TALLINN UNIVERSITY OF TECHNOLOGY

School of Business and Governance

Department of Law

Solomon Ezekiel Adedeji

THE IMPACT OF ARMED CONFLICT ON REGIONAL TRADE IN WEST AFRICA

Bachelor's thesis

Programme: International Relations

Supervisor: Peeter Muursepp,PhD

Tallinn 2018

I declare that I have compiled the paper independently

Also, all works, important standpoints and data by other authors

Have been properly referenced and the same paper

Has not been previously been presented for grading.

The document length is 13,529 words from Introduction to the end of Conclusion.

Solomon Ezekiel Adedeji

                (Signature, date)

Student code: A156984

Student e-mail address: soloeze1@yahoo.com

Supervisor:

The paper conforms to requirements in force

Peeter Muursepp, PhD

(Signature, date)

Chairman of the Defence Committee:

Permitted to the defence

…………………………………

(Name, signature, date)

TABLE OF CONTENTS

ABSTRACT

The armed conflicts within the West African sub-region question the ability of member states to trade effectively and freely among themselves, thereby leading to ineffective trade activities, most especially along the sub-Saharan trade zone which has a reputation of being an erstwhile flourishing trading route for the West African countries. Undeniably, the West African trade liberalisation cannot be fully realised unless there is a strong economic, security and political integration among the member states. This is a premise that is hinged on the fact that the sub-region is characterised by economic constraints such as low-level development, lack of a unified currency, segregated markets, and incessant conflicts.

The proponents of trade integration, therefore, are of the belief that if the member states within the sub-region can be economically and politically integrated, the desire for trade liberalisation will be fully realised. However, the incidence of armed conflicts that has continually engulf the region has made the call for such high-level integration a big challenge for ECOWAS, which has been at the fore of the struggle to make the sub-region experience a higher level of economic integration. The primary concern of this study is to examine how the various armed conflicts are affecting the regional trade amongst member countries within the sub-region.

Keywords: integration, trade liberalisation, regional trade.

List of abbreviations

AU	-	African Union
AQIM	-	AlQaeda in the Islamic Maghreb
BCEAO	-	La Banque Centrale des États de l'Afrique de l'Ouest
CIP	-	Cross-Border Initiative Program
CEAO	-	Communauté des États de l'Afrique de l'Ouest
ECOWAS	-	Economic Community of West African States
ECOWARN	-	Early Warning and Response Network
ECOMOG	-	Economic Community of West African States Cease-fire Monitoring Group
EPA	-	Economic Partnership Agreement
ETLS	-	ECOWAS Trade Liberalisation Scheme
EU	-	European Union
MAD	-	Mutual Assistance in Defence
MNLA	-	National Movement for the Liberation of Azawad
MRU	-	Mano River Commission
LDC	-	Less Developed Countries
UNECA	-	United Nations' Economic Commission for Africa
UNDP	-	United Nations Development Programme
UNHCR	-	United Nations High Commissioner for Refugees
WAEMU	-	West African Economic and Monetary Union

INTRODUCTION

The occurrence of conflicts in Africa is becoming an issue of concern within the continent. As has been observed, the various conflicts in different African countries, most especially in West Africa are complex and unique to the affected countries. Some are as a result of ethnic and political ideologies while others are as a result of the clash of religious dogmas. The West African region has been at the receiving end to the series of both intrastate and interstate conflicts. These violent conflicts have been directly and indirectly responsible for the deaths of millions of people, mostly civilians. It has also resulted in a shallow level of human security within the region, leading to mass emigration from the region. Also, it is believed that the major causes of armed conflicts, while being complicated, are also interconnected. As noted by Castens (2006), the structural causes and struggles for power have caused much instability on the continent.

A significant number of African leaders have at one time or the other called for the support for a continent-wide integration, but sadly these calls have not materialised due to the problems of interstate and intrastate armed conflicts. However, the calls for regional integration in the West African subcontinent has been actualised but remained largely an economic and political integration and vision as contained in Article 3 of the African Union Constitutive Act. The establishment of the Economic Community of West African States (ECOWAS) was born as a direct result of efforts at integrating the West African countries. The ECOWAS member states include Benin, Burkina Faso, Cote D'Ivoire The Gambia, Ghana, Liberia, Mali, Nigeria, Guinea, Guinea Bissau, Senegal, Sierra Leone, Togo, Niger and Cabo Verde.

The organisation was established in 1975 as a regional organisation with the aim of promoting economic integration but gradually transformed into an organisation that is responsible for finding a lasting solution to the numerous armed conflicts as well as other political calamities that often spring up to undermine the peace and security of the region. The establishment of ECOWAS came about as a result of pressure from West African countries facing the incessant armed conflicts (Yabi 2010, 6), and it necessitated the commissioning of ECOMOG (Economic Community of West African States Cease-fire Monitoring Group). ECOMOG functions as a multilateral armed force established by ECOWAS and commissioned to embark on peacekeeping missions in member states experiencing armed conflicts within the sub-region.

As Yabi (2010) noted, the intervention of ECOMOG in the 1990s was initially geared towards ending civil wars in member states or armed conflicts against the governments of member states. However, as terrorism threatens the region, ECOMOG is undeniably facing a high level of difficulty in achieving the objective of restoring peace in the region. Notwithstanding, ECOMOG and by extension, ECOWAS has played a vital role in resolving several devastating civil wars within the West African sub-region.

In the light of this, it becomes paramount to analyse whether or not the efforts of ECOWAS remain feasible in restoring peace in countries experiencing armed conflicts, while also maintaining a strong economic and military integration. Thus, this research examines the impact of armed conflict on the regional trade in West African region. The research adopts the qualitative analysis method to explore the causes of the conflicts and how they influence the social and political landscape particularly the regional government policies, and their regional relevance in the formation of multilateral institutions within the region. The research further concludes that the multilateral relations between the West Africa nations will be of benefit to all the member states in combating regional threats and conflicts.

Research Motivation

The result of armed conflict in the West African sub-region is telling on the economic development of the countries in the region. Armed conflicts as we know are known to be a challenging issue with regards to the socio-economic growth and development within the sub-region. Virtually all the countries that make up West Africa have at one time or the other experienced the incidence of armed conflicts. Political instability and insecurity are still prevailing issues in the sub-region and as a matter of fact seems to be getting worse. Various studies have disclosed that there exists a strong correlation between the decline in trade, low human development index and armed conflicts. Therefore, a successful and sustainable resolution of these armed conflicts presents a considerable boost to the future prosperity of the region (Kelly 2003, 62).

