variously argued that the demise of Boigny and the dire need to chart a democratic way forward resulted in a lot of political upheavals and instability in Cote D'Ivoire. Conversely, the instability in Cote D'Ivoire also brought to the fore the possibility by of who was going to succeed Boigny as head of state. Thus, when he passed on in December, 1993, Henri Konan Bedie, the then speaker of the country National Assembly outsmarted the last Prime Minister, Allasane Dramane Ouattara and took over the mantle of leadership. Scholars of international diplomacy have expressed discontent with this government and argued that instead of containing with Houphouet – Boigny's inclusive approach to political and economic management, Bedie created a narrowly defined citizenship concept, Ivoirite, which according to him, was to install a deeper sense of nationalism, garner support for his political endeavours and facilitate the political exclusion of Ouattara ahead of the 1995 elections. However, the ideology of Ivoirite compounded issues, caused massive political squabbles and hence, paralysed this initial beacon of stability. The reason as given above is one major offshoot for the first

military coup in post independence Cote D'Ivoire. Bedie was over thrown by a group of young officers in a military coup of December 24, 1999 following his rejection of demands for a pay increase. Invariably, the junta appointed General Robert Guei to lead the transition, but he failed to realize the nation's vision for a democratic transition. The reasons further given for this massive failure is akin to the fact that the elections were rigged, while most of the potential candidates, such as Ouattara, were either excluded from the race or boycotted it, e.g. Bedie Guei's attempt to legitimize himself ended in a violent popular uprising that brought to power Laurent Gbagbo of the Front Populaire Ivoirien (FPI). Again, a coup attempt against Gbagbo resulted in a civil war in 2002, which led to the balkanization of Cote D'Ivoire into the rebel held North and the Government controlled South. Meanwhile, it can be said at this point that the crises in Cote D'Ivoire led to intensive regional and international diplomacy and activities that resulted in more than ten peace agreements, twelve (12) UN resolutions and many more meetings and consultations. The role of the international community was a complex one. At one stage, the situation became controversial and compelled key protagonist to resort to home-grown mechanisms. The peace initiatives were taken by ECOWAS through the Togolese President Gnassingbe Eyadema's aborted Lome peace negotiations of 2002. The involvement of France through the Linas - Marcoussis Agreement in 2003 and the UN was no less successful, especially as Gbagbo suspected a neo-colonialist agenda (ECOWAS 2012). This kind of suspicion partly explains why the international community-led mediation process could not achieve the break through necessary for the normalization of the political situation, even though it did contain the conflict and improved the humanitarian situation. The aforementioned was rightly captured by Bah (2012) when he opined that the typical ingredients of the internationally mediated peace agreements in African conflict are the provisions on ceasefire, power sharing, disarmament, human rights and elections. This path to peace is predicated on successful democratic elections.

Drawing from the foregoing, it can be said that in Cote D'Ivoire, this recipe failed because it did not pay sufficient attention to citizenship, which is the underlying cause of the war. With the exception of the Linas-Marcoussis Agreement, the internationally engineered accords were often mute on citizenship. Instead, they focused on the distribution of power, disarmament, and elections. The end results were successive failed peace agreements (Bah, 2012:9). The ensuing electoral battle between Gbagbo, Ouattara and Bedie further translated to the making and unmaking of the Cote D'Ivoire Presidency which culminated into the violence of 2011 that finally ousted Gbagbo who is now languishing at the International Criminal Court (ICC) at the Hague, Netherlands. Incidentally, the four-month long post electoral crisis in Cote D'Ivoire had reached a gravitating point in April 2011 following a brief and devastating armed confrontation between the National Security and Defence Force (NSDF) loyal to Gbagbo on the one hand, the pro - Ouattara Republican Forces of Cote D'Ivoire (FRCI). Loua et al (2011) argued that the confrontation culminated in the dramatic capture of Gbagbo on 11 April, 2011 by FRCI forces with the strong backing of French troops during the rein of President Nicholas Sarkozy of France acting under the aegis of the United Nations. Interestingly, it can be argued further that the recourse to brute military force was a policy of last resort, informed largely by the Gbagbo camp's intransigence that saw it systematically reject and frustrate all diplomatic efforts to the resolve the stalemate peacefully. In spite of all of these contradictions, what is not clear is the ideological persuasions surrounding the entire process of the political gaming in Cote D'Ivoire. On the one hand, scholars have argued that French intervention in that country is based on the former's political interest in establishing its stranglehold perceived to have been lost over a decade ago. On the other hand, is the justification for concerns that France was out to engineer a regime change is the belief that the UN interpretation of the responsibility to protect (R2P) principle has been biased in favour of Ouattara (perceived to represent the imperial interests) given that France took sides while allegedly protecting the electoral process and its out course. Apparently, the so-called responsibility to protect (R2P) is a broad principle without consensus among scholars and practioners. Thus, while the protection of civilians in peril during armed conflicts has become an imperative, the principles application in practice has become challenging and subject to disagreement. R2P is based on the responsibility of states to protect their own citizens. Nonetheless, the R2P outlines possible actions that can be taken by the international community in terms of providing assistance and strengthening the capacity of states, and hence, lays the framework for a resolute response by the international community to serious crisis.

