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# Regional Economic Groupings and Security Challenges: A Comparative Study of ECOWAS and SADC

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## **Abstract**

Amidst the demanding need for economic integration, the pressure for security is always present. The several dimensions of security have also suffered a paradigmatic shift, especially in the context of upsurge in global terrorism, and several human security challenges. The article contextually addresses the contending issues and comparatively analyzes the similarities and differences in both regions: West Africa and Southern Africa. The functionalist approach is applied in the explanations of the circumstances that led to the establishment of ECOWAS and SADC as Regional Economic Groupings. Data for the research were adapted from secondary sources; published works, from libraries, internet sources and archival materials. The comparative method brings the strategic issues in security management in both regions into focus, and the significance in emulating or learning from each other, with a view to finding common ground in the amelioration of the real security challenges.

**Keywords:** ECOWAS, SADC, Nigeria, South Africa, Regionalism, Security

The importance of security in the development of Regional Economic Groupings (REGs) cannot be overemphasized. At the formation of the Organization of African Unity (OAU), now African Union (AU), the founding fathers, though divided on the methodology and framework for unity, were united on the need for African security. The division created on the unification of the African continent gave rise to the majority of the African leaders and plenipotentiaries subscribing to a gradual functional approach to continental unity. In other words, the emphasis was more on regional cooperation and economic integration.

As a result of this development the Economic Community of West African States (ECOWAS) was established on May 28, 1975, fulfilling the goals and aspirations of West African leaders, many of whom anticipated such a development shortly after independence in the early 1960s. Similarly, the Southern African Development Community (SADC), established in 1992, in like manner as ECOWAS, was created to perform similar responsibilities in the Southern African region. The paper compares the two regional organizations because of their strategic positions in west and southern Africa respectively.

### **ECOWAS and SADC: A Functional Explanation of Regionalism**

Functionalism as a theory of international relations was developed by David Mitrany in response to the developments of the interwar period, basically as an offshoot of a concern about the obsolete role of the state as a form of social organization and the need to replace the state as a dominant actor in the international system. Rather than the self-interest notion presented by the realist as the motivation in international relations, functionalism focused on common interests and mutual needs shared by state and non-state actors in a process of global integration triggered by the erosion of state sovereignty and the increasing weight of knowledge and hence of scientists and experts in the process of policy-making (Rosamond, 2000). Furthermore, Rosamond (2000) traced the root of functionalism to the liberal/idealist tradition that started with Kant and goes as far as Woodrow Wilson's "Fourteen Points" speech.

In Mitrany's view, the basic reason for the existence of any political system is welfare and security, and that once what people want and need are provided for them they tend to pursue and keep peace (Groom & Taylor, 1975, p. 50). In this light, functionalism provides the foundation to the theory of globalization and strategy. State theories were built upon assumptions that identified the scope of authority with territory (Scholte, 2014), aided by methodological territorialism (Scholte, 1993). Functionalism seeks to build a system based on functions and needs, which links authority with needs and responsibilities, scientific knowledge, expertise and technology, i.e., it provides a supranational conception of authority. Functionalism rejects the idea of states power in explaining the reasons for the proliferation of international organizations during the interwar period and the subsequent years (Wolf, 1973).

According to the functionalist ideology, international integration develops its own internal dynamics as states integrate in limited functional, technical, and/or economic areas. International agencies would meet human needs, aided by knowledge and expertise (Mitrany, 1966, p. 101). The benefits rendered by the functional agencies would attract the loyalty of the populations and stimulate their participation and expand the area of integration. The following are the assumptions underpinning functionalism:

1. That the process of integration takes place within a framework of human freedom;
2. That knowledge and expertise are currently available to meet the needs for which the functional agencies are built, and;

3. That states will not sabotage the process.

Right from the days of Mitrany, functionalist writing has always focused on cooperation, togetherness and peace against conflict, disunity, disintegration and discord which characterized the power politics of the realists as evidenced in the interwar period. As a foundational effort at regional integration and security, the use of the functionalist thesis for our purpose logically connects with the *raison d'être* for the establishment of OAU (now African Union, AU) and subsequently, ECOWAS, SADC and other regional economic groupings, both in Africa and elsewhere. As well, the thesis is relevant to the extent that the various colonial blocs, Anglophone, Francophone and Lusophone, because of the variegated interests they represent, as a result of differentiated colonial experiences, are in themselves capable of generating conflicts. Hence the functionalist thesis, which also formed the intellectual background to the establishment of emergent regional bodies, following the inauguration of Mitrany's thesis, like the European Steel and Coal Community, later the European Economic Community (now European Union, EU) is also justified as an explanatory tool here. Further this is in tandem with the UN Charter requirements on regional arrangements, as enshrined in Chapter 8, Articles 52-54 of its Charter. This encourages regional bodies to intervene in conflicts that occur around their region, but also to seek approval from the UN security Council, which has the primary responsibility for the maintenance of international peace and security.

