# The End of the Cold War and the Emergence of Supra-nationalism in Economic Community of West African States (ECOWAS)

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## Abstract

ECOWAS is a sub-regional integration organization in Africa, whose main objective is the market integration of its fifteen member states. The organization has suffered criticisms as a result of the poor implementation of its economic programmes. Since the end of The Cold War, ECOWAS problems were aggravated by security problems and political instability due largely to power vacuum and broken nests of the powerful blocks. Hence, the authority of heads of state and government of the ECOWAS were constrained to take on the challenges, thereby extending the mandate of ECOWAS to tackle security issues. Consequently, the organization has been growing in power and influence within the sub-region, thereby acquiring some supranational posture. For instance, in December 2010, the ECOWAS Authority of Heads of State and Government threatened to take measures including the use of legitimate force to remove the President of Côte dʹIvoire, Laurent Gbagbo for refusing to concede defeat at the Presidential elections and hand over power to the internationally acclaimed winner, Alhassane Dramane Ouatarra. This paper examines the global dynamics that are propelling this trend and explains the factors responsible for supranational authority of ECOWAS. Using qualitative data and analysis, the paper argues that the adoption, codification and implementation of international norms and neo-liberal precepts on democracy, good governance and human rights by ECOWAS since the end of the Cold War have enabled it to establish its supranational authority in West Africa.

*Key words: ECOWAS, Cold War, Regional integration, Supranational authority*

## Introduction

This paper examines the global dynamics that are propelling the trends towards supranationalism in ECOWAS and explains the factors responsible for supranational authority of ECOWAS. The paper starts with a conceptual discussion of supranationalism and then proceeds to argue that ECOWAS has been evolving towards a supranational organization since the end of the Cold War.

Economic Community of West African States (ECOWAS) is a sub-regional organization established by 15 West African states in 1975 to facilitate the economic integration of their disparate economies with the aim of uplifting the standard of living of their peoples.[1] Until 1990, which corresponds with the End of the Cold War, the organization's main preoccupation was market integration through the establishment of a policy of free movement of people and goods, right of residence and establishment for the citizens of ECOWAS across the West African sub-region. The rationale behind this policy is based on the economic argument that an enlarged market could help the ECOWAS countries to pool their resources for development through gains from economies of scale, and overcoming structural challenges posed by their small and weak national markets. Although, a free trade area has been achieved in the ECOWAS zone since 2000, obstacles still remain, making free movement of people, goods and services difficult. These obstacles include both tariff and non-tariff barriers. Corrupt practices of some border officials, dependence on fiscal revenue from imports, lack of complementarities in trade and structural dependence on trade with advanced economies are among the factors that contribute to difficulties in trade integration within the sub region (Bappah, 2007). Therefore, it has been the preoccupation of ECOWAS to ensure that the free trade area functions effectively.

The market integration is also hampered by political instability and violent conflicts that make the union insecure. The insecurity situation became prominent in the early 1990s, which corresponds with the end of the Cold War. The end of the Cold War radically changed the international security landscape, ushered in the era of unfettered globalization and therefore unsettled many aspects of life (social, economic, security and political) in different countries, sub regions and regions of the world (Fawcett and Sayigh, 1999; Falk, 1997; Hogan, 1992). In the ECOWAS region, the end of Cold War imposed on the member states the need for a regional security complex as the region became threatened by political instability occasioned by the outbreak of violent intra-state conflicts. These conflicts constituted a huge threat to the realization of the economic integration objective of the Organization. Between 1989 and 1990, violent conflict broke out between the government and rebel groups in Liberia, which caused untold hardship and death to the people. The consequent flow of refugees across the sub region effectively made the war a matter of urgent regional concern. With little or no prospect of international intervention,

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[1] Benin, Burkina Faso, Cape Verde, Cote d'Ivoire, Gambia, Ghana, Guinea, Guinea-Bissau, Liberia, Mali, Niger, Nigeria, Senegal, Sierra Leone, Togo.