This study carried out an in-depth exploration of the effects of armed conflicts on regional trade in the West African sub-region. In addition to this, an analysis of the impact of armed conflict

on the integration efforts of the member states is also carried out. Additionally, efforts were made to contribute to the existing body of knowledge on the subject matter while also serving as a reference point for other researchers on related topics.

Objectives of the Study

The objective of the study is to examine the incidence of armed conflict in West African sub-region and how it affects regional trade amongst member states. This will be achieved by:

1. Examining the cause of the various armed conflicts in the West African sub-region.
2. Accessing the effectiveness of regional institutions particularly ECOWAS' efforts in resolving the incidences of armed conflicts.
3. Assessing the challenges confronting ECOWAS in the process of addressing the challenges of armed conflicts.
4. Examining the possibilities of embarking on regional economic integration despite the occurrences of these armed conflicts.

Research Questions

For the benefit of this study, the following research questions have been propounded, and the answers will go a long way to understand the limitations that armed conflicts impose on trade in the West African sub-region:

1. How effective are the various efforts put in place by the regional institutions particularly ECOWAS in trying to resolve such armed conflicts in the West African region?
2. What are the challenges being faced by institutions in addressing the armed conflicts facing the West African sub-region?
3. Will it be possible to embark on regional economic integration in West Africa in the face of all these armed conflicts?

Scope of the Study

This study is aimed at accessing the various armed conflicts within West Africa in relation to how the impact on trading activities in the region. Consequently, the study is limited to only member states of the West African sub-region and not Africa as a whole. The stakeholders examined in this study are just the governments of these countries, the agents responsible for and related to armed conflicts within the West African sub-region as well as international agencies that participated or are participating in the move towards making economic integration a realistic endeavour for the sub-region. Lastly, this study will be limited to the armed conflicts that occurred between 1989 to the present day in the sub-region.

1. LITERATURE REVIEW AND THEORETICAL FRAMEWORK

The concept of armed conflict and regional integration like many other concepts in the field of social science and international relations have been given a variety of meanings by various scholars.

This chapter touches on some of the widely accepted scholarly definitions of conflict as well as regional integration. Some of the past and present armed conflicts in the West African sub-region, as well as the relative causes of such armed conflicts, are discussed in this section. The efforts made by the stakeholders with the aim of putting an end to the violent armed conflicts are also discussed in this section. Some evidences also suggest that the concept of regional economic and political integration is essential in managing the violent armed conflicts in West Africa sub-region. Therefore, the rationale and need for regional integration are also discussed in this section of the work.

1.1 Theoretical Framework

The theory of perpetual peace hinges on a number of premises out of which the most effective for this study is contained in the section one of his expose. According to Luwam, Kant stated in the preliminary articles for perpetual peace that 'No treaty of peace shall be held valid wherein there exists a tacitly reserved matter for a future war' (2014). During the mediaeval times when armed conflicts were as a result of strives between different religious doctrines or cultural differences, the peace theorists believed that the only possible way of maintaining a peaceful coexistence is by establishing a homogeneous set of values that will be adopted into various systems (Luwam 2014).

Without a conscious adaptation of tolerance to different religions and cultures, the concept of peaceful coexistence will mean that societies have to practice the same religion and culture in order to avoid conflicts. However, as it is, the advancement in technology has meant people travel easily and emigrate more often. This increased emigration has led theorists to focus more on integration as a means of ending conflicts of any form (Abrahamson 2000, 48) rather than tolerance.

Moeletsi (2009, 213), in his evaluation of Africa concerning the ruling class, believe that they are the ones who contrived together to make their fellow citizens continue to languish in poverty while enriching themselves. Therefore, the concept of perpetual peace cannot be justified as the reason for Africa's choice to integrate into the global world. Moeletsi further substantiated his argument by analysing the reoccurring regional wars, thereby concluding that since most of the armed conflicts in Africa are based on ethnic dissimilarities, regional integration holds no form of relationship with the concept of peaceful coexistence (2009).

In essence, conflicts and its consequences are better of accessed and addressed as the expected outcomes of hostilities and examined from the prism of integration instead of tolerance. If trade and security can be successfully achieved through the strengthening of ECOWAS and the commitment of the member nations to implement it to the book, then the problem of armed conflicts among nations in West Africa will be eminently minimised.

1.2.   Conceptual Framework and Literature Review

Much literature exists that gives meaning to armed conflict with regards to definition and concepts of armed conflicts and its resolution. According to Mayer (2000), armed conflicts can be explained through a multidimensional point of view. This includes conflict as a perception, conflict as a feeling and conflict as an action.

1.3.   Conflict Defined

As a perception, conflict is often seen as the conviction that one party's needs and interests are incompatible with the other party's needs and interests. As a feeling, it can be expressed as a feeling of emotions including but not limited to anger, resentment, bitterness, fear, sadness of a combinations of all these. Lastly, as Mayer opined, conflict as an action may be violent and destructive (2000, 39). It is this third one that encapsulates the incidence of armed conflicts as it is the most destructive form of conflict.

Conflict is defined as the inherent contradictions in power relations that often manifest among individuals and groups as a result of their interrelations with one another. It could also be perceived as violent expression of non-compliance that arises from the unmet needs and aspirations of some people within a larger group (Annan 2014). However, as observed, while conflicts are not always violent, armed conflicts like the ones that generally play out in the West African sub-region are always brutal and destructive. As noted, most armed conflicts in West Africa have been fueled by multiple interlinked factors such as poverty, human rights violation, corruption, ethnic marginalisation and the proliferation of small arms (Fithen 1999).

With the persistence of the above-listed causes, some of the violent armed conflicts that have occurred in the West African sub-region can be easily linked to specific catalysts that often ignite such uprisings. As defined by ECOWAS in its Conflict Prevention Framework of 2008, the triggers of armed conflict in West Africa are associated with issues that suddenly arouse tensions amongst people, often becoming unmanageable, thereby leading to full-scale war. For instance, the 2012 Coup D'état in Mali was ignited by the lack of support from the Traore regime to the military in handling the Tuareg rebellion of January 2012 that led to the death of many soldiers (Chew 2012).

In the past two decades, the history of post-independence West Africa has been marked with a series of armed conflicts (Picollino 2014). Moreover, it is important to note that very few among these armed conflicts are as a result of domestic armed conflicts but instead intrastate armed conflicts. A careful perusal of history books will reveal that while some of these armed conflicts were particularly very violent, resulting in a high number of deaths and casualties (Sierra Leone and Liberia), others have been characterised as low-intensity armed conflicts resulting in very few casualties. Examples of these are the crises in Burkina Faso, Gambia and Senegal.

