

**REPOSITIONING THE ECONOMIC COMMUNITY OF WEST AFRICAN STATES (ECOWAS)
CONFLICT RESOLUTION ARCHITECTURE THROUGH FEMINIST INCLUSION**

IBENEKWU, IKPECHUKWUKA¹, ODO, N. LILIAN² & IYIANI, C. CHRISTIAN^{3*}

- 1. Institute of African Studies, University of Nigeria, Nsukka.**
- 2. Department of Social Studies Education, Federal College of Education, Ehamufu, Enugu State**
- 3* Department of Social Works, University of Nigeria, Nsukka**

3* Corresponding Author christian.iyiani@unn.edu.ng

Abstract

The Economic Community of West African States originally established in 1975 by its fifteen member West African states was initially set up to promote cooperation and development in diverse economic facets among its members in order to enhance; better living conditions for its citizens and improved interstate relations. However, persistent internal threats of insecurity and conflicts in many of the member states including; Liberia, Sierra Leone, Cote d'Ivoire, Burkina Faso and Guinea Bissau prompted the organization to delve into security matters in the region. Many years after this move, this paper, relying on the liberal feminism theory examined the repositioning of the community's conflict resolution architecture through the inclusion of feminist peace movement. The paper showed that women have since become active and useful in promoting peace from the family to the global stage and should be involved in the ECOWAs security architecture.

Key words: Conflict resolution architecture, repositioning, Economic Community of West African States, feminist peace movement.

Introduction

The Economic Community of West African States (ECOWAS) treaty of May 1975 was primarily built around the promotion within the members states, cooperation and development in all facet of economic activity especially in the fields of industry, transport, telecommunications, energy, agriculture, natural resources, commerce, monetary and financial matters, as well as in social and cultural matters for the purpose of raising the standards of lives of the people of member states through increasing and maintaining economic stability, ensuring closer relations among its members and of contributing to the overall progress and development of the African continent (Kwaja, 2017). Thus, the objective originally did not provide for military intervention in either intrastate or interstate conflicts in the member states. However, the provisions of the United Nations Charter give impetus for Regional and Sub-regional organizations to get involved in peace and security matters in their respective regions. That is why under Chapter VIII; Article 52(1) there is the provision that nothing in the Charter is to preclude the existence of regional arrangements or agencies for dealing with such matters relating to the maintenance of international peace and security as are appropriate for regional action provided the action is in line with the principles of the UN which are seeking a solution by negotiation, enquiry, mediation, conciliation, arbitration, judicial settlement, resort to regional agencies or arrangements, or other peaceful means of their own choice as contained in Article 33(1). Chapter VI goes further to invite Member States entering into such arrangements for dispute resolution to ensure that they make every effort to achieve pacific settlement of local disputes by adopting the regional arrangements or regional agencies before referring them to the Security Council.

Relying on the above UN provisions and previous agreements and protocols on peace and security, which ECOWAS had entered into such as the June 1977 Agreement on Non-Aggression and Assistance in

Defense (ANAD), the April 22, 1978 Protocol relating to Non-Aggression (PNA), and a Protocol on Mutual Assistance in Defense signed in Freetown on May 29, 1981, the organization started to nurse idea of integrating the issue of peace and security into its agenda. The opportunity came in the late 1989 and early 1990s when the sub-region witnessed upsurges in politically motivated violent conflicts and instability leading to state failure in countries such as Cote d'Ivoire, Guinea Bissau, Liberia and Sierra Leone. The intensity and devastating consequences of the situations in these countries led ECOWAS to make a major shift in its primary focus and added ensuring peace, security and stability bearing in mind that without these, the attainment of the primary focus would be a mirage.

Even after ECOWAS had intervened in the crises in the conflicts in the member states, the UN continued to encourage regional organizations to get involved in peace and security matters. In an Agenda for Peace, issued on 31 January 1992, the Secretary-General, Boutros-Boutros Ghali, according to the United Nations Lessons Learned Unit Department of Peacekeeping Operations (1999), citing (A/47/277-S/24111, paras 63-65), recommended a greater role for regional organizations in peace-related activities by stating thus:

But in this new era of opportunity, regional arrangements or agencies can render great service.