ECOWAS was compelled under the situation to venture into conflict resolution and peacekeeping in 1991 (Musah, 2011). That development came with some resistance and lack of consensus among the member states as it was seen as an aberration by an organization meant to promote economic integration and development. ECOWAS Monitoring Group (ECOMOG), a peace-keeping outfit, was formed out of necessity to address the war in Liberia. As the war spilled into the neighbouring state of Sierra Leone, ECOMOG's mandate was expanded to include Sierra Leone. Since Liberia and Sierra Leone, ECOWAS has seen its mandate and objectives transformed to include political and security matters (Musah, 2011). The transformations in the mandate of ECOWAS have been largely supported by the post-Cold War internationalization and diffusion of neo-liberal political and economic values. ECOWAS has embraced the concepts of human security and respect for human rights norms by adopting the policy of non-indifference or right of intervention in internal affairs of member states in cases of gross violations of human rights (ECOWAS, 1993). It has also adopted zero-tolerance to violations of liberal democratic principles and is promoting the involvement of civil society actors and private organizations in the implementation of its policies and programs. These transformations have contributed in the evolution of supranational structures in the sub region. Incrementally, changes have been made to the structure and power of the ECOWAS and its institutions. The Organization has in recent times established its authority in maintaining peace, security and political stability in the sub region. A few instances may support this claim. In 2010 the ECOWAS Authority of Heads of State and Government of ECOWAS resolved, at the end of an extra-ordinary meeting, to explore all options, including the use of legitimate force, to pressure the President of the Republic of Côte d'Ivoire, Laurent Gbagbo, to relinquish power after losing election (ECOWAS, 2010:4). The resolution was unprecedented and indicative of the growing power of the regional body. In similar vein, the Organization has punished some of its member states with suspension and pressure for violation of common principles on democracy. Niger, Guinea and Côte d'Ivoire were at one time or the other suspended on account of falling short of democratic standards set by the Community. Niger was suspended following President Tandja's attempt to manipulate the constitution in order to extend his stay in power. Guinea was also suspended following a bloodless coup on December 23 2008 in line with the ECOWAS principle of zero-tolerance to power obtained unconstitutionally (Temple, 2011). Côte d'Ivoire was suspended during its election crisis in 2010. All these countries were only re-instated when they had fulfilled the conditions of restoring constitutional legality set by ECOWAS instruments.

Furthermore, in the last two decades ECOWAS has transformed its institutional structures. It has established supranational institutions such as the ECOWAS Parliament, the ECOWAS Community Court of Justice and the upgrading of its Executive Secretariat to the level of Commission with enhanced power and authority (ECOWAS, 2006). The development of ECOWAS from an intergovernmental organization to one with outward trappings of a supranational entity brings to fore the question of what dynamics are behind the evolution. This paper examines this question from the theoretical analysis of supranational development of regional integration in order to show that the adoption, codification and implementation of international norms and neo-liberal precepts on democracy, good governance and human rights by ECOWAS since the end of the Cold War have enabled the supranational evolution of ECOWAS. In the next section, we shall examine the theoretical literature on supranational development in regional integration.

**Theoretical Focus of the Paper**

This paper employs an adaptation of the Theory of Supranational Governance proposed by Alec Stone Sweet and Wayne Sandholtz (1997).  Supranationalism is defined as the voluntary ceding of some decision-making powers by member states to some higher authority…in specified areas such as trade and economic policy, financial policy and so on (Taylor, 1979). This implies that state accept to subject itself willingly to the higher authority and has then power to withdraw itself from the arrangement. The concept of supranationalism has to do with the relationship between state sovereignty and international institutions. Discussions on the relationship usually centers on the fact that international institutions are often 'thought to have interfered in some sense with the traditional pattern of exclusive control by state authorities of their own internal governmental affairs' (i.e. their sovereign fortress) (Taylor, 1977:216). The two aspects of state sovereignty affected are 'the exclusive competence of the state in its territory and the relative independence of law-making institutions from external intervention' (Adebajo and Rashid, 2004:75). Taylor (1977) writes that the concept of supranationalism 'raises questions about the power and authority of international institutions and about the way in which developments there may have weakened the authority of states and their capacity to survive in their traditional form'(Taylor, 1977:216). In the present era of globalization, state's internal and external sovereignty is vulnerable on different counts. Taylor (1977) identified three broad areas from which state's sovereignty may be weakened: 1) when there is progressive change in the structure and power of the international institutions; 2) when there are forces challenging the exclusive competence of the state in its own territory and; 3) when the separateness or