West African armed conflicts are not only of varying degrees of intensities and durations, but they are also triggered by multidimensional issues that are diverse and highly interlinked (Minow 2014). Intrastate armed conflicts have been able to attract a lot of scholarly reviews as a result of their complexities and the manner of their emergence. One school of thought believed that in as much as the scarcity of resources have the tendency to bring about armed conflicts, and then it is possible that abundance of resources can also bring about armed conflicts. This is possible if the people concerned are of the mindset that there is corruption at the helms of power. This often

results in the establishment of anti-government groups emerging in order to demand for answers from the authority in question. Also, in the situation where such allegations and accusations are not appropriately managed, it often degenerates into armed conflicts.

In an attempt to place this study in a proper context within all other existing bodies of knowledge, series of literature will be reviewed in order to understand the subject matter more. As Bowd and Chikwanha noted in their book titled "Understanding Africa's Contemporary Conflicts Origins, Challenges and Peace Building" that the emergence of conflicts can be interstate or intrastate, expanding further by asserting that intrastate conflicts emerge as a result of a complex variety of reasons. It is a generally accepted notion that armed conflicts in West Africa have contributed negatively to the various economies, thereby posing some other challenges such as poverty, political instability and human insecurity.

Also, scholars have further posited that although conflicts are not entirely to be seen as negative phenomenon, the critical thing about it is the manner in which the society responds to the armed conflict. By this, their confirmation is in sync with the research embarked upon by Galtung who stated that if a society is coercive by nature, there is a greater likelihood that armed conflicts would quickly emerge. However, if the armed conflicts could be well managed and analysed, there is possibility of reaching a point where a transformational process would be established, bringing about peace and development (Galtung 1969, 189).

In addition to this, Omeje (2010), found out that the catalysts of armed conflicts are many, ranging from pre-existing animosities and colonial legacies to deep-rooted complexities of colonial realities, global government and globalisation forces. Mildner et al. (2011, 155), are of the opinion that there is a relationship between natural resources and the emergence of armed conflicts. Notwithstanding, the West African sub-region is also faced with other socio-economic challenges going by the fact that the countries that make up 80% of Africa are among the least developed countries in the world with regards to per capita income levels and markets. Not only are they small and poor, but many are landlocked, which is another contributing factor to high transaction costs leading to high cost of doing business in West Africa. Going by this, the importance of regional trade to West Africa cannot be overemphasised and is the singular reason why the sub-region has always embraced the concept of regional integration in order to develop trade strategies that will erase the deficiency created by being landlocked.

1.4.   Regional Trade and Integration Defined

Trade liberalisation can take several forms and understanding why countries and regions, specialise in making and exporting certain goods is vital to understanding regional trade. Regional economies often have some geographical proximity and need to actively trade and develop the commodities in which they have a competitive advantage and are successful at making. The defining characteristic of regional trade is that lower tariffs are imposed on commodities produced in the regional member economies than on those produced outside of the region (Panagariya 2000, 288). The elementary path to trade liberalisation is for a country to reduce tariffs unilaterally but, more usually, countries lower their import barriers simultaneously as their trade partners. This type of liberalisation is usually in the form of a multilateral agreement.

This multilateral agreement are mutually agreed treaties between nations that are established to reduce or eliminate policy-imposed trade barriers. Although, nations trade internationally, however, more often the regional trade is much freer than international trade. Trading externally is said to be the "engine" of development as it generates foreign exchange which can be used to finance domestic industrialisation. Like the international trade, the theory of regional trade is based on the principle of comparative advantage. In fact, regional trade will mutually benefit both trading partners.

On the other hand, and broadly, regional integration is regarded as the unification of a number of independent into a larger whole and whose unity is more than the sum of its part. It can also be conceived as a dynamic process, a terminal condition or a combination of both. As a process, integration involves the establishment of a set of legal rules and systems for the citizens (Bach 2000). As a condition, integration in Africa is taken in the form of a bureaucratic and political institutionalisation of ideas that cut across and goes beyond a single ideology. It involves the development from a hitherto state of isolation to a condition in which there exists a sort of unification and incorporation.

Regional integration is the process involving two or more nation-states coming together to enter into a regional agreement that will foster more cooperation and close working in order to achieve peace, stability and wealth through the regional institution and regulations. It usually involves one or more written agreements which will give a detailed description of the areas of cooperation as well as the coordinating bodies representing the countries involved. Integration also takes place at various levels of the society from local down to international. It takes the form of economic, social and political synchronisation, with its success or failure hinging on the interaction of the inhibiting and enabling variables (Chingono and Nakana 2009).

Economic integration can be defined as a closed degree of economic alliance in the form of a formal agreement of informal circumstances, with the countries involved surrendering some of their sovereignty in order to make the synergised economic unit more potent (Rourke 1995). The concept of economic cooperation is understood to be a process whereby sovereign states tend to cooperate with one another multilaterally through the establishment of international organisations or processes (Van Ginkel 2003, 47). However, it should be noted that there is an invisible silver lining between economic cooperation and economic integration. This is due to the fact that it is an evolving process along a spectrum of other stages which are aimed at dismantling economic isolation through the creation of a commercial policy that starts with economic cooperation and then leads to economic integration.

Many scholars see regional integration as a global phenomenon of territorial systems which increases the level of interactions between their components thereby creating newer forms of organisations that coexist with the traditional forms of state-led organisation at the peak level. Some scholars have argued that the integration initiatives should fulfil the issue of strengthening the trade integration within the region, embark on the creation of an appropriate and enabling environment for the development of the private sector as well as the development of infrastructural projects that would support economic growth as well as the development of a robust public sector institutions which will mirror the incidence of good governance. Furthermore, it is believed that regional integration should reduce the incidence of social exclusion and the development of an all-inclusive society that would contribute to the peace and security of the region. It should also be aimed at building environment programs at the regional level while also strengthening the region interactions with other regions across the world.

Other scholars see regional trade as the process by which states within a predefined geographical area increase their level of interaction as a result of economic, political and cultural issues. They concluded that regional trade entails the coming together of states within a region into a larger whole, with the degree of integration depending upon the willingness and commitment of the independent sovereign states to share the individual sovereignty with other states (VanGinkel 2003).