### **Security Challenges and Responses in West Africa**

One of the challenges of West African States and Africa in general is the control of its borders against transnational organized crime. According to Darkwa (2011, p. 39), West Africa is at a critical juncture in its socioeconomic and political development. The region is confronted with challenges that render it fragile and vulnerable to political instability, economic crisis and violent conflict (Darkwa, 2011). The security challenges confronting West Africa and its regional organization is in part a result of the proliferation of Small Arms and Light Weapons (SALW). This has threatened the national and sub-regional security of the ECOWAS states, as is evident from the civil wars in Liberia, Sierra Leone, Guinea Bissau and Cote d'Ivoire, the revolt in Mali and Niger Republic, the Niger Delta Crisis in Nigeria and the Boko Haram terrorism along the Chad Basin. However, as noted by Obi (2009), the sub-region has one of Africa's most sophisticated peace and security arrangements, yet it is still confronted with intra-regional security challenges.

Another security challenge confronting the sub-region is the activities of transnational organized criminal networks operating in the sub-region. These networks have established their hold in some West African countries where they carry out their illegal activities, such as human trafficking, drug peddling, arms trafficking, illegal mining of minerals, cross-border crimes and smuggling, and sea piracy. This led the United Nations Office on Drugs and Crime to posit in 2010 that:

West Africa is a paradise for organized crime, offering ideal conditions for a trafficking contraband: a strategic location, porous borders, weak governance, widespread poverty and extensive corruption. As a result, criminals and insurgents are exploiting the region. West Africa serves as a transit point between Latin America and Europe for US \$1 billion-worth in cocaine, as a destination for counterfeit medicines and toxic waste, and as a source of stolen natural resources, particularly oil. Human trafficking, whether for

forced labour or sexual exploitation, also occurs in the region (Aning, and Pokoo, 2014, p.7).

With respect to the above claim by the UN, we have to note that West Africa is neither a production nor consumption point, but only a transit camp along the value chain. The statement will therefore be more useful if it is put in proper perspective. But our emphasis here is on these activities and the role they play on conflict generation in the sub-region.

However, the post-Cold War era brought about a renewed interest in collective regional security in Africa, following the soft concern of Europe and North America about African affairs. Thus West Africa was confronted in the 1990s with the need to develop effective structures that could deal adequately with the security challenges of the post-Cold War period.

West Africa has witnessed a series of armed conflicts—mostly intra-state conflicts—and these conflicts led to a rethink about the initial purpose of the ECOWAS, hence the need for peace and stability becoming fundamental to economic integration and economic growth. Although ECOWAS was set up mainly to achieve the economic goals of “harmonisation and coordination of national policies,” the signatories to the treaty also agreed to adhere to principles which include “solidarity and collective self-reliance, nonaggression between Member States, maintenance of regional peace, and stability and security (Addo, 2006 p.5).” ECOWAS also entreats its members to seek the “recognition, promotion, and protection of human and people’s rights in accordance with provisions of the African Charter on Human and Peoples’ Rights.” However, promoting and protecting human rights—prerequisites to good governance—were in chronic short supply at the signing of the original ECOWAS treaty.

The United Nations has been involved in several peacekeeping missions in Africa; between 1948 and 2008, the UN was involved in 26 peace operations in Africa (Soderbaum & Tavares, 2009). Despite the increasing presence of the UN in Africa, the regional organizations have equally been involved in peacekeeping and conflict management in the region. The deep involvement of the organizations in peacekeeping can be explained as a result of the UN system’s inability to come up with lasting solutions to security challenges. It is evident that the UN lacks the political will and enough resources to engage with all global security challenges, hence, the growing concern for security regionalism (Soderbaum & Tavares, 2009). This is aptly captured by Haas (1989, p. 90) when he submits that “regional security arrangements, as enshrined in Chapter VII of the UN Charter, grow in direct proportion to disappointment with the UN collective security system.”

The 1975 ECOWAS Treaty provided no security role for the sub-regional grouping. This is not unique to ECOWAS, as several other regional organizations gradually assumed security and foreign policy functions by default (Kabia, 2011). The European Union is a case in point. Founded as an economic union, the European Union systematically developed security and foreign policy capacities with the adoption of the Treaty of Maastricht and has devised common foreign and security policy agendas. According to Roper (1998), evolution into security regionalism occurs as a result of military threat or instability. In the context of West Africa, political instability and conflict in its member states (including Nigeria, Ghana, The Gambia, Sierra Leone, Senegal, Cote D’Ivoire, Burkina Faso, Togo, Guinea, Guinea Bissau, Cape Verde, Mali, Niger, Liberia, and Benin Republic) made ECOWAS realize that economic development cannot be achieved in the absence of peace and stability; hence, focus was placed on developing the peace and security framework. Prior to the establishment of ECOWAS, Guinea experienced an attempted invasion by Portuguese Mercenaries in November 1970, and the Republic of Benin in 1977. In addition to these external aggressions are military coups that were prevalent in West

Africa in the 1970s and '80s. It is these realities that prompted the need to adopt measures that will safeguard the sub-region's security. This began with the adoption of the 1978 treaty on non-aggression, which enjoins member states to refrain from the threat or use of force or aggression against each other (Soderbaum, 2000, p. 126). As a result of the implementation weakness of the Non-Aggression Pact, West African leaders ratified the Mutual Assistance on Defense (MAD) Protocol at the 1981 Freetown summit, with the protocol coming into force in September 1986. This protocol committed member states to give mutual aid and assistance for defense against any armed threat or aggression directed at a member state and to consider such incidents as threats or aggression against the entire community (Soderbaum, 2000).