... Under the Charter, the Security Council has and will continue to have primary responsibility for maintaining international peace and security, but regional action as a matter of decentralization, delegation and cooperation with the United Nations efforts could not only lighten the burden of the Council but also contribute to a deeper sense of participation, consensus and democratization in international affairs. ... and should the Security Council choose specifically to authorize a regional arrangement or organization to take the lead in addressing a crisis within its region, it could serve to lend the weight of the United Nations to the validity of the regional effort.

As a follow up, the Security Council on 28 January 1993, invited regional organizations for them to study ways and means to strengthen their functions to maintain international peace and security within their areas of competence, paying due regard to the characteristics of their respective regions. They were also directed by the Council to consider ways and means to further improve coordination of their efforts with those of the United Nations. On 3 May 1994, the Security Council further expressed its view that one of the factors that should be taken into account when considering the establishment of new peacekeeping operations was the existence of regional or sub-regional organizations and whether they were ready and able to assist in resolving the conflicts. Furthermore, on 25 September 1997, the Security Council convened at the foreign minister level to consider the need for concerted international action to promote peace and security in Africa. The Council requested the Secretary-General to submit a report regarding the sources of conflict in Africa, ways to prevent and address those conflicts, and how to lay the foundation for durable peace and economic growth in that continent. In response to that request, the Secretary-General issued a report on 13 April 1998, submitting it both to the Security Council and the General Assembly, giving the scope of the challenges to be addressed.

In a presidential statement issued on 30 November 1998, the Security Council underlined the increasingly important role of regional arrangements and agencies, and of coalitions of Member States in the conduct of activities in the peace and security field. This is because, it is believed that regional and sub-regional organizations or arrangements are likely to know more than the UN about the root causes of a conflict in their respective regions and may have a better knowledge of the parties and personalities involved in the conflict. Further, regional organizations/arrangements are able to provide the resources required to support their own operations. In his speech on the future of peacekeeping operations delivered at Georgetown University in February 1999, the Secretary-General expressed concern on the increasing reliance of the Security Council on regional, sub-regional organizations and arrangements in maintaining international peace and security.

The civil war that started in Liberia in 1989, which threatened to collapse the country forced ECOWAS to establish a cease-fire Monitoring Group (ECOMOG), which was dispatched to Liberia on August 24, 1990. In the fourteenth session of the Authority of Heads of State and Government held in Abuja, Nigeria from 4 – 6 July 1991, and in its declaration of political principles of the Economic Community of West African States, the Heads of State and Government of the Economic Community of West African States (ECOWAS), reaffirmed pursuing the realization of the objectives of promoting better relations among West African States by ensuring a stable and secure political environment, in which the people of the sub-region can live in freedom under the law and in true and lasting peace, free from any threat to or attempt against their security, in which the political leaders can pursue a speedy and effective realization of the objectives of ECOWAS. Consequently, the ECOWAS Heads of State, among others, declared their full adherence to the following principles, which was signed on 6th July 1991 in order to enhance the prospects of advancing economic cooperation and integration in a political environment of peace, security and stability within the sub-region:

1. reaffirming the provisions of the Protocol on Non-Aggression adopted on 22 April 1978 and commitment to securing peace and maintaining stability in the ECOWAS sub-region by promoting increasingly better relations, strengthening good neighborliness and ensuring conditions in which peoples can live in freedom under the law and in true and lasting peace, free from any threat to or against their security.
2. reaffirming the determination to refrain in ECOWAS member States mutual relations, as well as in international relations in general, from any threat or use of forces, directly or indirectly, against the territorial integrity or political independence of any Member State.
3. reaffirming also the determination to settle all disputes among member States by peaceful means in such a manner as not to endanger the peace, security and stability of the sub-region.
4. respecting human rights and fundamental freedoms in all their plentitude including in particular freedom of thought, conscience, association, religion or belief for all peoples without distinction as to race, sex, language or creed.
5. promoting and encouraging the full enjoyment by all our peoples of their fundamental human rights, especially their political, economic, social, cultural and other rights inherent in the dignity of the human person and essential to his free and progressive development.
6. believing in the liberty of the individual and in his inalienable right to participate by means of free and democratic processes in the framing of the society in which he lives. To this end, efforts will be made to encourage and promote in ECOWAS countries, political pluralism and those representative institutions and guarantees for personal safety and freedom under the law that are our common heritage.(ECOWAS declaration of political principles, 1991).