Therefore, the primary objective of regional integration is to unite some of the overall aspects of the various countries in question. Usually, integration grows from cooperation and coordination of mutually agreed issues amongst a given number of member states to full integration. Chingono and Nakana (2009), revealed that integration occurs at various levels of society which may take economic social and political forms and whose inherent success or failure is determinable by the interaction of other variables.

Ebaye (2010), in his own view, noted that regional integration should strengthen trade, create an enabling environment for private sector development, spur the development of social infrastructures that would support economic growth, stir the development of a robust public sector and also enhance the reduction of social exclusion. He further explained that the degree of regional integration depends mostly on the willingness and commitment of the independent sovereign states to share their sovereignty. However, as observed by Ebaye, a major stumbling block to effective regional integration is the inability of the member states to give the regional institutions the necessary power to act as a unifying force in the sub-region. Ebaye (2010) also clarified the significance of member states giving up some of their autonomy for the effective regional trade and integration process.

An extensive argument has been developed that even though the success stories of West Africa trade and integration has been dismal, given the attributes of the sub-region, regional trade still remains the best option for the region as a whole (Hartzenberg 2011, 147). At the continental level, all West African countries are by extension members of African Union (AU). ECOWAS has, at the regional level been championing the development of a regional trade, peace and security architecture while the West African Economic and Monetary Union (WAEMU) has also embarked on successful monetary integration.

2. ARMED CONFLICT AND CIVIL STRIFE IN WEST AFRICA

The history of West Africa records a series of armed conflicts in the form of civil wars, Coup d'état as well as ethnoreligious crises since gaining independence. The unchecked incidences of political despotism, abject impoverishment, corruption and foreign interference have turned the dreams of an economically integrated and United West Africa into a living nightmare for most of the occupants of this sub-region. West Africa has been grappling with armed conflicts for decades but the periods between 1980 and 2000 presented more violent armed conflicts that have destabilised the sub-region (Aning and Bah 2009). The most notable countries that were plunged into armed conflicts within this period include Sierra Leone, Liberia, Guinea-Bissau and Cote D'Ivoire.

2.1. Causes of Armed Conflicts in West Africa

The reasons for West Africa experiencing armed conflicts are not far-fetched. They are diverse and interrelated. As many scholars have noted, such issues are as a result of the accumulation of political, economic, historical, cultural and structural factors. It has also been noted that a single element alone cannot be blamed for these civil strives as the root of violent armed conflicts in West Africa is linked to several interrelated factors. The roots of armed conflicts in West Africa are deep and complex and therefore are embedded in the interplay of various historical factors, legacies of authoritarianism, socio-economic crises as well as political exclusion of ethnic minorities. While these aforementioned problems constitute the large causative factors, in between they are embedded the problems of bad governance, corruption, violations of human rights, poverty, and proliferation of small arms and light weapons. All these continue to serve as catalysts for armed conflicts in the sub-region (Newland 1993, 57).

2.1.1. Bad Governance and Corruption

Post-independence rule in West Africa is fraught with so many challenges, and the majority amongst them are the issues of bad governance and corruption. Following the process of independence, several African regimes across the sub-region were faced with mismanagement of state resources and substandard governmental institutions which resulted in an economic stalemate, political apprehension as well as a breakdown of the social stability and peace. As evident today, these factors seem to constitute the primary cause of armed conflicts and civil strife in the West African sub-region. Several academic scholars who study the incidence of armed conflicts in Africa have identified bad governance and corruption as one of the fundamental factors that fuel the incidence of armed conflict in the sub-region (Walker 2012).

Conflicts across countries from Nigeria to Guinea-Bissau and other West African states have all been hinged directly or indirectly on bad governance and corruption. In the instance of the Sierra Leonean war, it was observed that corruption and bad governance were among the salient causes of the armed conflict. Additional research made in Liberia revealed by Kreutzer in (2011) showed that the cause of the Liberian Civil war was centred on corruption, greed and bad governance amongst other factors. In the region's most populous country, Nigeria, one of the underlying causes of the Niger Delta armed struggle and the rise of armed insurrectionists (Boko Haram) is attributed to bad governance at the national levels coupled with a high level of corruption at the corridors of power. With the Niger Delta region blessed with a vast amount of crude oil which the Nigerian government relies heavily upon, the same region is faced with being the most impoverished region in the country. For instance, in 2003, the Nigerian anti-corruption agency, EFCC reported an estimated 70% of the gross crude oil earnings being stolen and wasted.

The principal perpetrators of this waste are senators, ministers, commissioners and individuals with high connections at the corridors of power. In order t affirm the link between the corruption and armed conflicts in Nigeria, Ejibunu (2007) revealed that seeing the money that is coming from the federal government with regards to earnings on crude oil, and none of it coming to the ordinary people have created the condition for armed resistance against the government. This is same for a small country like Guinea-Bissau where bad governance and corruption are deeply rooted in the political and economic system so much that it has led to a bitter pent-up feeling amongst the local

18

population which are sometimes expressed through isolated cases of armed conflicts (Voz de Paz 2010).

2.1.2. Violations of human rights

Cases of human rights violations and abuses are very rampant in Nigeria. Therefore, it is just rational to expect such incidences erupt to violent conflicts and strife within the region. In West Africa, there has been several reported cases of gender-based violence, ethnic cleansing, reprisal killings, high level of injustice, brute leadership as well as unequal allocation of state resources (Human Rights Watch 2003). All the listed incidences often serve as triggers for armed conflicts. In the case of Nigeria, the continuous violations of citizens' rights have been observed to be the primary causal factor of the continued militancy in the Niger Delta region. While it is a known fact that several oil companies within the Niger Delta region are reportedly causing much environmental degradation through their constant pollution of the rivers and farmlands, the federal government seems not bothered to do anything to fix this because the country generates majority of its revenue from crude oil drilling within this region. A perfect example of this can be traced to the killing of youths from Bonny, Rivers state in 1992.

It was alleged that the youths were on a peaceful demonstration against the series of environmental pollution and marginalisation caused by some oil drilling conglomerates. It was so sad that rather than for the state security apparatus to support the citizens over the foreign organisations, they violated the citizens' right to peaceful protest. A similar occurrence was reported a year later in another in Ogoni, another oil drilling community within the same region. More than 300,000 local protesters were harassed, with thousands arrested and many killed by federal government troops when they embarked on a peaceful demonstration against Shell Oil for the constant pollution and economic marginalisation that the oil company has always been guilty of.