The protocol made provisions for the circumstances that can warrant intervention. These include: cases of armed conflict between two or more member states after the failure of peaceful means, and in the case of conflict within a state engineered and supported from outside. It made provision for a response mechanism which comprises: a Defense Council, Defense Committee and a sub-regional intervention force. One of the shortcomings of this protocol is its inability to provide conflict prevention management and resolution mechanisms; rather, it focused more on external threats and did not establish a role for the sub-regional body in incidences of coup d'état that swept through the community in the 1970s and 1980s and the internal conflicts that characterized West Africa in the 1990s.

The ECOWAS move to develop conflict resolutions, security and peacekeeping mechanisms began with a revision of the ECOWAS Treaty in 1993, to establish a permanent mechanism for peace and security. The treaty addressed issues bothering on strengthening economic and fiscal ties of the community to face the challenges of globalization while strengthening the peace and security mechanism. In recognition of the link between human rights, good governance and conflict in the sub-region, ECOWAS in 1991 resolved on the declaration of political principles which enjoins democratic states to respect human rights, democracy and the rule of law. This was followed by the adoption of the protocol on good governance in 2001, which addresses the root causes of conflict such as corruption and bad governance (Kabia, 2011, p. 5). To deal with the issue of small arms proliferation and conflict, ECOWAS member states agreed on a Moratorium on Small Arms in October 1998. This was transformed into a convention in 2006 leading to the establishment of a Small Arms Unit within the ECOWAS Commission to monitor its implementation.

Most importantly, ECOWAS adopted the mechanism for conflict prevention, management, resolution, peacekeeping and security signed in December 1999. This mechanism, as the name implies, seeks to strengthen the conflict prevention management and resolution capacity of the sub-region as well as develop effective and efficient peace-building, peacekeeping and humanitarian support capabilities. It also seeks to address issues of cross-border crimes, which are a major security challenge of the sub-region. To achieve this aim, ECOWAS institutionalized bodies such as the Mediation and Security Council, Early Warning System, and Standing Force. These arms of the organization are known as the ECOWAS Peace and Security Architecture.

It is important to note, as well, that the ECOWAS effort at conflict resolution has recorded some successes, such as the intervention in Liberia, Sierra Leone, The Gambia, Togo, Cote D'Ivoire, Burkina Faso, and Mali. With respect to Mali, the first response from ECOWAS was to try a diplomatic push to resolve the conflicts that engulfed the country in 2012. ECOWAS first denounced the military junta of the March coup to relinquish power to legitimate government so that the country can return to constitutional rule. It also called for the Movement

National pour la Liberation d'Azawad, MNLA, to lay down its arms. Again it imposed diplomatic and economic sanctions on Mali on March 3, 2012, and ordered ECOWAS countries that share borders with Mali to close their borders, thereby blocking Mali's access to the neighboring seaport. All these eventually put pressure on the junta to negotiate their way through, and today Mali is relatively stable.

### **SADC and the Security Challenges of Southern Africa**

The history of the Southern Africa sub-region as a political and economic bloc is embedded in its colonial experience. Albeit, the colonial experience is distinct to the extent that the processes and structures of administration were not in conformity with the regular pattern of colonial administration in other parts of Africa. Unlike the regular colonial administrations that pervaded the continent, Southern Africa became home to settler colonialism and the consequent white-supremacist rule in Zimbabwe (the former Rhodesia) and Namibia, and its political "alter-ego": the apartheid policy in post-independent South Africa. This political uniqueness had a prolonged impact on inter-state relations in the sub-region, and essentially provided the platform for apartheid and South Africa's ascendance as the most critical state. The substance of power configuration was evident in the anti-South Africa polarization during the apartheid era, and the emergence of post-apartheid South Africa as an outstanding regional leader. Gwaradzimba (1993, p. 51) rightly notes:

Since the 1960s, southern Africa's regional alliance patterns have been primarily dominated by South Africa's military and economic dominance of the region. Not surprisingly, divisive and conflict-ridden relations between South Africa and the less powerful majority-ruled states characterized interstate relations in the region throughout this period.

Thus, an understanding of the security dynamics of the Southern Africa sub-region requires the unbundling of South Africa's pre-eminent stature in the region.

