

# Regional Threat to Security in West and Central Africa

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**Abstract:** - This study addressed regionalism and the search for solutions to common security challenges in West and Central Africa. It specifically used ECOWAS and ECCAS regional bodies as case studies. Insecurity occasioned by Trans border crime, drug trafficking and terrorism among others are dominant issues in Africa. Both regional bodies have put in place numerous measures to check and control the concomitants crisis in the two regions. In spite of the effort of regional bodies, insecurity still persist in West and Central Africa, as cases of Fulani and banditry are common issues ravaging Northern Nigeria, while kidnappings were rampant in the south. In central Africa, cases of insecurity were also rampant. This study compares strategies adopted by the two regional bodies to reducing the burden in the regions. The methodology stems from informational gathering and secondary materials. The study provides possible recommendations on ways in which conflict can be reduce in Africa.

**Keywords:** -Trade: Security: Peace: Terrorism: Regionalism: Boundary: Africa

## I. INTRODUCTION

West and Central Africa are two important regions within the African continent. Africa has six regions namely; West, East, North, South, central, and the Diaspora.(African Union, 2012) Researchers have identified common security threat in west and central Africa to include but not limited to; illegal cross border activities, especially terrorism, money laundering , violent extremism as well as trafficking in Arms , humans and drugs. These threats hinder peace, security as well as stability and jeopardize the development effort of Economic Development of West Africa states (Ecowas) and Economic community of central African states (ECCAS). While several security challenges in Africa have their roots in complex post colonial issues such as political and social economic crisis, the west and central African regions have also been mired in armed conflicts, crisis of governance, proliferation of small arms, fragility of security sector, cross border movement of weapon, drugs and armed groups, mass movement of refugees, underdevelopment of infrastructure, widespread poverty, and weak state institutions.. most security challenges affecting the regions are transnational in nature; therefore, require transnational solutions that emphasize regional cooperation, interdependence and sustainable regional effort.

The work of Barry Buzan(1991) underscores the importance of building regional security complex through cooperation as envisaged by the joint summit of ECOWAS and ECCAS on

peace, security, Radicalization and Violent Extremism in Lome ,Togo on 30 July 2018. Buzan defines a regional security complex as a specific type of region united by common security problems. In other worlds, it is a set of states continually affected by one or more security challengers that emanate from a given geographical area. Similarly, the term regionalism refers to the process of the governments and people of two or more states to establish voluntary associations and to pool together resources (material and immaterial) in order to create common financial and multinational arrangements (Kacowitz, 1998). Furthermore, regionalism can be best described as a process occurring in a given geographical region by which different types of actors(states, regional institutions, societal organizations and other non state actors) come to share certain fundamental values and norms (page 2001). These actors also participate in a growing network of economic, cultural, scientific, diplomatic, political and military interactions.

The significance of the Joint summit of ECOWAS and ECCAS heads of state is not in doubt, what is of concern is the commitment of the partners to pursue and actualize goals envisaged in the Lome declaration on peace, security, stability, and the fight against terrorism and violent extremism. This paper reflects on the ideas of regionalism in Africa and the search for solution to African problems in the post-colonial era. It also examines the common security challenges in West and central Africa and the significance of joint summit of ECOWAS-ECCAS. Finally, the paper examines the prospect and challenges for the implementation of the Lome Declaration on Peace, security, radicalization and violent extremism and provides some policy recommendations,

## II. REGIONALISM IN AFRICA: ROLES OF ECOWAS AND ECCAS AS BUILDING BLOCS

Regionalism, as important priority for Africa, has long been recognized by its leaders and people. Africa's government has concluded a large number of regional integration arrangements, several of which have significant membership overlap. The formation of the OAU in 1963 was seen as a major setback in uniting and integration Africa after independence (Bothale 2010) more attention was to be given to the regional integration project with the launch of the Lagos Plan of Action (LPA) in 1980. The vision of regional integration was given programmatic direction by the UNECA then; led by Adedeji Adebayo. The LPA called for the

integration of the continent based on self reliance, self sustaining, and developmental regionalism. Though the LPA was criticized for not having a detailed implementation strategy, a decade later, the OAU provided a roadmap for achieving African integration by adopting the African Economic Treaty (AET) establishing the Africa Economic Community (AEC)