'integrity' of the decision-making structures in the state is being challenged forces from outside (Taylor, 1977). This perspective is however, challenged by another perspective referred to as intergovernmentalism.

Intergovernmentalism is the opposite of supranationalism, which implies the preponderance of state power and will within any integration process. The EU has been a subject of debate about whether or not it is tending towards supranationalism or intergovernmentalism. Sweet and Sandholtz (1997) contend that intergovernmentalism and supranationalism are two opposite sides of governance continuum. Along the continuum, given the dynamic interplay of the elements of supranational evolution (transnational exchange, supranational organization, and European Community (EC) rule making) a given policy sector may proceed towards supranationalism and leave behind other sectors within the realm of intergovernmentalism. Therefore in explaining the supranational governance-the competence of the European Community (EC) to make binding rules in any given policy sector- manifest in some policy sectors within the EU and not in others, Sweet and Sandholtz, argue that European integration, is 'provoked and sustained by the development of causal connections between three factors: transnational exchange, supranational organization, and European Community (EC) rule making' (Sweet and Sandholtz, 1997:297). Therefore, to understand the differentials in governance outcomes in any one sector, one needs to look at a process of transition from national to intergovernmental to supranational governance, which occurs as a result of social demands for EC rules and regulations generated by cross-border transactions and communications pressures and the response of the supranational organizations to that effect; and the process of institutionalization of these rules, which itself may provoke further integration (Sweet and Sandholtz, 1997). The theory therefore underscores the role of transnational exchanges, the capacities of supranational organizations to respond to the needs of those who exchange, and the role of supranational rules in shaping subsequent integration (Sweet and Sandholtz, 1997:299). It also draws some of its logic from neo-functionalism, and also an appreciation of intergovernmentalism. The major differences in the arguments of the two theories on regional integration, i.e. intergovernmentalism and neo-functionalism, is that the former sees integration as a process of fulfilling goals set by states, while in the former", the effect of unintended consequences or 'spill-over' is emphasised in the process of integration. However, regional integration and institutions have been explained in a context different from the ones demarcated by either intergovernmentalism or neo-functionalism.

Sweet and Sandholtz (1997) acknowledge the importance of states and the power and influence they wield in the integration process, they nonetheless did so by also highlighting how the transnational forces of integration (cross border transactions and communications) may transform and transfer governance/authority from the state to the supranational level. Hence, the competence to govern in a particular sector may be turned over to a supranational authority by the state due to pressure from social demands and supranational rules that are made in response to that. This functional process is what defines the theory.  In addition, Sweet and Sandholtz (1997) contend that intergovernmentalism and supranational governance are two opposite sides of governance continuum. Along the continuum, given the dynamic interplay of the elements of supranational evolution (transnational exchange, supranational organization, and European Community (EC) rule making) a given policy sector may proceed towards supranationalism and leave behind other sectors within the realm of intergovernmentalism.

A similar line of theorisation was suggested by Pollack (1997) in his re-examination of the debate about whether supranational institutions drive integration or they merely work within the remit of states' interest. He suggests that

> the role of supranational organizations in the integration process is best understood in terms of principal-agent analysis, which suggests that the autonomy and influence of supranational organizations varies as a function of four key variables: the preferences of member governments, the institutional decision rules governing EC policy making, the distribution of information between supranational organizations and member governments, and the possibility of transnational coalitions between the organizations and interest groups within the member state (Pollack, 1997:1).