As a central figure in sub-regional politics, the South Africa racist regime attempted to preserve the legacy of white-minority rule in general, and its own apartheid policy in particular. However, some of the independent states in the sub-region resisted attempts by South Africa to hold the sub-region hostage for the forces of white-minority domination. At various times, Tanzania and Zambia played credible roles in the struggle against white-minority rule in the sub-region by supporting and providing assistance to liberation movements such as the African National Congress (ANC) and Pan-Africa Congress (PAC) in South Africa, and Zimbabwe African National Union (ZANU) and Zimbabwe African People's Union (ZAPU) in former Rhodesia. This scenario set the initial tone for the security dynamics of the sub-region because South Africa responded by institutionalizing the policy of sub-regional destabilization. Nkiwane (1999, p. 127) captures the scenario thus:

A geo-strategic focus on military security and destabilization pitted apartheid South Africa against the Frontline States of southern Africa, in a politico-military confrontation which had enveloped the foreign policy debates from the mid-1970s until the mid-1990s.

South Africa's economic, political and military capacities provided the leverage for actualizing the aims of the policy of sub-regional destabilization. Through its economic policies, the apartheid regime attempted to stifle the economic development of unfriendly states, and also provided assistance for the forces of domestic political destabilization within those states. Booth & Vale (1995, p. 286) note:

... South Africa's deepening paranoia over its security unleashed a campaign known by the generic term 'destabilization' that left more than a million of the region's people dead and is estimated to have cost \$62.42 billion. This policy branded an indelible mark on southern Africa's people; every effort to rebuild the region will be touched by its destructive legacy.

The relatively powerful anti-apartheid southern Africa states eventually resorted to a collective security mechanism in order to counter the destructive tendencies of South Africa's policy of regional destabilization. As captured by Gwaradzimba (1993, p. 51), the prevailing condition was that the relationship of the two sub-regional factions "gave rise to two competing regional blocs: the South African-led *PaxPretoriana* and the Frontline States (FLS) informal diplomatic alliance, which became the nucleus of the Southern African Development Coordination Conference (SADCC)," which today includes the following as members: Angola, Botswana, Congo DR, Lesotho, Madagascar, Malawi, Mauritius, Mozambique, Namibia, Seychelles, South Africa, Swaziland, United Republic of Tanzania, Zambia and Zimbabwe.

The Frontline States was a coalition of independent Southern African states which aimed to neutralize South Africa's attempt to destabilize both the political environment and the economy of the sub-region. The group evolved as a "loosely structured security coordination forum" (Hammerstad, 2005, p. 72) geared towards resisting the extension of South Africa's sphere of influence beyond the other white-ruled enclaves in the sub-region. In a significant sense, the content of the security paradigm that played out in the sub-region was emphatic on military security. South Africa, indeed, provided military troops and various forms of assistance to anti-liberation forces in Angola and Mozambique, thereby attempting to stifle the efforts of the liberation movements supported by the OAU and the Frontline States. The military focus of the security challenge did not however preclude the attempt at economic destabilization of unfriendly states. This was made possible by South Africa's preeminent role in the economic activities of the sub-region (Shamyurira, 1977, p. 1).

The impact of the lack of economic capability and its negative consequences on suppressing the menace of apartheid-era South Africa may have informed the focus of the leaders of the Frontline States on the economic development of the sub-region without the influence of South Africa. For this purpose, the Frontline States was transformed to the Southern Africa Development Coordinating Conference (SADCC) in 1980 by nine anti-apartheid South African states in the sub-region, namely: Angola, Botswana, Lesotho, Malawi, Mozambique, Swaziland, Tanzania, Zambia and Zimbabwe at the signing of a Memorandum of Understanding in Lusaka on April 1, 1980. To the benefit of the member-states of SADCC, Zimbabwe, the emergent state from the rubble of former Rhodesia, gained independence in 1980 and joined the organization. At independence in 1991, Namibia also joined the sub-regional grouping of states. Included in the anti-South Africa masterstroke was the granting of observer status of SADCC to the anti-apartheid movements ANC and PAC.

Essentially, SADCC was created by South Africa's neighbors "with the express intention of reducing their economic dependence on the apartheid states" (Willet, 1998, p. 413). The new political configuration meant that South Africa's capacity for both regional political and economic destabilization became greatly diminished. SADCC lived up to its billing as a regional grouping of note as Gwaradzimba (1993, p. 54) submits:

SADCC's achievements were not only maintaining unity in the face of adversity and sabotage from South Africa, but also realizing impressive gains in infrastructural



development and setting up institutions and parameters for cooperation in the food security sector.

By the 1990s, the emergent development of globalization and other global events, such as the end of the Cold War, and particularly the changing political conditions in South Africa, informed the changes in the security dynamics of Southern Africa. As South Africa began to transit to majority rule, and the world was becoming more integrated through REGs, states in the Southern Africa region transformed SADCC into the Southern Africa Development Community (SADC) (Hwang, 2007, p. 67).

From all indications, the new organization had similar form, content and context with the West Africa regional organization ECOWAS. In comparison with the erstwhile FLS and SADCC, SADC allows for deeper integration, which covers the economic, political, military and cultural dimensions of inter-state relationships within the sub-region. Nathan (2006, p. 608) points out that SADC is distinct from SADCC on the basis that the new organization “includes the regional power, South Africa; its primary goal goes beyond economic coordination to encompass regional integration; and its mandate extends to the political and security spheres” (Nathan, 2006).