The AEC seeks to promote cooperation and integration through regional integration schemes, intra African trade, and creates a common market (Sesay and Omotosho, 2001). The Abuja treaty set out a step by step approach to regional integration in Africa with the creation of the regional economic communities (RECs) and a path for the creation of an AEC by 2028. The adoption of the Abuja treaty on June 3 1991 which entered into force in 1994 was considered very vital for Africa's economic survival in a globalized world. Thus, rather than start from scratch, the AEC used existing RECs as the building blocks. Currently eight economic blocs that are advancing the process of regional integration include; South African Development Community (SADC). East African Community (EAC), Common Market for Eastern and Southern Africa (COMESA); Economic Community of West African States (ECOWAS); Economic Community of Central African States (ECCAS); Inter governmental Authority on Development (IGAD); Arab Magrebian Union (AMU); AND Community of Sahel-Saharan states (CONRAD).

In terms of states and timelines for the attainment of the AEC, stage one, the creation of regional blocs in regions where such do not exist was expected to be completed by 1999. Stage two. Strengthening of Intra-REC integration and Inter REC Harmonization of tariffs was expected to be completed in 2007. The third stage, involves the establishment of a free trade area and customs union in each of the regional bloc, and this is expected to be completed by 2017. The fourth stage, the establishing of a continent wide Anion is expected to be completed by 2019. In the fifth stage, to be completed by 2023, the establishment of a continent-wide African common market is expected to be completed. The sixth and final stage, which is the establishment of a continent wide economic and monetary union and thus, a currency union and parliament, is expected to be completed by the year 2028.

The Economic Community of West African States (ECOWAS) and Economic Community of Central African States (ECCAS) are both recognized by the African Economic Treaty signed in Abuja, 1991, as building blocks for the establishment African Economic Community (AEC). THE ECOWAS treaty establishing the community was signed in Lagos, Nigeria on May 28 1975. A revised treaty was later signed on July 24, 1993. ECOWAS was created to increase economic and political integration amongst its members. The fifteen member states are Benin, Burkina Faso, Cape Verde, Cote d'Ivoire, The Gambia, Ghana, Guinea, Guinea Bissau, Liberia, Mali, Niger, Nigeria, Senegal, Sierra Leone, and Togo.

The ECCAS was established in 1983 in order to achieve collective autonomy, raise the standard of living of its population, and maintain economic stability through harmonious cooperation. Even though, ECCAS began to function in 1985, it was inactive for several years due to financial difficulties and conflict in the Great Lake area. In 1999, the African Economic Community (AEC) again confirmed the importance of ECCAS. Current members include Angola, Burundi, Cameroon, Central African Republic, Chad, the Democratic Republic of the Congo, Equatorial Guinea, Gabon, the Republic of Congo, and Sao Tome and Principe

### III. COMMON SECURITY CHALLENGES IN WEST AND CENTRAL AFRICA

The political and economic malaise in both west and central Africa have been linked to the so called "resource curse" a thesis whose explanation is not farfetched. Although west and central Africa are among Africa most resourced endowed regions, most countries, if not all, within these region groupings are among the poorest and least developed on the continent and in the world. In essence, their resource endowment rather than being blessings, bringing prosperity, development, stability and peace, have been sources of contestation, conflicts and general state of insecurity—a curse. Member states of both ECOWAS and ECCAS are well endowed with abundance natural resources and arable land suitable for agriculture, however, poor management of national wealth, and its distribution has left almost two-third of the population in perpetual poverty living on less than 1USD per day. Poverty in West and Central Africa stem from inefficient use of available resources, the mismanagement of public fund and frequent outbreak of conflict that leave many internally displaced and creating deep humanitarian situations.