This method using of variables in defining outcomes of integration process suggests dynamism in the relationship between the member states and the supranational institutions, and the influence of 'intervening' variables that produce outcomes in specific integration sphere for or against a move in the direction of either supranationalism of intergovernmentalism along the governance continuum. As applied to ECOWAS, the variables used by Sweet

and Sandholtz (1997) and Pollack in their study of the EU do not match the realities in ECOWAS. For instance, in ECOWAS, transnational forces within the sub region are so weak as to generate the kind of momentum that will drive integration and supranational governance. Therefore, a new set of variables that suit ECOWAS need to be employed. In our adaptation of the theories, therefore, we privilege the role of global dynamics in propelling supranational evolution of ECOWAS in the political and security policy sectors. These changes, as we will demonstrate later, impose on the regional institutions and the member states certain agenda that ultimately drive ECOWAS integration.

Therefore, having taken into consideration the peculiarities of ECOWAS, we argue that supranational developments in ECOWAS are informed by the interplay of three factors: the influence of changing global context, the adaptation of ECOWAS institutions, and the role of civil society organizations and ECOWAS development partners.

As noted earlier intergovernmentalism and supranationalism are not mutually exclusive but represent a continuum along which shift in policy authority occur, either towards supranational or intergovernmental mode of governance for any particular policy area.  In the next section therefore, we examine the factors that shape up the current global environment, which produces conditions that favour the emergence of supranationalism in ECOWAS.

**The Post-Cold War Environment and the Evolution of ECOWAS towards Supranationalism**

The end of the Cold War, which marked the global ascendency of capitalism and neo-liberal socio-economic and political precepts, has had some profound effect on developing countries and Africa in particular. The Washington Consensus and there is no alternative (to neo-liberalism) TINA rhetoric at the dawn of the collapse of communism on the economic front and tying up of trade/aid with human rights and freedoms by the advanced capitalist countries imposes the need for change within many developing countries. In the ECOWAS region, the influence in the political sphere became apparent in the 1990 Declaration of Political Principles by the ECOWAS Authority of Heads of State and Government. The Declaration was made at a time in which most of the regimes in West African states were under military rule and dictatorships. Therefore, the leaders made the declaration to show their determination

>to concert our efforts to promote democracy in the sub-region on the basis of political pluralism and respect for fundamental human rights as embodied in the universally-recognized international instruments on human rights and in the African Charter on Human and Peoples Rights (Emphasis ours, ECOWAS,1991)

This set the tone for the political agenda of ECOWAS. It was also a reflection of the change in global order, and the onset of new global order based on neo-liberalism. The principles of political pluralism and fundamental human rights clearly signaled the dawn of an era of liberal democracy in the sub-region. The declaration also indicated the commitment of ECOWAS to implement, at the sub-regional level, global and regional instruments that embody liberal values. The consensus of the heads of state on the political principles set the ball rolling for an era of regional management and enforcement of democracy and human rights norms.

Shortly after, in 1993, the Treaty of ECOWAS was revised to take care of new challenges. The influence of the changing global context was also acknowledged in part of the preamble to the 1993 Revised Treaty of ECOWAS. It says that "… the review of the treaty arises, inter alia, from the need for the community to adapt to the changes on the international scene in order to derive greater benefits from those changes". This adaptation to the changes in the international scene includes the incorporation of security and political objectives in the revised treaty. Article 58 (2) provides that, "to safeguard and consolidate relations conducive to the maintenance of peace, stability and security within the region… Member States undertake to co-operate with the community in establishing and strengthening appropriate mechanisms for the timely prevention and resolution of intra-State and inter-State conflicts" (ECOWAS Revised Treaty, 1993:32). The expansion of ECOWAS mandate to include prevention and resolution of intra-state conflict is a major shift in site of governance from national to supranational level. This supranational shift in authority was consolidated further by protocols. The protocol on the Mechanism for Conflict Prevention, Management, Resolution, Peace-keeping and Security and the Supplementary protocol on Democracy and Good Governance as well as the ECOWAS Conflict Prevention Framework (ECPF) are important instruments that enhanced the supranational authority of ECOWAS. The mechanism, for instance, established the Mediation and Security Council, comprising of nine member states mandated to take appropriate decisions for the implementation of the provisions of the mechanism by majority vote of