By 1994, the political dynamics of the sub-region changed considerably when for the first time in the history of South Africa a democratic election took place and the ANC won the election. This development engendered an unprecedented boost in the morale of member-states of SADC, primarily because the organization now commanded membership from all parts of the region, and also because for the first time, South Africa was allowed to relate with other states on the basis of cooperation and collaboration. In response to this positive development, the dynamics of South Africa’s foreign policy focus as a regional leader changed dramatically, thereby altering the structure of security dynamics that used to exist in the region. In the new environment of cooperation and collaboration Hentz (2009, p. 191) affirms that “southern Africa is a regional security complex defined by intra-state rather than interstate security issues.”

In the efforts to make SADC a formidable organization, the Summit in Blantyre in 2001 adopted the long-awaited Protocol on Politics, Defence and Security Co-operation, which is a creation of the 1996 Organ on Politics, Defence and Security. However, the chairing of the Organ, the permanent nature of that position and its status *vis-à-vis* SADC became hotly contested issues. At the Blantyre Summit, and after intense negotiations and pressure, it was decided to bring the Organ firmly under SADC control. The Protocol also provides for an elaborate structure of the Organ. Under the Chair and the Troika there is a Ministerial Committee comprised of the SADC ministers responsible for foreign affairs, defense, public security and state security. It operates much like the SADC Council of Ministers and has a partly overlapping membership.

Among other committees, the Inter-State Defence and Security Committee (ISDSC) comprises ministers responsible for defense, public security and state security. It is an established committee formed years ago by the Frontline States. It has a fairly elaborate substructure, especially under the defense subcommittee and a range of sub-sub committees on functional areas of co-operation. Under the public security subcommittee there is the Southern African Regional Police Chiefs Co-ordination Committee (SARPCCO) which has a permanent secretariat hosted by the Secretariat of the Interpol Sub-Regional Bureau for Southern Africa located in Harare. The Organ is supposed to be supported by the Directorate for Politics, Defence and Security Affairs based at the SADC Secretariat in Gaborone. It functions under the overall supervision of the SADC Executive Secretary and is headed by a Director for Politics,

Defence and Security. The Directorate's tasks, as interpreted by its director, relates to politics, defense and security issues as defined in the Treaty, Protocol and the SIPO; the monitoring and evaluation of the implementation of Organ decisions; and the provision of administrative backup to the Organ. It also supervises the activities of the SADC Regional Peacekeeping Training Centre (RPTC) based in Harare (Ndlovu, 2006, p. 4).

The current structural refinement of the Organ relates to the establishment of a SADC Brigade as part of the African Standby Force (ASF) concept. According to Macaringue's (2006, p. 2) interpretation, the 2001 SADC Protocol on the OPDSC and the Mutual Defence Pact are the foundation and core internal legal basis for the creation of a military capability by SADC. The SADC Organ and its Troika provide the guidance and symbolize the political will to implement the AU prescriptions for the establishment of Regional Brigades as components of the ASF. He captures the purpose of this structural refinement as follows:

The SADC vision is that the ultimate goal of the OPDSC and the Mutual Defence Pact is that peace, stability, and development would be protected, and that when necessary, *military force would be deployed to enforce peace* (Macaringue, 2006).

The Foreword to the printed version of the SIPO (dated August 2004) states that the SADC Protocol on Politics, Defence and Security Co-operation is intended to serve as an instrument for dealing with the region's political and security challenges, and that the SIPO was formulated to assist with the implementation of the Protocol. The SIPO is not an end in itself... it is an enabling instrument for the implementation of the SADC developmental agenda (embodied in RISDP). The core objective of the SIPO, therefore, is to create a peaceful environment... to realize the region's socio-economic objectives (Savage, and Shanker, 2012). The SIPO was designed to undertake three tasks: provide guidelines for action (strategies and activities); shape the institutional framework for the day-to-day activities of the Organ; and align the regional peace and security agenda with that of the African Union.

On the above basis, it would therefore be misleading to expect the SADC Secretariat to be engaged in political decision making relating to regional peace and security: it exists by design of the member states, in order to carry out political instructions. Put differently, the SADC Treaty and the mandates of the Secretariat and Directorate restrict it to being an administrative unit with no political decision-making powers. SADC member countries have not chosen to establish a regional institution with supra-national power in the areas of defense and security—critically, a precondition for moving the institution towards a security community. Given these strictures, the relationship between the Secretariat and individual members becomes key, as does leadership. In short, the Organ is not more than the sum of its parts, and given its in-built shortcomings, the parts become key.