Insecurity in West and Central Africa often take the form of conflict between ethnic, religious and communal groups for the control of state power, resources and influence. Many leaders have failed to strengthen national unity and would rather promote ethnic division to further their selfish interests. These are complicated by the porosity of national borders, the uncontrolled movement of violent non state actor and the proliferation of illegal arms and weapons (SALWs) that increase the risk of spill over from conflicts in neighbouring states. For example, in West Africa, the emergence of the Boko Haram militant group has led to the escalation of violence in the North Eastern part of Nigeria, spreading to neighbouring countries, thereby leading to the destruction of lives and properties, including the kidnapping of women and children for ransom.

Insecurity in Central Africa has been accentuated by regional problems that states are unable to deal with individually. The lucrative trade in arms, which involves both international and regional actors, has helped to fuel rebellion and criminal acts in Africa. The rebels in the Central Africa found it easy to

obtain arms across its borders with Chad and Sudan. Similarly, cross border crime is an enduring threat to the security and livelihoods of civilians. In the border area between Cameroon, CAR, and Chad, criminal gang continue to endanger the lives of the civilian.

The nature of violence in West Africa has changed significantly over the last decade. Conventional and large scale conflicts events, and civil wars, have receded in scale and intensity, replaced by a new generations of threats. Extreme relation violence is now on the rise, and extremism and terror attacks, drugs trafficking, maritime piracy, and criminality have increased.. in additions, wars are increasingly been fought on the periphery of the state by armed insurgents who are both factionalized and in some cases militarily weak, as evidenced by the campaign carried out by Boko Haram in North East Nigeria and the Tuareg and the Arab uprisings in Mali (Vanguard news, August 1 2018). Though, both the ECOWAS and ECCAS have made effort over the years to address increasing security challenges in the communities. Central African governments have been slower than those in southern and West Africa to agree to the regionalization of the prevention and resolution of conflict. Against the backdrop of these increasing insecurity challenges, leaders in west and central Africa had to confront the realities of building synergy and cooperation in addressing common security challenges in their communities.

#### IV. COOPERATION AND THE IMPERATIVE OF JOINT SUMMIT OF ECOWAS-ECCAS

The economic community of West African states (ECOWAS) and economic community of central African states (ECCAS) joint summit on peace, security, radicalization and violent extremism held in Lome, Togo, on 30 July 2018 was first of its kind to be organized by the two communities. The summit sought to forge between the two organizations concerted strategies in tackling the menace of terrorism; Trans-border crimes, violent extremism. Countries that attended from ECOWAS are Benin, Burkina-Faso, Cape Verde, Cotedvoire, the Gambia, Ghana, Guinea, Guinea Bissau, Liberia, Mali, Niger, Nigeria, Senegal Sierraleone and Togo. Countries that attended from ECAAS are Angola, Burundi, Cameroon CAR, Congo, Gabon, Equatorial Guinea, CAR, Rwanda, Sao Tome and principle and Chad. In addition to the president of the ECOWAS commission and secretary General of ECCAS that participated in the summit, other participant are Chairperson of the African Union Commission; special Representative of the United Nations Secretary General and Head of the United Nations Office for west Africa and the Sahel (UNOWAS); Head of United Nations office on East Africa; Representative of the European Union; President of CEMAC Commission and secretary general of CEN-SAD. The initiatives by the ECOWAS and ECCAS have been commended by the AU, UN and several representatives at the summit. The United Nation secretary general Antonio Gutteres lauded the renewed commitment of ECOWAS and ECCAS member states to strengthen cooperation on security challenges. In his

statement, then secretary general said he is particularly encouraged by the ECOWAS and ECCAS

*... decision to sign a criminal cooperation agreement by the end of 2018 and to establish a ministerial committee to monitor implementation of the summit decisions. Hr also welcomes the decision of the heads of state and government of the two regions to hold consultations in the margins of the ordinary summit of the African Union to meet every two years to review implementation of the decisions contained in the Lome Declaration adopted at the Joint Summit (UNSG August 2 2018, AIT 2018)*

The chairperson of the AU commission expressed support for the measures agreed to by ECOWAS and ECCAS to bring their efforts closer together. According to the AU Chair:

