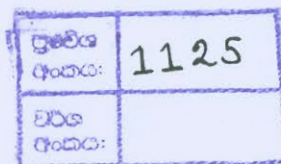


REGIONAL INTEGRATION AND CONFLICT RESOLUTION: AN ANALYSIS
OF ECONOMIC COMMUNITY OF WEST AFRICAN STATES (ECOWAS')
CONFLICT MANAGEMENT MECHANISM, 2001-2011

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ABSTRACT

Economic Community of West African States (ECOWAS) was established in 1975 with the main objectives of promoting economic cooperation and development of its 15 member states through regional integration. Constrained by security challenges in early 1990s, ECOWAS extend its mandate to address security issues leading to the establishment of a protocol relating to the Mechanism for Conflict Prevention, Management and Resolution, Peace keeping and Security in 1999. The Mechanism is to anticipate and prevent armed conflicts, as well as facilitate peace making and peace building efforts in the region. However, in spite of its operation for over a decade, efforts at achieving peace in the region leave so much to ponder; the much desired peace is still an illusion with rampant proliferation of small arms and insurgency in different parts of the region, rising militia activities, high rate of crime, and electoral related violence. Many member states to date did not ratify the ECOWAS Mechanism and the supplementary protocol on Democracy and Good Governance which make it difficult to domesticate its provisions. Until recently, ECOWAS did not have competent manpower and adequate financial resources for implementing the terms of the Mechanism; these manifestations put to question the capability and efficacy of ECOWAS Conflict Management, Mechanism, as well as question the commitment of the member nations to peace and security. Against this background, this study, using qualitative content analysis method and from primary and secondary sources of data, mostly source from ECOWAS Commission and interview with its officials, and civil society, investigated ECOWAS Mechanism's experience in peace keeping functions since its inception in 2001 until 2011. The study examined its structures, strategies, and its relations with regional and international bodies and civil society organizations as it operate to determine its effectiveness in meeting security challenges in the region. According to the findings of this study, although there are wide range of security challenges the regional body did not relent in its effort to tackle security challenge. Through the support received from development partners, ECOWAS transform its security institution; Built up legal and normative capacity and authority to deal with security challenges and political instability. ECOWAS has achieved relative success in mediation and negotiation efforts and have made progress through its zero tolerance to unconstitutional accession to power in sanitizing the region of undemocratic advances. However, while the regional body is commended for a well established structures and norm-setting, its commitments generally to effective implementation of its policies and decisions posed a serious challenge at both national and regional level. The study end by making recommendations on the need to: strengthen effort on addressing structural factors that trigger conflict in the first place; commit to implementation and compliance to policies and protocols; there must be powers to not only enact requisite laws, but also power to enforce them on regional priorities. Strengthening relationships among various partners; member nations need to renegotiate organization's responsibilities, capabilities, and competence; devise a sustainable and predictable funding scheme without being at the mercy of donors; enhance the capacity and training of the security architecture units among others. The study concludes that, in spite of the challenges, it could be said without doubt that the mechanism is efficient and appropriate institution worthy of commendation not withstanding the flaws and the need for an improvement for a greater performance and better result.

Key words: Regional Security; Conflict Mechanism; Peacekeeping; Early Warning; Security Governance.