members present. The functions of the Council include authorization of all forms of intervention and decision on deployment of political and military missions. The decision is binding on all other members. The protocol on Democracy and Good Governance prescribes sanctions to be meted on any member state by ECOWAS in the event of an abrupt end to democracy or massive violations of human rights in a member state. The ECPF sets an agenda 'to eliminate pervasive threats to people's and individual rights, livelihoods, safety and life; to protect human and democratic rights and the promotion of human development to ensure freedom from fear and freedom from want' (ECPF, 2008:9). Furthermore, in line with the vision of transforming the region from an 'ECOWAS of States to an ECOWAS of the Peoples', the framework posits that tensions between sovereignty and supranationality and between regime security and human security will progressively be resolved in favour of supranationality and human security (ECPF, 2008:9).

All the foregone developments help in explaining how the global dynamics has helped in the supranational evolution of ECOWAS at the institutional and normative levels. However, they do not explain how these institutional and normative structures play out in practice. It is noteworthy that paper provisions may not be implemented at any level of governance, whether it is national, regional or international, without the influence of some forces. Therefore, in order to explain how the supranational provisions in ECOWAS instruments get translated into action, we employ the interplay of our three theoretical variables, which is the influence of neo-liberal global forces, the role of civil society and development partners of ECOWAS. This will be analyzed in the next section.

**Explaining the Dynamics of Supranationalism in ECOWAS in the Post-Cold War Era**

The end of the Cold War changed the international landscape and unshackled forces that have been eroding the pervasive nature of state sovereignty and regime security in international relations. The old international order in which the sanctity of state sovereignty was respected as a basis for international peace and stability is today under attack by the forces of globalization and neo-liberalism. Globalization, with its transcending of borders/ territories and control of the nation-state, is eroding national sovereignty, territoriality and authority (Hettne and Söderbaum, 2006:180). There is a strong perspective that argues that a transition from a Westphalian or state-centred world order to a post-Westphalian or post-sovereign world order has taken place (Hettne and Söderbaum, 2006). Although, this is disputable, in Africa there has been an increase in the influence of international norms on human rights and security as

well as enthronement of the principles of democracy. States in Africa are being subjected to the application of these norms and principles. Within ECOWAS these norms and principles have been adopted and codified, as mentioned earlier. Therefore, in the application of these norms, ECOWAS has developed mutual relations within the member states with civil society and at the international level with international organizations, strong western powers that champion those human rights norms and democratic principles. In so doing, ECOWAS receives tremendous support and cooperation that strengthen its authority in applying the agreements voluntary entered into by its member states.

In carrying out its mandate on conflict prevention, management, security and humanitarianism, which is enshrined in the protocol on the mechanism, ECOWAS works with, and receive support from, the United Nations. In the history of peace-keeping in Africa, ECOWAS was the first organization to engage in joint action with the UN for the resolution of conflicts within West Africa. The UN peace support operations in Liberia, Sierra Leone, Guinea-Bissau and Côte d'Ivoire were all with the active involvement and collaboration of the ECOWAS Monitoring Group (ECOMOG). The collaboration provided the resources and international backing for ECOWAS effectiveness. It also helped in boosting the image and authority of the Organization. For instance in 2004, the UN Security Council in its Resolution 1528 (2004) referred to the conflict in Côte d'Ivoire as follows:

> '*recalls* its full support for Economic Community of West African States (ECOWAS) and France to promote a peaceful settlement of the conflict, and *welcoming*, in particular, the effective action taken by the ECOWAS forces in order to stabilize the country' (UN Security Council, 2004).