This declaration that empowered ECOWAS to intervene in the member countries empowered the organization to act as a critical vehicle for achieving regional security (Golwa, 2009). Hence, on July 29, 1992 and August 6, 1994, ECOWAS in Dakar and Abuja, respectively, made a convention on Mutual Assistance in Criminal Matters and on Extradition. In December 1997 in Togo at the extraordinary ECOWAS Summit, there was the endorsement of a Mechanism for Conflict Prevention, Management, Resolution and Security. In Yomoussoukro, Cote d'Ivoire, during the March 3, 1998 meeting of Ministers of Defence, Interior and Foreign Affairs, it was recommended that ECOMOG should formally become responsible for peace-keeping operation in West Africa; and in the ministerial and expert meeting of July 1998 in Banjul, the security-related mechanisms were given further support (Odo, 2016). There was also the Declaration on the Moratorium on the Importation, Exportation and Manufacture of Light Weapons adopted by ECOWAS Heads of state in a meeting of 30-31 October, 1998 at Abuja. The Moratorium was aimed to "facilitate the resolution of violent conflict, enhance peace-building measures, step-up arms control, and curb the proliferation of light weapons" in the region (ECOWAS 1999; UN, 1999; United Nations Economic Commission for Africa, 2016, para 2). In the Bamako meeting of March 24, 1999, a programme for the Coordination of Assistance for Security and Development (PCASED) was adopted. ECOWAS also established the Programme for Coordination and Assistance for Security

and Development (PCASED) to give effect and serve as an enforcement mechanism for the implementation of the Moratorium. The PCASED defined the Code of Conduct and a Plan of Action covering nine thematic areas (Ayissi & Sall, 2005).

In May 2000 in Monrovia, the Mediation and Security Council (MSC) of the mechanism was officially launched. The Council serves as the equivalent of the UN Security Council, and can authorize all forms of intervention, including the decision to deploy political and military mission, inform the UN and African Union (AU) of its decision, appoint force commander, and other related functions. There is also the Defense and Security Commission made up of Chiefs of Defense staff in ECOWAS that is charged with the responsibility of examining all technical and administrative issues, and assessing logistical requirements for any peace-keeping operation. It also examines reports from the Observation and Monitoring Centres and makes recommendations to and assists the Mediation and Security Council in a number of ways such as formulating the mandate of the peace-keeping force; defining the terms of reference of the Force; appointing the Force Commander; and determining the composition of the contingent (Odo, 2016).

In August 2000 at Abuja, the ECOWAS Authority finally adopted the protocol establishing the mechanism. To ensure its realization, some agencies or commissions charged with different responsibilities, were established. One of such is the Early Warning system with four Observation and monitoring zones: Zone I - Cape Verde, Senegal the Gambia, Guinea-Bissau, and The Gambia with headquarters in Banjul (The Gambia); Zone II comprising Burkina Faso, Côte d'Ivoire, Mali, and Niger, with the office in Ouagadougou, (Burkina Faso).; Zone III made up of Ghana, Guinea Conakry, Liberia, and Sierra Leone has its office in Monrovia (Liberia), and Zone IV comprising Benin, Nigeria, and Togo with the headquarters located at Cotonou (Benin Republic). These zones are charged with the responsibility of collecting data on potential disputes within the countries of their jurisdiction for transmission to the central ECOWAS Observation in Abuja, Nigeria.

There is also the Council of Elders whose members are appointed by the Executive Secretary from seasoned persons adjudged to have contributed meaningfully in their respective countries to engage in preventive diplomacy within the region. The first Council of elders of 32 members was inaugurated in July 2001 in Niamey, Niger, and in January 2003 at Dakar, the number was recomposed and its membership increased to 15, one from each member country. Later on April 23, 2003 in Accra, a new Council of Elders emerged. By and large, the Council had participated in election monitoring in The Gambia, Sierra Leon, Togo, Zimbabwe, among others for the purpose of ensuring peace and violent free elections.