Moving to Guinea Bissau, the incidence of human right violations by state security agencies led to a violent conflict which destabilised the economy of the country in 1998. According to Voz di Paz (2010), the local authorities were accused of physically assaulting and oppressing the local citizenry thereby culminating in a rise in aggressive behaviour from the citizens which ended up breeding a major conflict with brutal consequences. Still within the same country, the constant existence of such repressive actions against the citizenry, even after the events that led to the civil

war in 1998, seems to put the country on a keg of gunpowder and if care is not taken would explode into another violent armed confrontation as was experienced in 2010 soldiers mutiny as well as the 2010 coup d'état (Zenoumenou, 2012).

Equatorial Guinea and Gambia are not left out in the incidences of human rights abuses been meted out on citizens. Although these two states are relatively stable and calm, there are fears that if the constant rights violations are not stopped, there is the possibility of any of the states experiencing armed conflict which will result in instability. While these two countries pride themselves on not having witnessed any incident of large-scale armed conflicts in recent times, the undemocratic and authoritative rule by various regimes has been creating tensions, and if this is not resolved, it would definitely bring the countries to a boiling point that will inadvertently lead the countries experiencing armed conflicts. As reported by Freedom House in 2011, Equatorial Guinea and Cote D'Ivoire made the list of 20 most repressed countries in the world.

The government of Teodoro Mbasogo was not only accused of gross corrupt practices but also a high degree of human right abuses which includes torture, detention of political opponents, wanton interference with judicial proceedings, total disregard for the rule of law and extrajudicial killing amongst other things (McSherry 2006). In a similar vein, the Yahya Jammeh's regime has also been accused of human right violations. As it has been stated earlier, while all these human rights abuses have not yet led to any form of armed conflict whatsoever in these two countries, the possibility of such cannot be overlooked. This is evident by the number of attempted coups he faced before eventually handing over to Adama Barrow in 2017.

2.1.3. Poverty

An inherent problem that seems not to have any solution yet and which affects much of West Africa is the high rate of poverty among the people. The 2012 UNDP human development report stated that close to half of the population of the people in SubSaharan Africa live in abject poverty. Also, this particular problem has been observed to be another significant contributing factor to the occurrence of armed conflicts within the region. Just as in the case of other African countries, the region is neither immune to the problem of poverty nor ignorant of the knowledge of how it affects the stability of the region.

A region with over 60% of its citizen living below poverty line of US$1 a day should logically expect civil unrest which is a recipe for armed conflict. Sometimes, the agitations against the prevailing poverty conditions often take very violent forms with a large percentage of the people believing that they can use such violent agitations to take on the government for the latter's failure to alleviate their conditions. Vinck et al. (2011) revealed that 30% of Liberia's population believed that poverty was a major root cause of the Liberian civil war. Similar assertions have been claimed in the past about Nigeria.

In Voz di Paz's 2010 report, he highlighted poverty as one of the causes of the Guinea Bissau conflicts, also supporting his assertion with underlying problems that go hand in hand with poverty like lack of necessary infrastructure, access to basic social needs, and food insecurity. In evaluating the link between poverty and armed conflict, the people of Guinea Bissau are known to always refer to an adage which says that 'in abodes with no food, there will always be fights and every party to the fight is justified in his or her own right. All these indicate that hunger and starvation coupled with lack of economic growth have the tendency to lead to violent and armed conflicts if not attended to.

2.1.4. Ethno-Marginalization

While it can be said that ethnicity itself is not a violent issue, however, it has a way of being manipulated to polarise societies into various unbalanced units, which will end seeing one or more units feeling marginalised in the grand scheme of events. From the point of view of Fearon and Laitin (2003), a higher degree of ethnic and religious diversity is never a direct cause of violent conflicts. However, for a heterogeneous society like West Africa, the issues of ethnicity is a sharp dividing factor which always drive armed conflicts in many of the countries that make up the region. This is one of the factors that has continually destabilised the peace within the region. Ethnic fragmentation has been reported as one of the root causes of armed conflicts in West Africa. As reported in the case of Liberia, a staggering 50 % of the population identified ethnic division as one of the causes of the Liberian civil wars (Vinck et al. 2011).

This is more pronounced during the ten years rule of Samuel Doe when the Mandingo and Krahn tribes were more favoured than the remaining tribes. Ethnic tensions were so high during this time that it culminated in the invasion by Charles Taylor to ignite the violent conflict that finally

overthrew the despotic Samuel Doe in 1996. Even as we speak, the citizens of Liberia are still held in fear of a recurrence of the civil war along ethnic lines. In similar situations in Guinea Bissau and Nigeria, not leaving Cote D'Ivoire, the problem of ethnic division is so entrenched in their day to day dealings and even at the national level which often results in constant clash of interests. Also, if we are to take a look at Ghana that has a profile of being relatively stable and peaceful, the Andanis and the Abudus has always been at loggerheads with themselves as a result of ethnic differentiation. This has at some time in the past often threaten the peaceful nature of the entire country.

2.1.5. Weapons Proliferation

The proliferation of small and light weapons is also a major challenge in West Africa. The region has always been known to engage in the proliferation of arms due to the affordability and accessibility of such. Also, it is not helped by the porous borders and the seemingly non-existent laws that are supposed to regulate the ownership of such weapons (Keili 2008). As reported by Edeko (1992), the West African region holds up to 10 million illegal small and light weapons. Also, sadly enough, more than 10% of these weapons are held in the hands on various insurgent groups in the region. The circulation of these illegal arms across various West African states has increased the possibility of armed conflicts as it had encouraged the incidences of coups and the undemocratic overthrow of legitimate governments in the region, leading to a high level of casualties from inter-communal armed conflicts.

Worthy of note is the fact that since 1960, West Africa as a whole has had over 37 successful military coups, with no single country left out. These military coups have led to the killing of millions of people and the displacement of many more as noted by Keili (2008). Also, in places such as Sierra Leone, Mali, Niger, Togo and Senegal, armed conflicts have been fuelled by the proliferation of small and light arms. It was reported that arms were supplied to various communities to aid the civil wars in Liberia. Also, Ross (2004) reported that Charles Taylor's National Patriotic Front of Liberia was the primary supplier of arms to Sankoh's Revolutionary United Force to propagate the armed conflict in Sierra Leone. This conflict alone led to the death of more than 50,000 people as well as 30,000 amputations. There were also reports of sexual harassment of women as reported by Ploughshares (2002). Suffice to add that even the Liberians

United Reconciliation and Democracy rebel organisation were beneficiaries of weapons from the Guinean government which they used in the propagating the armed conflict in Liberia.