*In this regard, the African union will identify practical arrangement to enhance its contribution to the fight against terrorism and organized crime, through its relevant structures, including the African centre for the study and Research on Terrorism, African Police Cooperation mechanism and the Committee of Intelligence and Security Services of Africa. The African Union will also endeavours to better support environmental conversation efforts, particularly in view of the negative impact of climate change on the livelihoods of the local people and on regional security. in this regard, special emphasis will be placed on the issue of Lake Chad, through increased African Union involvement in advocacy, technical support and resource mobilization both at the continental and international levels( AU, August 1, 2018)*

The highpoint of the joint summit of ECOWAS and ECCAS was the adoption of the Lome Declaration for Peace, stability, fight against terrorism and violent extremism which seeks to overcome barriers opposing a broader and more efficient cooperation regarding security. The destruction aligns with the two communities constitutional standards. The Lome declaration serves as a guide for priority measures to take in order to establish optimal partnership framework between the two communities. These would subsequently help these regions better fight terrorism and violent extremism. In this regards, the two partners would enhance collaboration involving both the international community and member states of ECOWAS and ECCAS, by leveraging on legal, security and defence tools, as well as on the civil society, religious communities, youth, women and other stakeholders. Also, the issue of migratory flows featured in the discussions at the summit as well as in the declaration. Besides, the United Nations, the African Union (AU) and several stakeholders welcome the Lome Declaration and support the initiative by ECOWAS and ECCAS to jointly tackle common security challenges.



## V. MAJOR COMPONENTS OF THE LOME DECLARATION

The Lome Declaration is not a standalone document. It leverages on Treaty establishing the ECOWAS in 1975 (revised in 1993) and ECCAS on 16th October 1983. At the global level, it makes references to the UN resolutions such as 1373 of 24<sup>th</sup> September 2001 on threats to international Peace and security arising from act of terrorism. It also builds on UN resolution 2195 of 19<sup>th</sup> December 2014 and 2199 of 12<sup>th</sup> February 2015 dedicated to terrorism and transnational organized crimes and condemnation of all forms of terrorism financing. Furthermore, the declaration makes reference to UN resolution 1325 of 31<sup>st</sup> October 2000 on women, peace and security and UN resolution 2242 of 15<sup>th</sup> October 2015 on women, peace and security, resolution 2419 of 6<sup>th</sup> June 2018 on the involvement of youth in conflict resolution. It is also pertinent to note that the Lome Declaration also builds on continental and regional conventions, protocols and communiqués. It considers the Organization of African Unity (OAU) now African Union (AU) convention on the prevention and fight against terrorism signed in Algiers, Algeria on 14<sup>th</sup> July 1999 and its supplementary protocol, signed in Addis Ababa, Ethiopia on 8<sup>th</sup> July 2004, the AU action plan on the prevention and fight against terrorism in Africa adopted in Algiers, Algeria on 14<sup>th</sup> September 2002.

Several other pertinent documents that served as foundations for the Lome Declaration, include the protocol relating to the establishment of the AU Peace and Security Council adopted in Durban South Africa on 9<sup>th</sup> July 2002; AU charter on maritime safety, security and development signed in Lome, Togo on 15<sup>th</sup> October 2016. The declaration carefully considered the agreement signed in Ndjamena on 31<sup>st</sup> May 2018 between Libya, Niger, Sudan and Chad to secure their common borders against terrorist threats and mercenary group involved in all illicit trafficking. It would be recalled that a communiqué was also issued at the 469 meeting of the AU peace and Security Council held in Addis Ababa, Ethiopia on 25<sup>th</sup> November 2014. At the regional level, the Lome Declaration make reference to the protocol of central Africa peace and security council (COPAX) and the mutual assistance between ECCAS member states signed in Malabo on 24<sup>th</sup> February 2000 and also of the pact on non-aggression between member states of the UN advisory committee on security issues in central Africa signed in Cameroon on July 8<sup>th</sup> 1996. Relevant ECOWAS mechanisms were also put in place. These include the relevant provision on the mechanisms for conflict prevention, management, resolution, peacekeeping and security signed in Lome Togo on 10<sup>th</sup> December 1999; supplementary protocol on democracy and good governance signed in Dakar on 21<sup>st</sup> December 2001, protocol on non aggression signed in Lagos, Nigeria on 22<sup>th</sup> August 1978; protocol on mutual assistance in defence, signed in Freetown sierraleone, the convention on mutual assistance in criminal matter on July 1992; and the 2003