Assessment of ECOWAS Application of Peace and Conflict Resolution Mechanism

Many scholars have written to commend ECOWAS' role in the management of crises in many countries of the sub-region. In this study, the researcher made a critical view of the Economic Community of West African States' application of its peace and security architecture. To scholarly do this, a quick look at the ECOWAS modalities for its peace and security architecture is necessary. Chapter V of the ECOWAS 1999 Mechanism stated the conditions wherein the application of The Mechanism could be tenable. Article 25 of The Mechanism states that the Mechanism shall be applied in any of the following circumstances: in cases of aggression or conflict in any Member State or threat thereof; in cases between two or several Member States; in cases of internal conflict: (a) that threatens to trigger a humanitarian disaster, or (b) that poses a serious threat to peace and security in the sub-region; in the event of serious and massive violation of human rights and rule of law (Odoboo, Udegbunam & Akale, 2016).

One of the conflict ridden countries where ECOWAS had to test its peace-building mechanism was at Cote D'Ivoire. The Cote d'Ivoire crisis was indeed one in which ECOWAS was faced with the problem of enforcement of its conflict mechanism against a serving head of state that had the support of the country's Armed Forces. In this circumstance, ECOWAS did not mandate ECOMOG to enforce its institutional provisions even as the head of state demonstrated flagrant disregard for democracy, human rights abuses and violations of the rule of law, denying Ouattara to take position as the President of Cote d'Ivoire. At this point, ECOWAS failed to enforce the use of force against Cote d'Ivoire, either that it was conscious of not to ignite a return to civil war or not to get involved in a protracted peace enforcement operation that the sub-regional body hadn't the capacity to sustain. Therefore, ECOWAS took the path of applying mediation and

diplomacy. That was why On December 28, 2010, ECOWAS sent a delegation of Presidents from Sierra Leone, Cape Verde and Benin Republic to Abidjan deliver what it called “an ultimatum to leave” to Laurent Gbagbo (The Guardian, December 28, 2010). Gbagbo disrespected the ultimatum and without dispatching ECOMOG for a preliminary military action more time was given for Gbagbo to comply. On January 3, 2011, a second mission to Abidjan by ECOWAS delegates of Presidents Boni Yayi of Benin, Pedro Pires of Cape Verde and Ernest Bai Koroma of Sierra Leone were made, which like the first, the desired outcome was not reached. At the end it was the French, United Nations and pro-Ouattara’s forces that captured Laurent Gbagbo.

Further, Guinea-Bissau was in the mid 200s confronted with crises that were associated with political office succession and other security issues. Earlier in the 1998-1999 civil war, Senegalese and Guinean troops independent of ECOWAS in June 1998, in the name of bilateral agreements intervened, but when General Ansumane Mané was dismissed after being accused of supporting the Senegalese rebels of the Movement of Democratic Forces of Casamance (MDFC) and the attempted coup against President Vieira of Guinea-Bissau, ECOWAS negotiated an agreement between Mané and Vieira at the end of 1998 and deployed ECOMOG to ensure the ceasefire and allow the retreat of Guinean and Senegalese contingents. However, the unit was too weak militarily and it could not react when Mané went on the offensive again and took control of Bissau in May 1999. ECOMOG finally withdrew from the country less than five months after its deployment. ECOWAS latter disengaged from the country for many years, abandoning UN alone to take the lead in the security ridden country (Crisis Group Africa Report, 2016).

From 2004-2009, ECOWAS got involved in different mediation exercises such as the promotion of the creation of an International Contact Group for Guinea-Bissau (ICG-GB) and mobilizing the interest of the international community in Guinea-Bissau and the attempt to re-launch security sector reform (SSR) in partnership with the Community of Portuguese Language Countries (CPLP), notably Angola, after the European Union (EU) suspended its involvement in the scheme in 2020. The goodwill was however, unable to achieve its objective due to lack of a clear division of labour between the different international organisations, rivalries that existed between partners who were supposed to work together on the reforms, the governmental instability and the grip on Bissau held by unsavory military leaders, slow and incoherent administrative and financial procedures and the non-transparent management of resources and priorities in Abuja did not help matters. ECOWAS was therefore unable to give any impetus to the necessary reforms, notably in the security sector. Though ECOWAS experienced some hiccups, it was a key component of the international mechanisms that helped keep Bissau-Guinean actors under control.