2.2.   Challenges to Ending Armed Conflict in West Africa

Irrespective of the fact that great efforts have been made to prevent the occurrence as well as end armed conflicts in West Africa, the region still finds itself confronted with incidences of armed conflicts every now and then. Moreover, the major challenge to ending the reoccurrence of these conflicts is attributable to the lack of proper understanding of the underlying causes of these armed conflicts. A vivid example is the recent Malian conflict where there was a misconception from the international community that the root cause of the armed conflict was as a result of terrorist activities by fundamentalists, thereby placing the conflict within the context of fighting against terrorism. This stance has failed to lead to any lasting solution to the armed conflict. However, later events revealed that the deep-seated root causes are actually poor governance, corruption, discrimination, ethnic marginalisation as well as unstructured military governance (Taylor 2013).

Some other challenges of armed conflict prevention that have been identified by scholars include weak institutional structures, language barriers, lack of effective conflict mediation techniques, lack of coordination amongst the various ECOWAS agencies within the region as well as a non-inclusive rebuilding process. As Afolabi (2009) noted, all these factors have culminated into making it difficult to end armed conflicts in West Africa. An affirmation of this is also highlighted by Aning and Bah (2009), who identifies a disjointed technique concerning the collaboration and coordination amongst the various ECOWAS institutions and its partners. Aning and Bah (2009) further emphasised the fact that this is affecting the effective implementation of the conflict prevention moves that was designed to strengthen the issue of human security while also incorporating conflict prevention activities and some aspects of peacebuilding. It has also impacted on the work operation of ECOWARN. Early Warning and Response Network (ECOWARN) is an institution tasked with identifying the possibility of conflicts within the region.

The organisation was criticised for not detecting early enough the signals that led to the 2012 coup d'état in Guinea Bissau (Annan 2014, 11). Another major hindrance to effective conflict prevention and conflict resolution in the region hinges on the lack of resources of states. The resources to

effectively tackle the incidence of armed conflicts have been a major challenge for some countries in West Africa. For example, most nations' national security apparatus does not have the required equipment and capacity that is needed to effectively disarm the warring groups. As witnessed during the Malian conflict, lack of standard equipment on the part of the national army was observed to play a major role in the inability of the national army of successive governments to effectively quench the Tuareg rebellions that have been in existence since the 1960s (Chew 2012). Also, as was noted in Liberia by Isma (2001, 42), despite the fact that the acclaimed intervention of ECOMOG in 1996, the group could not effectively handle the peace mandate accorded to them which was the main reason another armed conflict resurfaced in 1999, just two years after the initial peace was restored.

Lack of willpower on the part of the governments in West Africa to embark on establishing transparent and accountable institutions and implementing the peace agreements that were hitherto signed during the peace negotiation process has also been adjudged to be a great challenge to the incidence of conflict prevention in West Africa. As posited by Obi (2012), most governments in West Africa often find it difficult to work with the peace agreements that were signed to end the initial conflicts, thereby leading to the occurrence of further armed conflicts. A good example is the post-electoral violent conflict that was witnessed in Cote D'Ivoire in 2010 as a result of Laurent Gbagbo's defiance to the communique of ECOWAS that was released in the Abuja summit calling for him to step down. As a result of this defiance, an early resolution of the armed conflict could not be reached as his action fuelled the crisis the more because his loyalist continued to fight the opposition.

 The limited involvement of women and grassroots organisations in the peacebuilding process also contributes to the challenge of resolving conflicts and also preventing them in West Africa. As we all know, women have a role to play in the peace-making within their respective communities, homes as well as organisations. However, when it comes to wide-reaching negotiations and mediations, the women are nominally cheated as they are not adequately represented. In West Africa, the primary organ that oversees conflict mediation among the member states is the Council of the Wise (CoW). Since the time of its inauguration, only a woman, Ex-president Ellen Sirleaf Johnson has been involved in the activities of the group (Afolabi 2007, 28). The exclusion of women from the formal negotiations often limits the effectiveness of the negotiating process. As

noted by Melanne Verveer, Head of the US State Department's Office for Global Women's Issue in 2010, thirty-one out of the world's thirty-nine armed conflicts relapsed after peace agreements due the fact that women were excluded from the mediation processes. A lack of adequate expertise in the art of mediation also poses a challenge as it has been observed that those that often make up the mediating team do not possess the requisite skills in such endeavours.

2.3.   Current and Emerging Conflicts in West Africa

While there is a steady decline in large-scale violent conflicts in West Africa, the region is always witness pockets of simmering tensions as a result of the resurgence of fundamentalists as well as the re-emergence of military coups. For instance, the last coup in Guinea Bissau and the Mali insurgency continues to make the region unstable, while also limiting trade between the unstable countries and the stable ones. Also, low scale armed conflicts in Nigeria and Ghana has resulted in reduced bilateral trades between them and other West African countries. From the time of gaining independence from the French in 1960, Mali, a country profiled as the continent's third largest producer of gold has suffered several coups and ethnic-based armed conflicts until 1992 when the nation adopted a multiparty democracy that resulted in the election of President Alpha Konare.

The emergence of democracy and subsequent stability in the country did not last due to the resurfacing of armed conflicts in the northern part of the country by the National Movement for the Liberation of Azawad (MNLA), Tuareg rebels and also the AlQaeda in the Islamic Maghreb (AQIM) in 2007. The coup d'etat of 2012 also culminated in the killing of thousands of civilians while a lot more were displaced, thereby destabilising the relative peace the country has enjoyed for some time (Gilmour 2012, 2). Also, the Boko Haram insurgency in the northern part of Nigeria, which occurred as a result of religious doctrine and economic deprivation, is also posing a serious risk to the security of the region as a whole. Since the emergence of the terrorist organisation in 2009, the insurgency has claimed too many lives, with million being displaced and the state experiencing wanton destruction of its properties (Walker 2012, 2). On the other side of the country, the southern part of Nigeria is still faced with the militancy issues from the Niger Delta region, further trampling on the relative peace of the country. Within the Niger Delta region,

kidnapping of expatriates and foreign nationals have increased the possibility of armed conflicts in the region. (Ebijunu 2007).