Similarly, the Security Council in its Resolution 1509 (2003) on Liberia reiterated,

> its support for the efforts of the Economic Community of West African States (ECOWAS), particularly the organization Chairman and President of Ghana John Kufuor, Executive Secretary Mohammed Ibn Chambas, and mediator General Abdulsalami Abubakar, as well as those of Nigerian President Olusegun Obasanjo, to bring peace to

> Liberia, and *recognizing* the critically important role they continue to play in the Liberia peace process (UN Security Council, 2003).

The resolution also commended,

> the rapid and professional deployment of the ECOWAS Mission in Liberia (ECOMIL) forces to Liberia, pursuant to its resolution 1497 (2003), as well as Member States which have assisted ECOWAS in its efforts, and stressing the responsibilities of all parties to cooperate with ECOMIL forces in Liberia(UN Security Council, 2003).

These types of support and commendation no doubt bolster the image and authority of ECOWAS in the sub region, as the UN aligns its position with that of ECOWAS and calls on the parties to cooperate with the ECOWAS efforts.

After the restoration of security and stability, the next task of ECOWAS in a crisis situation is the restoration of constitutional governance. In this respect, ECOWAS serves as the overseer of elections and the establishment of good governance. ECOWAS gains supranational status by appealing to, and adopting and implementing liberal democratic values, principles and standards. In the post-Cold war world, there is an increasing intolerance to any abuses of the 'universal' values and principles of democracy, good governance, human rights. It is also recognised that unconstitutional changes of governments, particularly in Africa, are one of the essential causes of insecurity, instability and violent conflicts. Hence, it is considered legitimate that strict actions, including intervention, can be taken against a state where violence is committed against the people and constitutional authority is desecrated. ECOWAS has enshrined this global position in its protocols, particularly on Democracy and Good Governance. ECOWAS has also exploited international support in that regard to pressure its member states to refrain from, and correct any violations of these universal principles. This happened in the case of Niger, when the former President Tandja Mahmadou attempted to alter the constitution to elongate his stay in power ECOWAS rejected the move, suspended the government and mobilized international diplomatic pressure on Tandja. The pressure helped in ending his regime as the Nigerien Army took over power and cooperated with ECOWAS to restore constitutional government.

More recently, in Côte d'Ivoire the former President Laurent Gbagbo attempted to overturn the victory of his opponent Allasane Ouatarra in order to perpetuate his stay in power. ECOWAS took a decisive position by recognizing Ouatarra as the legitimate winner of the elections and continued to pressure Gbagbo to yield power. The UN, AU and most of the international community sided with ECOWAS. Gbagbo was ousted from power by a rebel movement with the tacit approval of ECOWAS. The rebels handed power to the elected President Allasane Ouatarra. These instances are indicative of how ECOWAS utilize international support to implement the provisions of its Protocols on Conflict Prevention, Democracy and Good Governance.

The civil society became important and relevant in the post-Cold War era in Africa. In the political sphere, the Civil Society Organizations (CSOs) became agents of change as they did participate in effecting transitions from various types of military dictatorship on the Continent. Moyo (2010) argues that the civil society's role was not limited to the arena of political and civil liberties. It was also seen as instrumental in promoting well-being, influencing public policy, reducing poverty and administering humanitarian aid. Civil society, in particular non-governmental organizations (NGOs) associated with foreign aid, assumed significant roles and became major forces in development (Moyo, 2010:5). The tension between state and civil society in many African states in the 1990s is the result of the expansion of space for CSOs as agents of change and providers of services. Decentralization of governance means that states are no longer the sole representative of the people and agents of change in Africa (Moyo, 2010). This role of the CSOs was recognized in ECOWAS and a space was created for them in the affairs of the organization. Articles 81 of the Revised Treaty provides that:

> The Community, with a view to mobilizing the human and material resources for the economic integration of the region, shall co-operate with regional nongovernmental organizations and voluntary development organizations in order to encourage the involvement of the peoples of the region in the process of economic integration and mobilize their technical, material and financial support (ECOWAS Treaty, 1993:45).