In another development, the role of ECOWAS during the Malian political crisis underlined the organisation’s importance as a diplomatic actor to be reckoned with and its lack of substance as a regional body capable of carrying out a decisive military intervention on its own in a complex environment. This is in spite of having noticed that from the first quarter of 2011 there was slowness in the preparations for Malian elections and deterioration of the security situation in the northern part of the country. This in mind, ECOWAS did not take time to study the security situation and thus unable to provide leadership, having little experience in Sahel-Saharan security issues. Continuing with diplomatic method, ECOWAS held an emergency meeting of heads of state and government in Abidjan on 27 March at which it demanded the immediate return to constitutional order and mandated the then-president of Burkina Faso, Blaise Compaoré, to mediate as the leader of six heads of state sent to Bamako to communicate the organisation’s message to Captain Sanogo and discuss the details of a return to constitutional order. The mission was unsuccessful, hence after a semi-summit of ECOWAS on 29 March; it applied a vast arsenal of political, diplomatic, economic and financial sanctions against Mali for as long as the junta remained in power. In addition, the mini-summit confirmed the decision to “put the ECOWAS Standby Force on high alert for all eventualities” (ECOWAS Press release, 2012). The threat of a regional military intervention was quickly made, but the formulation was ambiguous. ECOWAS was therefore, confronted with the limits of its military capabilities and it found it impossible to deploy its soldiers to the densely populated city of Bamako to neutralise the Malian junta’s troops as well as in the regions of Gao, Timbuktu and Kidal to liberate them from occupation by armed Tuareg and jihadist groups. By and large, ECOWAS through mediations played a decisive role in organising the post-coup transition and restored democratic government in Mali in 2013 where Ibrahim

Boubacar Keïta (IBK) won with a clear majority. In the negotiations that followed after the election in Algiers, which resulted in the June 2015 peace agreement, ECOWAS, the AU and the UN took part in the negotiations. ECOWAS played a role in part in the negotiation because it was better able, than other international organizations to build bridges to the Malian political elites. However, although it contributed a lot in terms of expertise and know-how during the discussions, it was no longer considered to be a decisive actor.

ECOWAS's response to the Burkinabe political-institutional crisis raised doubts about the organization's impartiality and neutrality, bringing to light the influence of prominent politicians of the region on its decisions. Private interests and personal friendships sometimes hampered the application of its democratic and good governance principles. This lack of professionalism possibly followed from the informal nature of its mediation. To begin with, when President Compaoré was trying to change the constitution of Burkina Faso to stay in power, ECOWAS pretended as if it was unaware of the development. The attitude of ECOWAS was probably because President Compaoré had played a central role in the organisation for more than a decade. Besides, between February 2012 and April 2016, the president of the ECOWAS Commission was a Burkinabe national, Kadré Désiré Ouédraogo, who was Compaoré's prime minister from 1996 to 2000 and ambassador to Brussels between 2001 and 2012. However, following pressures, Compaoré suddenly resigned in October 2014 creating room for Lieutenant-Colonel Yacouba Isaac Zida's takeover of power. Then was when ECOWAS issued a first communiqué on 31 October 2014 calling on the parties to embrace dialogue with a view to arriving at a political consensus that will lead to free, fair and credible elections consistent with constitutional provisions.

After consulting Burkinabe actors, the ECOWAS delegate of three heads of state called on stakeholders to designate by consensus and as a matter of urgency, a suitably eminent civilian to lead the transition, form a transitional government for a period of one year, organize presidential and legislative elections by November 2015, ... initiate an all-inclusive consultation among political party leaders, representatives of civil society organizations, religious and traditional leaders as well as the national armed forces, to work out the structure and composition of the transitional organs" (Crisis Group Africa Report 2016). This notwithstanding there was a coup carried out by the presidential guard (RSP) on 16 September 2015, but ECOWAS dithered and did not take as firm a position as the AU, which quickly condemned the coup and imposed sanctions on its authors. Instead of isolation and targeted sanctions, ECOWAS chose mediation, hence On September 18, a delegation led by the ECOWAS chairman, Senegalese President Macky Sall, and his Benin counterpart, Thomas Boni Yayi, went to Ouagadougou. After two days of consultations, the delegation made a proposal that worsened the situation rather than eased tensions. It proposed an amnesty for the coup leaders, which was rejected by most Burkinabe as many Burkinabe actors felt that ECOWAS was partisan as it failed to convince them of its independence from Compaoré. This is because the friendships between heads of state seem to have played an important role in the inability of ECOWAS to act more firmly against the coup leaders. Close associates of Compaoré and General Gilbert Diendéré, leader of the coup, apparently activated their networks to put pressure on the organization to tone down its position.