2.4.   Trade in West Africa

The West African region is made up of fifteen countries initially with Morroco recently indicating an interest to join the organisation. It can be further divided into two distinct groups; the eight French-speaking countries (Guinea Bissau, Burkina Faso, Benin, Mali, Nigeria, Senegal, Togo and Cote D'Ivoire) who adopt the usage of a common currency (CFA Franc) and the non-French speaking countries (Nigeria, Cape Verde, Ghana, Guinea, Gambia, Liberian and Sierra Leone). The West African nations agreed to be organised into a regional unit as ECOWAS in 1975, with a disposition to allow for free trade among member nations. In the year 2000, the French-speaking countries also agreed to a customs union.

However, the implementation of trade liberalisation and unified trade tariffs has not been effective as member nations do not comply fully with the dictates of the free trade regulations. Of particular note is the challenge of integrating Nigeria, who maintains a complex tariff structure coupled with a regulatory ban on a number of products. A number of regional institutions were established and mandated to oversee the integration process including the ECOWAS Commission, Court of Justice and the ECOWAS Bank for Investment and Development. Aside the issues relating to trade liberalisation, some other integration techniques were embarked upon in a number of areas. For instance, the Cross-Border Initiative Program (CIP) of 2004 was inaugurated to give support to projects that from areas such as security and conflict management and resolution.

Furthermore, the integration followed nine-member countries adopting a common ECOWAS passport which grants them the opportunity to travel within the region without the need for a Visa. ECOWAS countries are also engaged in negotiating for economic partnership with the European Union (EU) under the Economic Partnership Agreement (EPA) of 2000. A review of this agreement in 2006 revealed that the agreement was lagging behind as result of persistent disagreement with respect to the development provisions made and the resources needed for assistance by the ECOWAS countries. In the face of these delays and glitches in the negotiation process, the European Commission decided to adopt a two-stage approach, firstly persuading non-

LDC (Less Developed Countries) countries to sign interim EPAs that is restricted to only trade in goods in order for them not to be at the losing end with respect to their privileged market access to the European Union market initiative.

It is worthy of note that the LDCs were given the liberty to enjoy duty-free on household goods. Amongst the four Non-LDCs, Cote d'Ivoire and Ghana embarked on signing an interim EPA while Nigeria was relegated to a less favourable market access status under the generalised system of preferences. After the upliftment of Cape Verde from the list of LDCs in 2008, the country obtained an extended EPA which was to lapse at the end of 2011. The country now enjoys the benefits of being given approval for the European Union market access under the generalised system of preferences, a special market access status that is granted to developing countries with a commitment to international standards on labour and human rights as well as environmental protection and good governance. Some critics like Gerard and Archon (2010), are of the opinion that the EPA process may end up having a negative impact on regional trade and integration in the region by imposing deadlines and complicating negotiations which may not be appropriate for the region.

The introduction of reciprocity of free trade with the EU long before the regional market consolidation also carries with it the risk of diverting goods from regional markets to the European Union markets. It is on this note that the ECOWAS member states unanimously agreed that the progress of regional integration is required for the successful implementation of the EPA with the European Union (ECOWAS 2005).

3.   REGIONAL INSTITUTIONS AND REGIONAL TRADE

The establishment of Economic Community of West African States (ECOWAS) was done with the prime motive of integrating the states within the region into a single economic unit where there will be free movement of goods and services across the region without segregation. Since the establishment of the organisation, there have been various policies that have been put in place to make adequate sure that member states feel the essence of being integrated into the organisation in respect of trade and movement of goods and services. While the implementation of these policies has not been impressive, the prevailing issues of armed conflict have further played down the possibility of effective trade and economic integration among member states. There are still some school of thoughts that believe that the incidence of trade within the region is not a possibility. This chapter, in essence, will explore the various efforts embarked upon by ECOWAS to make sure there is free movement of goods and services as well as a highlight if effective economic integration is possible with the constant armed conflicts that West Africa is known for.

3.1   Institutions responsible for economic integration in West Africa

As we have in other parts of the world, the past experiences of West African countries in respect of regional economic integration has been spurred by the desire of the member countries to overcome the barriers of a small economic size that is impeding on their ability to embark on industrialisation efficiently. Before the establishment of a formal organisation that aims at economic integration of the member states, there has been the existence of smaller groups within the region to help foster trade among member states. The establishment of Communauté des États de l'Afrique de l'Ouest (CEAO), which was created in 1973 and made up of Benin, Burkina Faso, Cote d'Ivoire, Mali, Mauritania, Niger and Senegal were aimed at keeping the francophone countries as a common economic unit with a unified currency so that trade will be more liberal among the member states.

There was also the Mano River Commission (MRU) which was also established in 1973 comprising of Guinea, Liberia and Sierra Leone. By 1975, when ECOWAS was established, there were more than 30 inter-governmental organisations that are in cooperation with either the member

states of ECOWAS as well the CEAO and MRU. As at this point, the CEAO has already embarked on a mission to establish a joint central bank which was named BCEAO (La Banque Centrale des États de l'Afrique de l'Ouest). With the creation of ECOWAS, the organisations immediately moved to establish a West African Clearing House that will facilitate intraregional transactions while reducing the reliance on foreign convertible currencies for trade between member states. However, it should be noted that despite all these measures put in place to facilitate healthy trade between member states, there have been hardly any effective coordination among the member states with regards to adequate trade liberalisation.

While the member states have been able to foster unity in other areas of life, the area of economic integration is still lagging behind. Moreover, when the time is taken to consider the significant overlapping of goals and activities amongst the various organisations in West Africa, it becomes surprising to find out that member states of ECOWAS deem it necessary to maintain membership in various organisations within the sub-region. However, in all honesty, according to Earnest (2001), ECOWAS which was the last regional organisation to be established seemed to have gained more popularity and recognition as the foremost ground for economic integration in West Africa.

3.1.1 ECOWAS' Mandate

Just like other regional economic organizations in Africa, the establishment of ECOWAS is credited to the determination of an erstwhile executive secretary of the United Nations' Economic Commission for Africa (UNECA), Adebayo Adedeji, who was convinced that Africa lacked the capability to compete with the rest of the world unless conscious efforts are made to unite economically and politically. He was of the opinion that such a project should indeed start at the regional level (Castens 2006). This was one of the reasons for the creation of ECOWAS with 15 countries in West Africa coming together irrespective of language differences and precolonial history.

The formation of ECOWAS was a clear indication of the determination of the West African leaders to further cement precolonial ties among various tribes and societies and weaken the adverse economic legacies that were left behind by the colonialists. The expectation of the leaders was that

the newly formed organisation would further enable member states to establish a free market that is large enough to enhance competitiveness and regional development. It was also believed that the enlarged free market will spur industries and producers to ride on the economies of scale to promote market specialisation which would ultimately lead to improved terms of trade in the region.