Regardless of the debate all of the above has generated, the UN's use of military force epitomized by the Republic of France to neutralize the NDSF, protect civilians and provide Ouattara's forces with logistical support to capture Gbagbo was an all important step toward averting a generalized armed conflict which has the potential of inviting the military to the stage for any good reason. Again, while Frances military raid in Cote D'Ivoire has been granted with wild criticism by avid scholars of international politics, it can be said that the critics would have to do so with significant restraints, given that the potential implication of Gbagbo's continuous stay in office would have been rather gracious and human security implications worsened thereby creating plausible ways of continuous military harassments in that part of the world. The merits of those arguments are that the eventual arrest and arraignment of former President Gbagbo at the international Criminal

Court in Netherlands has largely disentangled the possibility of military interregnum in Cote D'Ivoire. Secondly, the government of Cote D'Ivoire has, since the period under review remained largely stable, thus gradually rebuilding its shattered economy under the watchful eyes of the entire global community, the ECOWAS and the rest of the West African Peace – builders. This tendency, no doubt could propel adequate and formidable democratic force needed to grow the continent thereby warding off the possibilities of military autocracy and intervention. Situations such as this, will no doubt, keep the “Khakhi boys” permanently in the barracks thereby fostering the much needed peace, cooperation, tranquillity and progress in the West African sub-region both now and in the hereafter.

Conclusion

The sudden paradigm shift in the roles of ECOWAS from economic cooperation and trade concerns to matters of politics, regional integration and democratic stability is germane to this study. The paper interrogates the critical concerns of social change orchestrated by military intervention in West Africa in the 21st Century and the corresponding role of the ECOWAS Protocol as a policy framework of regional governments to keep the menace of militarism in check. Arguments have been given proper perspectives to the extent that in order to foster peace, unity and progress in the West African sub – region, the role of ECOWAS and the application of its protocols must go beyond mere orthodox economic matrix to a more or less political function. The tendency is to keep and check the multiplicity or otherwise of unconstitutional governments in West Africa which is widely perceived to be anti people and counter productive in all its form and content. Thus, the 21st Century ECOWAS and whatever philosophies it proclaims needs to be wholly decentralized and diversified to meet the challenges of security concerns in West Africa; and this is the template of this scholarly exercise. Thus, the ECOWAS Protocol as an ideal political structure for promoting virile democratic stability and sustainability has been given a pride of place in this discourse as one thing that is sure and necessary to achieve results in process of peace, stability and continuity. The mechanism of ECOWAS, no doubt, seeks to improve effectiveness in the operation of democratic rebirth through popular mandates, peace – building and overall cooperation of separatist interests that scuttles meaningful developments in the West Africa sub-region. The paper X-rays the Cote D'Ivoire government and those of Niger Republic as a point of departure, bringing out the thrusts of military cum civilian contradiction in those countries and the roles they have played in shaping the internal politics of these political entities.

Nonetheless, the essence of the paper to help understand the all – important role of ECOWAS and its Protocol geared towards improved governance pattern, adequate group behaviour and overall socio – economic growth, stability and progress in the sub – region in the 21st century and beyond.

THE WAY FORWARD

Based on the foregoing analysis, the paper makes the following recommendations.

1. ECOWAS needs to be strengthened politically and economically and its protocol reinforced to stamp out all tendencies of militarism in the West Africa sub-region.
2. Closely related to the above is that ECOWAS should further design and develop a graduated response mechanism to tackle the manner in which political incumbency is abused in Africa, thereby propelling military intervention in West African politics.
3. Again, ECOWAS should further strengthen its zero tolerance for unconstitutional change of government to those governments that temper with their constitutions to prolong their stay in office.
4. ECOWAS should develop strong oversight and compliance to ensure full compliance with its good governance principles.
5. Adequate security reforms are necessary to forestall issues of strife, molestation and breach of public peace by individuals or group of persons. Such acts of indiscipline must be met with stiff sanctions to serve as deterrence to other prospective separatists.
6. These should be a uniform design for specific the number of years allowed for any incumbent government to stay in power. This way, there will be no need for contention in a bid to stay on for too long, thereby reducing the risks of military incursion.