criminal police cooperation agreement between ECOWAS member states.,

The declaration affirmed the support of member states for the establishment and deployment of the Multinational Joint Task Force (MNJTF) of the Lake Chad Basin Commission. This was deemed as an appropriate framework for the neutralization of Boko Haram terrorists group. Amongst many others, reference was also made in the declaration of maritime Safety and security in the gulf of guinea that was done at the Summit of the Heads of state and government of the of the ECOWAS and ECCAS held in Yaoundé, Cameroon on 25<sup>th</sup> June 2013. Against the backdrop of references to these protocols, document, and discussion held at the Lome summit, the member states of ECOWAS and ECCAS committed themselves to strengthening collaboration and working jointly to define and implement common approach on peace, security stability, and the fight against terrorism and violent extremism in the two regions. Specifically, the major areas highlighted include; the promotion of peace and security; the prevention and fight against terrorism and violent extremism; and coordination and monitoring the implementation of the declaration.

## VI. THE PROMOTION OF PEACE AND SECURITY

Emphatically, ECOWAS and ECCAS pledged commitment to cooperate in conflict prevention and promotion of peace and stability in the two communities through:

- Setting up and strengthening at the national level, national early warning and rapid response mechanism with the involvement of civil society, opinion leaders, women and youth and state actors.
- Setting up at the regional level, crisis monitoring and rapid response mechanism
- Creating of a Joint Group of Elders comprising eminent persons from the two communities. The groups of elders are to be charged with the responsibility of carrying out preventive diplomacy, crisis facilitation and mediation in the two communities.
- Deepening of the rule of law, peace and human right education, good governance and democracy, as well as the fight against corruption.

The member states of ECOWAS and ECCAS also condemn the violent acts particularly during internal crisis aimed at destabilizing states and calling into question national borders. The Head of states and government undertake to adopt at their next summit, a regional framework on the convergence of constitutional principles in ECOWAS and ECCAS.

Towards addressing the issues of security, the Heads of state and government commit to strengthen cooperation in order to effectively check all forms of insecurity. Specifically, the Summit instructed the president of the ECOWAS Commission and the secretary general of the ECCAS to immediately open negotiations among member states of the

two regions, to conclude and implement procedures on usual legal assistance and judicial cooperation. In this regard, cooperation agreement on criminal police matters should be signed by the designated Ministers of west and central African countries before the end of 2020. Recently, the issue of farmer herder's conflict has been very intense in the two regions as lives and properties vanished in the absence of a workable peace process. The leaders at this summit argued that the farmer-herders conflicts are due to the adverse effect of climate change. To address this problem, the ministers responsible for agriculture, livestock and security of the two regions, were instructed to hold regular consultations, with the participation of herder and farmer organizations, in order to identify measures for the prevention and peaceful management of these conflicts. The reality however, is that beyond the climate change narratives these conflicts have their roots in complex historical realities, which include migration, population growth, ethno religious factors, governance, territorial contestation, and economic globalization, amongst others. Towards strengthening the management and security of their regions and common maritime and land borders, the ECOWAS and ECCAS undertook the following;

- Capacity building for the national administrations involved in border management and control (police gendarmerie, national guards, customs,)
- Provision of equipment and materials for the proper management and surveillance of the sensitive border areas in the region;
- Promotion of cross border cooperation through capacity building on border area management and local development initiatives for border management,
- Introduction and popularization of biometric ID used to enhance the security aspect of free movement and facilitate border control (ECOWAS and ECCAS Lome Declaration, 2018, p7)

#### VII. PROSPECTS AND CHALLENGES FOR THE IMPLEMENTATION OF THE LOME DECLARATION

The achievement of the Lome declaration intended objectives would naturally derives from its successful monitoring and implementation, but what are the possibilities that its implementation would be successful? It is the view of this paper that there are a number of opportunities for implementation of the Lome declaration. Actualizing the tenets of the document requires resources. Accordingly, nations were urged, in line with the documents goal, to provide financial and material support for troops deployed to fight terrorists in Lake Chad Basin and across the Sahel. Still under the declaration, the leaders demanded the United Nations Security Council to place the G5 Sahel force under chapter 17 of the UN charter. This would allow the task force to secure more sustainable and multilateral funds.