Of critical importance to the security dynamics of the sub-region is the absence of the political polarization that was prevalent in the region since the post-apartheid South Africa state supposedly aligns its regional policy agenda with SADC's interests. In contrast to the policy of political and economic destabilization that was rampant with apartheid South Africa's relationship with unfriendly states in the sub-region, post-apartheid South Africa has demonstrated interest in leading the regeneration of the sub-region through collaboration with members of SADC. An example of such a noble cause under the auspices of SADC was demonstrated when South Africa through "cooperative diplomacy" (Booth & Vale, 1995, p. 286) collaborated with Botswana to restore the democratically elected government of Lesotho to power after an attempted coup plot by the three opposition political parties that disputed the outcome of the May 1998 elections (Mbuende, 2001, p. 47). In the same vein, South Africa,

under the auspices of SADC, contributed to the success of Mozambique's elections in 1998. This policy direction is well illustrated by Hwang (2007, p. 77) thus:

By implication, for SADC, this means that collective (regional) identity can be understood as the basis of regional consensus such that peace and stability in the region cannot be realized without regional solidarity on security problems.

The phase-out of political polarization and its consequent policy of destabilization provided the enabling environment for cooperation and collaboration. Understandably, the change in the conditions of South Africa, an undeniable sub-regional leader, transformed the fortunes of inter-state relations in the sub-region. Of significant importance is the resultant change in the nature of security dynamics within the sub-regional security complex. With the end to the possibilities of inter-state wars, SADC's focus has rightly shifted from the military security considerations to the emergent security challenges largely reposed in Human Security. According to the Commission on Human Security (2009),

Human security means protecting fundamental freedoms—freedoms that are the essence of life. It means protecting people from critical (severe) and pervasive (widespread) threats and situations. It means using processes that build on people's strengths and aspirations. It means creating political, social, environmental, economic, military and cultural systems that together give people the building blocks of survival, livelihood and dignity.

The emphasis is on the fact that solutions to human security challenges as a global agenda "places the individual at the 'centre of analysis.'" Consequently, it considers a broad range of conditions which threaten survival, livelihood and dignity and identifies the threshold below which human life is intolerably threatened" (UN Trust Fund for Human Security, 2009, p. 6). The 1994 UNDP Human Development Report identifies the following conditions as the main issues of human security challenges: economic security, food security, health security, environmental security, personal security, community security and political security.

The focus on the human security dimension resonates with prevailing conditions in Southern Africa. Just like there are no glaring prospects of inter-state armed confrontations among member states of SADC, the possibilities of any form of external aggression against any member state of the organization is equally remote. Thus, "the main sources of insecurity, both for ordinary people and for the stability of the state, are found within the borders of the state" (Hammerstad, 2005, p. 77). The reality is that the region currently battles with the challenges of human security in the following areas: illegal migration, piracy on the high seas, spread of HIV/AIDS, proliferation of small arms and light weapons, human trafficking, cross-border criminal activities, natural disasters (flooding and famine), internal political instability, poverty etc., thus, focusing on the individual as the security referent, in contrast to the traditional notion of security which harps on the state as referent object.

Even so, an outstanding conflict in the SADC membership is the conflicts in the Congo DR. The DRC is an example of a conflict with regional and trans border dimensions. Therefore SADC has played a significant role in working towards sustainable resolution. The DRC is bordered by nine countries, Angola, Burundi, Rwanda, Uganda, Republic of Congo, Central African Republic, CAR, South Sudan, Tanzania and Zambia. SADC played a front role in the resolution of the conflicts in the DRC as a regional economic community that seeks economic development through integration, good governance and sustainable peace and security.

The DRC became a member of the SADC in 1998 after its admission into the regional body following Laurent Kabila's defeat of Mobutu's forces. Apart from military intervention,

SADC has also supported mediation and preventive diplomacy efforts in the country. It is important to note that the SADC was pivotal to advancing dialogues and negotiations aimed at ending the various conflicts in the DRC. We could recall the Lusaka Peace Agreement and the Inter-Congolese Dialogue that were facilitated by SADC leaders, among numerous other efforts aimed also at Africans taking charge of their own problems and finding solutions to them, with the DRC conflicts as litmus test. Despite all these efforts the DRC conflicts have persisted and festered, leading to suggestions that the civil society organizations need to be involved and that the base of consultations should be broadened.

SADC must up the ante in the efforts at tackling these issues, not just because of the implications on the internal socio-economic dynamics of member states, but also because some of the issues have the potentials of causing disaffection among the member states of the organization. Uncontrolled and illegal migration across the sub-region, which is aided by the existence of porous borders and corrupt officials, have become prevalent and therefore provide the enabling environment for human trafficking, spread of diseases, cross-border banditry, etc. Booth & Vale (1995, p. 286) aver:

International experience shows that when cross-border migration develop[s] a certain momentum new issues surface: drug smuggling and the unimpeded spread of small arms are major elements in a new and vibrant sub-culture of 'border-economies' in southern Africa.

In reality, "the spectre of uncontrolled migration to South Africa from the region provokes an emotional response" (Booth & Vale, 1995). A section of the South African community have at various times since 1998 launched spates of violent "afrophobic" attacks against fellow black Africans in a bid to expel them from South Africa. Such actions could have profound effects on regional solidarity and cooperation. As SADC battles to entrench regional solidarity, cooperation and collaboration, the organization must devise mechanisms that are relevant to the security challenges of the times. The question, however, is whether the changing phases of security challenges are peculiar to southern Africa, or whether West Africa is equally caught in the web of security dynamism.