Fundamental of the above security architecture and the constituting personnel is that all were males. This could be because none of the heads of state was a female or possibly because of the much orchestrated male chauvinism in Africa.

Theoretical Framework

The theory adopted for the analysis of this study is liberal feminism also called mainstream feminism. The pioneers advocates of liberal feminism theory were Mary Wollstonecraft (1759-1797), John Stuart Mill (1806- 1873), and Harriet Taylor Mill (1807-1858), who argued for women rights and liberation at the time when the economic and social position of European women was very low (Herouach, 2019). Mary Wollstonecraft in 1792 logically showed that women are independent and morally strong as the men. She therefore contended that if different education system is imposed on men and women; then it is not only unjust but also counterproductive and the nation will be of "*artificial and weak characters*". Therefore, both sexes, should be educated to enhance their rationality that will be beneficial to the society.

Liberal feminism theory hold the view that society has a false belief that women are, by nature, less intellectually and physically capable than men (Tong, 2009). The liberal feminists believe that all human are equally rational to perform any job and subordination of women is due to certain outdated beliefs. To them, men are judged through their merits, whereas women's abilities are deemed to be due to their sex (Jaggar, 1983). They stress that men and women should have equal rights and women have equal opportunities as men. It considers that women are rational creatures as men and they should not be denied from natural rights and should have freedom to act according to their wishes. This theory advocates for works within the structure of mainstream society of integrating women into the structure.

The liberal feminism theory's primary goal is to influence the society to accept women just as men as workers and contributors in the society. In other words, it pursues gender equality in all facets of the public shares. The liberal feminists do not, however, deny that there are biologically based differences between men and women, but they do not regard the differences as adequate to justify for the inequality shown to women.

Feminist Dimension in ECOWAS Security/Conflict Resolution Architecture

African continent has taken a leaf from the international community by adopting most of the international women's rights and women, peace and security frameworks to ensure women's participation in peace-building processes. Some of such are the Convention on the Elimination of All Forms of Discrimination Against Women (1979) (CEDAW), the Beijing Platform for Action (1995), and the landmark UNSCR 1325 (2000). These are anchored on a held basic principle that peace and security can be meaningfully achieved with the participation and leadership of women. African countries have, therefore, since the Nairobi forum in 1985 and especially after the early 1990s, experienced increased number of women organizations in which women have been able to assert their various concern on issues of conflict and peace. Such initiatives of groups includes West African Network for Peace building (WANEP), West Africa Civil Society Institute (WACSI), Mano River Union Women's Peace Network (MARWOPNET), and Women in Peace building Network (WIPNET), among others, have brokered peace and ended violent conflicts in Africa. For example, WIPNET through its advocacy campaign, contributed significantly to the end of Liberian war. Through its "We want peace, No More War" advocacy Charles Taylor and the warlords of the Liberians United for Reconciliation and Democracy (LURD) were forced to attend the peace talks resulting in the signing of the Agreement on Ceasefire and Cessation, which brought about an end to the conflict in 2003 (Jones, 2011). In a similar action, an advocacy campaign by MARWOPNET in 2001 brought together the presidents of Liberia (Charles Taylor), Sierra Leone (TejanKabbah) and Guinea (Lansana Conte) for a peace talk. This action marked the first time the three leaders came together to discuss insecurity and peacekeeping along their borders (Jones 2011). This could be why O'Reilly, Marie, Súilleabháin, and Paffenholz (2015) stated that women's participation in democratic transitions in particular can improve the likelihood of peace negotiations arriving at settlements and parties reaching sustainable agreements. These women actions could be why Africa Union (AU) has given recognition that any efforts for building good governance, democracy, respect for human rights, justice, the rule of law and a peaceful and secure Africa must integrate the Women, Peace and Security (WPS) agenda. This is because, according to O'Reilly, Súilleabháin, and Paffenholz (2015) research shows that women's participation in resolution processes decreases the chances of peace agreements failing by 64 percent and increases the chances of peace agreements lasting for 15 years by 35 percent.