In spite of the opportunities for implementation of the Lome Declaration, it would be inundated by a number of challenges.

First, there is low level of awareness regarding the joint summit and declaration made at the first joint summit of ECOWAS and ECCAS on Peace, Security, Radicalization, and violent Extremism. Most stakeholders, including policy makers, civil society, scholars and the general public in the two communities are simply not aware of the summit or the Lome Declaration. Another challenge is how to overcome the problem of lack of commitment of member states of ECOWAS and ECCAS to the implementation of document they have signed. States in west and central Africa are usually quick to sign regional documents but they often do not back signatures with commitment to implementation. Given the history of member states of ECOWAS and ECCAS, the Lome Declaration could suffer the same fate. Another challenge, which relate to the above, is how to ensure effective mobilization of major stake holders such as the civil society, security forces and other relevant bodies in the implementation of the declaration. Improving participation of stakeholders would help ensure the state level institution and stakeholders to be more committed to implement of the declaration. Another possible challenge relates to raising of adequate financial resources to fund the implementation of the declaration. Addressing security challenges bordering on "Peace, Security, Radicalization and Violent Extremism" in the two communities will require huge financial commitment. But raising adequate funds for the implementation of the declaration may be a challenge. However, if member states of ECOWAS and ECCAS show commitment to implementation of the declaration, funds could be raised at the national level to support the implementation.

#### VIII. COORDINATION AND MONITORING THE IMPLEMENTATION OF THE DECLARATION

To ensure compliance and follow up on implementation of the Declaration, the Lome summit established a Ministerial Committee for Implementation (MCI). THE mci, which is comprised of ministers of foreign affairs and ministers in charge of Security assisted by ECOWAS commission and ECCAS secretary general are expected to meet once a year to monitor the declarations implementation. The MCI is also to submit an annual report on the measure to implements the declaration. In addition to the need for establishment of a joint secretary to coordinate implementation of the Declaration, successful implementation will also requires constant discussions and dialogue between ECOWAS and ECCAS. Apart from the MCI, the Heads of state and governments of ECOWAS and ECCAS are also to play major roles in the implementation of the Declaration. In this light, the leaders agreed to meet every two years, alternatively in the two communities to review implementation of the decisions contained in the Lome Declaration. Even though the next Joint Summit is scheduled to hold in Ndjamena, republic of Chad is in 2020, consultations are to be held at the margins of the ordinary summits of the AU.

## IX. CONCLUSION

The importance of regionalism as a means for accelerating and consolidating socio-economic development, and more recently also for security provisioning has been recognized by African decision makers. Convinced of the benefits, African governments embrace the idea of establishing integration frameworks at continental and regional levels. It was hoped that countries would benefit from economies of scale in production and trade, and, further, that it would help curb instability and insecurity. Accordingly, in order to promote economic growth, security and stability, African leaders have placed lot of hope in regional solutions to African problems. At a policy level, the centre of regional integration is the African Union (AU) which succeeded the OAU and the regional economic communities (RECs). The paper notes that the ECOWAS and ECCAS are two important regional integration schemes in west and central Africa respectively that seeks to promote economic development continues to be undermined by insecurity, terrorism and violent extremism, ECOWAS and ECCAS initiated the joint summit to find solution to common security challenges in their communities.

From the above discussion, it is clear that the organization of the joint summit of the ECOWAS and ECCAS on peace, security, radicalization and violent extremism is a commendable initiative with huge potential to contribute reduction of common security problems in the two regions. However, the realization of the intention of the joint summit depends largely on the commitment of member states to successful implementation of the Lome Declaration. This requires adequate funding as well as broader stakeholder

participation at the state, ECOWAS, ECCAS, continental and international levels. This also requires more efforts on the part of the ECOWAS and ECCAS by creating awareness, promoting more policy research on common security awareness in the two regions and organization of workshop to enlighten members of the public. Finally, there is need for international support for the implementation of the Lome Declaration

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