### **Comparative Analysis of Security Challenges within ECOWAS and SADC Regions**

One of the most fundamental similarities between the Southern and West Africa sub-regions is the existence of single sub-regional hegemony in both cases. For the west coast of Africa, Nigeria continually displays the features of inherently ascribed sub-regional leadership. The political elites had recognized this unique feature since independence, and had rightly declared that Nigeria possessed a "manifest destiny" in Africa. Similarly, South Africa took up the responsibility of playing a leadership role in Africa, especially since the country dropped its pariah toga and was welcomed into the comity of African nations in 1994. Indeed, both countries' leadership roles have been critical to the existence of the two regional organizations: ECOWAS and SADC. In a significant sense, ECOWAS is a creation of the Nigerian military government's exertions of the early 1970s, while SADC substantively became a classic regional organization after South Africa's membership in 1994. Without any fear of contradiction, therefore, it is safe to surmise that arising from the roles and features of both countries, they have both been central to the dynamism of both security complexes.

Dating back to the immediate post-independent period, each of the sub-regions was confronted with peculiar fundamental challenges arising from the contradictions of colonialism

and the management of modern states. These challenges were driven by both political and economic challenges, that both created sub-regional insecurity. As part of the solutions to Africa's economic underdevelopment, the United Nations body, the United Nations Economic Commission for Africa (UNECA), proposed that Africa's problems could be overcome through the establishment of sub-regional cooperation institutions (Afolabi, 1983, p. 46). Coupled with this informed advice was the desire of the Nigerian government to lead the battle for the development of the sub-region. The Nigerian government took a cue from the European integration mechanism, the European Coal and Steel Community (ECSC), which later became the European Community (EC) and finally emerged as the European Union (EU), to launch an ambitious project of creating the economic cooperation within West Africa in the 1970s.

ECOWAS was eventually founded through the signing of the Lagos Treaty by 15 member states of the sub-region on 28<sup>th</sup> May, 1975. As earlier mentioned, the core focus of ECOWAS was to arrest the debilitating economic conditions of West Africa at the time. About this period however, the Southern Africa sub-region was contending with the issues of managing confrontations between apartheid South Africa and the independent anti-white-minority ruled states. This culminated in the formation of FLS aimed essentially at frustrating the antics of the apartheid regime in its bid to hold the sub-region under its control.

The dynamics of security challenges were altered for both regions in the 1980s and 1990s with emphasis on military security in West Africa and the need for deeper economic cooperation in Southern Africa. The Liberia and Sierra Leone civil wars evolved a new chapter in the role of regional economic organizations. Shortly after the Liberia civil war broke out, and mindful of its responsibilities to the sub-region, ECOWAS, acting under the terms of the Protocol on Mutual Defence Assistance, that was adopted in Freetown on 29<sup>th</sup> May, 1981, through the Standing Mediation Committee, set up a Military Observer Group, called ECOWAS Monitoring Group (ECOMOG) to assist in restoring order to Liberia. Similarly, ECOWAS responded to the Sierra Leone civil war caused by the Revolutionary United Front (RUF) confrontation against the government. In the case of Southern Africa, the 1980s reinvigorated a focus on the economic development of the sub-region without the inclusion of apartheid-era South Africa. Essentially, the change to SADCC and the joining of the organization by independent Zimbabwe curtailed apartheid-era South Africa's economic threat against the weaker states in the region. This became even more pronounced with the creation of SADC in 1992 and the impending liberation of South Africa, and especially the anticipation of the goodwill an independent South Africa, as a member state of the organization, was going to offer the sub-region.

As mentioned above, the mid-1990s heralded the confinement of Southern Africa's security challenges mainly to human security issues. In contrast though, West Africa appears to be battling with its most intense military security problem since the end of the civil wars in Liberia, Sierra Leone and Guinea-Bissau. The major security challenge is unarguably the issue of international terrorism that threatens to tear the region apart. This however does not foreclose the existence of seemingly permanent security challenges of cross-border banditry, human trafficking, poverty and diseases, economic underdevelopment, etc.

The notorious Boko Haram sect, whose origin is traceable to early 2000s political contentions in Nigeria, has spread its dangerous tentacles across the sub-region (Nordwall, 2015). The group continues to unleash its terror mainly against targets within Nigeria, but also occasionally spread its mayhem into Cameroon, Niger, Chad, and other member states of ECOWAS. Another terrorist threat in the West African sub-region is the Maghreb Al Qaeda, which has in the past claimed responsibility for the terrorist attacks in Mali and Burkina Faso.

However, unlike the determined purpose of ECOWAS intervention in the Liberian and Sierra Leone civil wars, a regional security arrangement is yet to be proposed against the terrorist groups. According to Reuters (2015) in reference to Boko Haram, “mistrust between Nigeria and neighbouring Cameroon as well as disagreements over how to deploy troops against Boko Haram have stalled efforts to set up a regional force to combat the Islamist militants.” Until a concrete action is taken at the ECOWAS level, the incidences of terrorist activities may not subside in the sub-region. Hentz (2009, p. 213) submits:

The relationship between regional economic integration and regional security depends on the nature of the security threats that define the region. Traditional state vs state threats on the one hand and new transnational threats on the other hand determine how different forms of regional economic integration ... define or re-define a particular security complex.