All of the above strategies, if carefully and judiciously applied, will make the West African sub – region a safe haven for peace, stability and a hub of socio- economic development in the entire world system in the 21st century and beyond.

References

- Akinds, F. (2004) *The of the Military – Political Crises in Cote D'Ivoire*, Sweden: Wordic Africa Institute.
Bah, S. & Aning K. (2012) *ECOWAS and Conflict Prevention in West Africa; Confronting the Triple Threats*, New York, CIC Pub.

- Collier, P. (2009) *Wars, Guns and Votes: Democracy in Dangerous places*, London: The Bodley Head.
- Dialo, M. (2005) *The ECOWAS supplementary Protocol and Defence and Security Force Relationships to political power, being Report of the Workshop on the Role and Place of the ECOWAS Supplementary Protocol in Security Sector Governance in West Africa*, Guinea – Bissau, November.
- Decision on the Prevention of Unconstitutional Changed of Government and Strengthening the Capacity of the Africa Union to Manage such Situations* DOC Assembly/AU/7/XIII). Addis Ababa, February, 2010.
- ECOWAS Decision A/Dec.8/98
- ECOWAS Decision A/Dec.12/99
- ECOWAS: Briefs of ECOWAS Political Principles, Lagos Executive Secretariat of ECOWAS, 1991, July.
- ECOWAS Protocol A/SPI/12/01 on Democracy and Good Governance, Dakar, December.
- Erunke, C.E. (2012) “*Consolidating Democratic Governance in Nigeria: Analysis and suggestions*” *African Journal of Social Sciences* 2 (2) p. 67 – 73, London United Kingdom.
- Erunke, C.E. & Lemun, Y. (2012) “*Historical Context of the Incorporation of Africa in International Politics*”, *African Journal of Social Sciences*, 2 (3) p. 27 – 42, London, United Kingdom.
- Erunke, C.E. & Kigbu H. (2012) “*Globalization, Multinational Corporation and the Nigeria Economy*”, *International Journal of Social Sciences Tomorrow*, 1 (2), India p. 1-8.
- Gregory, C. & Bandai’s, V.(2010) *The 2010 coup d’etat in Niger: A Praetorian Regulation of Politics?* London: African Affairs, 110 (345),p.22-26 April.
- Gbeho, V. (2011) *Democracy in the Context of Regional Integration in West Africa: status, challenges and perspectives, being a Keynote Address Delivered at the ECOWAS Commission Press Conference*, Chatham House, London, United Kingdom, June.
- Joseph, K. (2008) *The Coke Coast: Cocaine and failed state in Africa*, Accra: Malta Press.
- Legalis: Com (2005) *Nigeria National Assembly Endorses Military Action against Togo*, Lagos, February.
- Michela, W. (2006) “The Big Men have Tightened their Grip” *Newstatemen*, July.
- Zounmenou, D. & Loua, S. (2011) *Confronting Complex Political Crises in West Africa: An Analysis of ECOWAS Response to Niger and Cote D’Ivoire*, ISS paper 230, December.

This academic article was published by The International Institute for Science, Technology and Education (IISTE). The IISTE is a pioneer in the Open Access Publishing service based in the U.S. and Europe. The aim of the institute is Accelerating Global Knowledge Sharing.

More information about the publisher can be found in the IISTE's homepage:

<http://www.iiste.org>

CALL FOR PAPERS

The IISTE is currently hosting more than 30 peer-reviewed academic journals and collaborating with academic institutions around the world. There's no deadline for submission. **Prospective authors of IISTE journals can find the submission instruction on the following page:** <http://www.iiste.org/Journals/>

The IISTE editorial team promises to review and publish all the qualified submissions in a **fast** manner. All the journals articles are available online to the readers all over the world without financial, legal, or technical barriers other than those inseparable from gaining access to the internet itself. Printed version of the journals is also available upon request of readers and authors.

IISTE Knowledge Sharing Partners

EBSCO, Index Copernicus, Ulrich's Periodicals Directory, JournalTOCS, PKP Open Archives Harvester, Bielefeld Academic Search Engine, Elektronische Zeitschriftenbibliothek EZB, Open J-Gate, OCLC WorldCat, Universe Digital Library, NewJour, Google Scholar