However, while the UN's WSP agenda and the African formations has generated great awareness of the relevance of integrating women in security architecture, progress about it has been slow. That is why Yamin and Burgoyne (n.d) argued that they have not necessarily led to actions in reality. Hence, of the seventy-three countries with NAPs on WPS, only about seventeen have allocated a budget for implementation as of early 2018. In effect, in spite of the recognition that women participation in peace building strategies can aid in effective and holistic reconstruction, national policies and programmes often neglect to involve them in peace building arrangements. This is basically because of male chauvinism that has characterized many societies, especially African. Consequently, the women organizations that have so far made some inroads into building peace in African in general and specifically West African countries,

have not been formally integrated into the mainstream of the peace and security architecture of regional and sub-regional organizations.

To achieve better security architecture in ECOWAS member states, feminist Peace movement should be built on indigenous methods of involving women in peace-building. Historically, in virtually all ECOWAS member states, there has been traditional conflict resolution and peace-building mechanisms including mediation, adjudication, reconciliation, arbitration and negotiation that involved women. The indigenous methods of conflict resolution and peace-building are largely informal, which is usually possible through their formation of social capital through marriages and kinship relations. Within the ECOWAS it has been a notable fundamental principles and sacred character of respecting women, especially the elderly women (Mathey, Dejean, Deballe, Sapio, Koulamnga & Moga, 2003). Thus, with these traditionally held views, women, especially the elderly, were respected by all and as such they played key roles in the crises management in the traditional society. Therefore, whenever, conflict degenerated into armed violence, appeal was usually made to women to intervene, calm the tension and possibly reconcile the conflicting groups. Usually, whatever position the women took was binding on the parties.

In the contemporary African societies, irrespective of the ongoing acculturation in the world, which has diffused our indigenous culture, women still wield significant degree of respect and honour. They are still seen and regarded as mothers to all, though may not be biological. Moreover, many contemporary women are highly educated in vast aspects of education, including peace and security matters. Be this as it may, heads of ECOWAS member state should encourage and formalize the formation of clubs of women that would be registered by government of each country, just like political parties, for the purpose of preventing conflicts, managing conflict and peace-building. These registered feminist clubs/movements would have national spread, permeating every locality and would be able to detect any latent potential conflict issues and strategize to nip them in buds before becoming manifest. With this, women rather should be perceived as agents in conflict and peacemaking than as victims (Olofsson, 2018). And because the clubs/Movements are widespread across the country, States/regions and local communities, they would be able to reach out to others to intervene when there is indication of incapability to handle any conflict issue. By a combination of others, the latent or manifest conflicts could be handled without recourse to ECOWAS. That is why Jordan (2003) argued that the women who work in peacebuilding often use their knowledge and power to help other women and increase their influence. In the same direction, Manchanda (2005) contended that women in conflicts often take part as decision makers, negotiators, peace activists and participating in the military struggle. The struggle she means is to start identifying women as agents instead of victims and strengthen their roles as agents for social transformation. Their ability to do this is on account of their being at the grassroot as local bodies where the conflict emanates. The inclusion of women bodies gives it a comprehensive security framework and as a viable option for addressing regional security issues.

Conclusion

The Economic Community of West African States (ECOWAS) was originally formed for cooperation of member states on economic purposes. However, on realization that no meaningful development can thrive without a secured environment, the organization started to consider security as part of its agenda. This was given a boost by United Nations that considered Regional Organizations as veritable bodies that can handle security matters. This gave impetus to regional organizations to initiate policies and actions leading to its involvements in many security issues that arise in the member states. However, of all the security mechanisms introduced and pursued, involving women was not considered. Many of these have also been seen to have not achieved the deserved result. This study therefore argued that for a comprehensive intervention in security architecture, women, like in the traditional African societies should be incorporated and should not be discriminated against on biological ground.

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