In the final analysis, both military and human security challenges have always been visible aspects of the development of both sub-regions. Responses of the regional organizations to the security issues have however been triggered by the exigencies of the times. The global realities of the post-Cold War environment is that the primary solution providers to security problems under the new dominant discourse are the sub-regional organizations.

### **Conclusions: Instructive Notes on Tackling Africa’s Sub-regional Security Challenges**

The security challenge in Africa is compounded by the ease with which crises situations spread across boundaries. This danger is partly tied to the porous land borders all around the continent. There is a sense in the submission that ECOWAS member states were alive to their responsibilities by the attempt to prevent the “domino effect” (Tavares, 2011, p. 149) that the insurgency in Liberia could have caused across the sub-region. Indeed, Charles Taylor’s National Patriotic Front of Liberia (NPFL) was able to make inroads into Sierra Leone and contributed greatly to the crisis that eventually enveloped the country. Similarly, the Lord’s Resistant Army facilitates disturbances in DR Congo, South Sudan, and Central African Republic from its base in northern Uganda. For this purpose, the sub-regional organizations have invented the necessary legal mechanisms for acting to prevent the cross-border spread of crises. As Burgess (1998, p. 37) notes:

The indigenization of peace enforcement in western and southern Africa has been accompanied by high levels of salience, as regional forces have struggled to prevent spillover of conflicts into their home countries.

In essence, the task of providing solutions to regional security issues must always not be confined to the efforts of a single regional organization. Other such organizations that must be included in curtailing the spread of crises are sub-regional organizations whose member states share immediate borders with the conflict zone. In addition, the AU Peace and Security Architecture must be constantly exploited for timely and far-reaching solutions to sub-regional security challenges.

One of the fundamental obstacles to the effectiveness of the REGs in providing security, especially in West and Southern Africa, is the over-reliance of the majority of member states on the capabilities of a single member state. For the western and southern regions, it is an undeniable fact that Nigeria and South Africa respectively have been over-burdened by the responsibilities of ECOWAS and SADC. As Tavares (2011) observes, the intervention of ECOWAS in Liberia “was directed by Nigeria, which contributed 90 percent of the funds

(roughly US\$2 billion and 80 percent of the ECOMOG troops.” Similarly, though the 1998 intervention in Lesotho “was part of an SADC Combined Task Force ... the military and logistical coordination of the mission was carried out primarily by South Africa and to a lesser extent Botswana” (Tavares, 2011). Under this troubling scenario, it may not be unfounded that both countries pursue the objectives of their individual national interests rather than the interests of their sub-regional organizations. Tavares (2011, p. 149) summarizes thus:

... the likelihood of military intervention on the part of ECOWAS and SADC was increased by the national interests of the subregional hegemonic power. As we saw, both South Africa and Nigeria have capitalized on their membership in SADC and ECOWAS, respectively, to extract national dividends.

While it is acceptable to have regional leaders, governments of member states must be aware that it is the concerted commitment of all that can create a united and forthright regional organization committed to meeting the yearnings of all citizens across international borders.

In line with the above, the sub-regional organizations also require the unalloyed commitments of member states in resolving fundamental national-interest related problems. It is critical to respect the salience of mutual agreements on the terms of future interventions in crisis situations in order to prevent avoidable human and material losses. The case of ECOMOG in Liberia stands out like a sore thumb. Whereas, if there had been agreements on the legality and politics of the intervention among member states of the sub-region from the outset, the mission would have prevented the prolongation of the crisis while minimizing losses for all sides.

A critical institutional addition to the structure of sub-regional security is the “Early Warning System” (EWS). For the purpose of an effective and efficient security mechanism, the sub-regions must acknowledge the works of the EWS. A water-tight EWS approach to confronting security challenges would guarantee the possibilities of nipping any form of crisis in the bud. In this regard, sub-regional organizations must continue to work with International Non-Governmental Organizations (INGOs) that are known for unbiased reportage and analysis of crisis-prone areas. Such organizations have the resources to provide adequate information and prognoses about conditions in most regions of the world.

Finally, the sub-regional organizations must provide avenues for deeper involvement in the political growth of member states because “the nurturing and consolidation of democracy is another key to sustainable peace and security” (Mbuende, 2011, p. 148), even at the sub-regional levels. In this respect, member states of SADC could be accused of fueling some of the human security challenges threatening the sub-region. The inability of SADC to proffer solutions to the political and economic impasse in Zimbabwe is an indictment on the organization. As Hentz (2009, p. 212) argues, “the level of development and its associated security dynamics, which are regional in nature, exists because economic development is explicitly linked to security.” It is therefore a matter of imperative urgency for SADC to play a robust role in resolving the Zimbabwe crisis. The same attitude should also apply in the ECOWAS sub-region in the resolution of the crisis among community members.

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