The benefit of this provision has been seen in the role of the CSOs in the resolution of the Liberian Conflict. The ECOWAS brokered Comprehensive Peace Agreement of 18th June 2003 in Accra between the Liberian Government,

the rebel groups and (eighteen) political parties were the witnesses and signed the Inter-Religious Council for Liberia (IRCL), the Mano River Women Peace Network (MARWOPNET), Liberia National Bar Association, Liberian in Diaspora, Liberia Leadership Forum, Civil Society Movement for Liberia (ECOWAS, 2003). These civil society groups mobilized and facilitated the peace process in Liberia. They participated in political forums, mediation (taking a stand on issues), negotiation and the peace agreement.

Furtherance, in developing this alliance between ECOWAS and the CSOs the First ECOWAS-Civil Society Consultation on tackling human security worries in West Africa was organized from 30$^{th}$ May to 1$^{st}$ June 2003 in Abuja (Thomson, 2003). And on 12 December 2003 a sub-regional umbrella for CSOs in the sub region, called West Africa Civil Society Forum (WACSOF), was established by ECOWAS. The establishment of WACSOF is aimed at galvanizing 'the emerging 'civic' power and facilitate constructive partnership with states authorities, political parties, as well as ECOWAS' (WACSOF, 2009). Its membership cut across various strands of civil society, which include social groups, professional groups, NGOs, Trade Unions, Organization of Workers, and Employers Organizations, Academia and research institutions, market women, retail traders, and artisans (WACSOF Charter, 2003). One of the reasons behind the formation of WACSOF is the conviction that the successful implementation of relevant ECOWAS treaties and protocols requires popular participation. WACSOF thus assists ECOWAS through policy influencing and advocacy and thematic support for ECOWAS programs on integration, development, trade and investment. In the case of the former, the civil society organization follows policy discussions at the level of ECOWAS, consults with relevant stakeholders in the civil society to come up with a policy stance (WACSOF, 2009). One of the main achievements of WACSOF was its support for ECOWAS Court of Justice to maintain its supranational advantage as a court with power to listen to individual complaints on human rights and freedoms, even against the member states. The Gambian authorities proposed an amendment to reduce this power by including a caveat that such power can be exercised only after exhaustion of internal remedies. WACSOF mobilized a counter position and participated in the meeting of Legal Experts tasked with the responsibility of looking into the proposal. The proposal was rejected with a landslide majority, which makes the Court retain its power (WACSOF, 2009).

Another important role of the CSOs in helping ECOWAS to fulfill its mandate is in the area of putting pressure on regimes to respect democratic principles and human rights. The CSOs form an integral part of the Conflict Prevention Mechanism of ECOWAS that is the Early Warning and Response System,

known as ECOWAS Early Warning and Response Network (ECOWARN). The most prominent of the CSOs in this structure is the West Africa Network for Peace building (WANEP). WANEP national units are linked to the ECOWARN. They collect information relating to some identified conflict indicators from open sources and transmit them to the monitoring and observation centre in the ECOWAS Commission, where informed analysis is made and recommended response options are passed on the President of the Commission for action. ECOWAS regularly trains the CSOs it collaborates with in order to serve its purposes effectively.

Similarly, in the promotion of democracy and good governance and human rights, WACSOF has been supportive of ECOWAS. The CSOs in West Africa are engaged in elections and conflict monitoring, advocacy, sensitization, research and policy recommendations for ECOWAS on a variety of issues. In an interview with the President of West Africa Civil Society Forum (WACSOF) and the Director of Centre for Democratic Development (CDD), Dr Jibril Ibrahim, explained the supportive roles West African civil societies play to assist ECOWAS in putting pressure on recalcitrant leaders in the sub region. He said, 'We helped put pressure on Gbagbo to conduct election in Côte d'Ivoire after five years delay. We also went to Niger and mobilized the CSOs in Niger against former President Tandjas's third term bid. We engaged political parties and CSOs in Niamey and pushed a position in ECOWAS demanding an end to the recognition of Tandja's authority' (Field notes, 2011). Consequent upon that the opposition parties in Niger decided to go to Abuja to address their grievances to members of ECOWAS who were having an extraordinary meeting on the situation in Niger. In their letter to ECOWAS the opposition demanded that the Organization act with firmness and take strong measures against the government of Tandja. As a minimum penalty, they suggested the suspension of their country from ECOWAS deliberations. These measures they hoped would help bring down the government political parties and CSOs in Niamey and consequently, ECOWAS decided to put pressure on Tandja.  When Tandja defied calls by ECOWAS not to organise a referendum and to halt brutal suppression of dissent to his ambition, ECOWAS suspended Niger and sanctioned the government of Tandja Mamadou, who was later overthrown by the Military. The fact that ECOWAS intervention in the Niger crisis was born out of popular civil movement is an indication of transnational links which gives some form of direct mandate and legitimacy to the Organization. The transnational linkage between the people and ECOWAS shows how effectively the Organization responds to the legitimate demands of the people in a supranational fashion. The CSOs therefore play an important role in the establishment of the supranational authority of ECOWAS.

ECOWAS, on the other hand, has also been supporting and strengthening CSOs and political parties in the sub region. It provides them with funds, training and technical assistance. In 2009, for instance, ECOWAS contributed nineteen percent (19%) of the funding received by WACSOF from its donors (WACSOF, 2009). Also, in July 2010, ECOWAS Commission convened a regional meeting on Political Parties and Internal Party Democracy in Côte d'Ivoire:

> to examine the state of political parties in West Africa with respect to their internal organization, financing and their ability to articulate visions and agenda to positively transform governance in the region. It was also to deliberate on networking possibilities and opportunities among political parties across the region, with a view to sharing experiences and best practices, enhancing their capacities, as well as the support that ECOWAS could render in this direction (ECOWAS Communiqué, 2010)

The meeting was attended by political parties from eleven member states, some members of ECOWAS Parliament, representatives of Electoral Commissions of Burkina Faso, Sierra Leone, Niger and Togo, governance experts, representatives of research institutions and the media from ECOWAS Member States. The meeting reviewed the democratization process in the sub region, the effort of ECOWAS and the place of parties within the process. Having reviewed the progresses made and challenges to overcome, it was decided that a Forum of West African Political Parties (FOWAPP) would be established as a platform for interaction and mutual assistance (ECOWAS Communiqué, 2010). This form of communication with political parties in the sub region gives ECOWAS enhanced status in the member states political processes.

**Conclusion**

The end of the Cold War brought to the fore the issue of human rights and democratization along with the neo-liberal doctrine of reduced governmental authority and increased civil society engagement. These changes in the global political context were embraced by ECOWAS. They influenced the mandate, structure and norms of the organization. From the pursuit of economic integration and development, ECOWAS has become more influential in dealing with political and security issues. The role of international organization and Western powers in supporting ECOWAS agenda for a stable and secure West

Africa, as well as the mobilization of civil society forces in the region have contributed to the efficacy of the organization as it evolves towards a supranational authority. Therefore, the continuous evolution of ECOWAS towards supranationalism can only be assured if the international norms on human rights and democracy remain relevant, and possibly deepened; if the organization continues to explore and enjoy the support of international organization, such as the UN, and Western powers on its application of those norms within West Africa and; if the CSOs continue to have robust space for their activities and collaboration with ECOWAS. The interplay of these three factors and conditions made it possible for ECOWAS to be inclined towards being a supranational organization.

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