A unified West African market with a population of close to 300 million would also enhance the sub region's bargaining power in relations to other regions and trading blocs within Africa and the world at large. Furthermore, it is believed that challenging policy changes can be implemented through regional agreements (UNDP 2011). Lastly, since it has been acknowledged that globalisation is fraught with serious challenges as well as vulnerabilities for developing nations and weak economies, it was widely believed that the establishment of ECOWAS will tackle such challenges within the framework of a credible regional cooperation.

3.1.2. ECOWAS' Shifting Objectives

The mandate given to ECOWAS upon creation includes creating a common market within the member states in West Africa region. However, the Revised Treaty of 1993 modified the mandate to reflect some important changes taking place in the region as well as the rest of the world. The Article Three of the Revised Treaty extended the organisation's aim to include the promotion of cooperation and integration.

Hence, asides the objectives of creating a common market, the institution has also taking up the responsibilities on issues ranging from political insecurity, state collapse due to the emergence of armed conflicts like the ones witnessed in Liberia and Sierra Leone (Levitt 1998) and also any potential issues such as the organization's challenges in peacekeeping.

Also, it should also be noted that the preoccupation of ECOWAS with conflict management and peacekeeping missions seems to be the most notable catalyst for the agenda of consolidating the economic integration of the region unlike what was experienced in Western Europe and other regional economic alignments. There is no doubt that the member states of ECOWAS played a pivotal role in shaping the fortunes of the organisation (Sesay and Omotosho 2011).

3.2.   Armed conflict as a challenge to ECOWAS integration process

Verifiable statistics reveal that more than 60% of the totality of the African countries has experienced armed conflicts within the country at one point or the other. Suffice to say that less than 20 African countries have been able to avoid the emergence of civil strife and armed conflicts within their respective shores. However, as the days and years pass by, the possibility of armed conflicts arising in these countries is on the increase. With respect to West Africa as a region, available statistics is not really different from what is attainable in the African continent as a whole.

Virtually all the 15 countries (plus the potential new entrant, Morroco) have, at one time or the other experienced armed conflicts from within. Posing as a major challenge to economic development and trade in West Africa, armed conflicts cause monumental damages to the economic prospects of countries. A most common attribute which has been identified, given the availability of records on the consequences of armed conflicts, is the decline in the economic capabilities that often occur as a direct result of the emergence of armed conflicts. Any country that is confronted with the incidence of armed conflict will definitely experience losses in the human capital and in its overall trading activities (Shaw 1990).

An example of this can be seen in the 1994 Rwandan genocide where about 800,000 Rwandan indigenes lost their lives as a result of infighting between two major tribes. Another example is the Burundian civil war which claimed over 200,000 lives in 2000 (Global Coalition 2012). Also, in Liberia, more than 250,000 Liberians lost their lives in the country's 14 years civil war between 1990 and 2004. This is much in consonance with the issue of Sierra Leone where an estimated 250,000 citizens were massacred during the civil war that engulfed the nation between 1991 and 2001. However, the event of Sudan is observed to be more pathetic than all the above examples. The Sudan civil war was one of the longest and costliest in the African continent with over 2 million recorded deaths.

Asides the incidence of life loss, armed conflicts and civil strives often render the citizens homeless and displaced as they often turn to refugees in neighbouring countries. Taking a cue from the

Liberian civil wars, the Global Coalition report of 2004 indicated that more than 700,000 Liberians were displaced internally as at 2003 right before the end of hostilities. The spill-over effect of the civil wars in Liberia was felt in neighbouring countries as a result of inflow of refugees from the war zones. Nigeria paid host to more than 3,000 Liberia at the height of the armed conflicts with a significant number of Liberians were refugees in Guinea. In the case of Sudan, more than 4 million Sudanese citizens were displaced during the country's prolonged civil strife. As of 2004, the total number of African refugees in various countries as a result of armed conflicts in their respective home countries was put between 15 million and 20 million (UNHCR 2004). Available statistics reveal that as at the end of 2012, more than 45 million people have been forcibly displaced in comparison to 40 million as of the end of 2011 (Besley and Perrson 2015).

Armed conflicts have also been shown to have strong impact on neighbouring countries since the influx of displaced people will have adverse effects on the various activities of the host country. The economic growth of the neighbouring countries tends to be on a decline when such happens since the influx of refugees takes its toll of the economic capabilities of such country. As noted by Besley and Perrson (2015), apart from the loss of lives and property, the emergence of armed conflicts more likely than not often results in lower investment in the country's fiscal capacity as a result of the diversification of fiscal resources to increased military expenditures to tackle the prospect of the armed conflicts spilling over (De Groot, 2010).

Due to the possibility of impaired economic situation and also the prospect of a lower investment in its fiscal capacity, Bah (2012), posited that a country that is faced with armed conflicts within its shores may not be able to respects its commitment to other countries within the region. This scenario can be better explained by the reluctance of Nigeria to send its army personnel to Mali for peacekeeping at a time when the Nigeria was also facing the issue of insurgency by Boko Haram.

Bah (2012) further noted that armed conflicts impede on the capacity of a nation to embark on production diversification, development of infrastructure within its territory, as well as nullifying any possibility of macroeconomic discipline. In order to achieve success with respect to regional integration and trade, there has to be convincing features of stability and permanence as well as a sustainable political commitment. However, it has been observed that armed conflicts change the priorities of governments, often leading to the country becoming more withdrawn (Bah 2012).

Based on this indisputable fact, Tapsoba is of the opinion that armed conflicts pose as an obstacle to regional trade and economic integration process due to the fact that they are potential sources of regional destabilisation and might also further increase the economic divergence of the member countries within the same geographical location. This is possible through an increase in the asymmetry of the shocks that affects their respective economies. It is believed that these shocks have the tendency to transmit to other partners of the country, depending much on the strength of their trade relationship. With the shocks emanation from the armed conflicts posing as a major challenge for the country, the possibility of the integration being widened is high according to various critics.

This has been observed with ECOWAS with respect to the weak nature of the organisation to force member nations to implement various trade liberalisation schemes. Within the West African region, ten different currencies are in use, but sadly most of these currencies are not accepted for the purpose of international trade, and the West African Clearing House has always been unable to prevent the occurrence of delays with the settlements of trade payments between member countries (ECOWAS Trade Liberalisation Scheme, 1992). Various constraints on intra-regional trade often includes the inconvertible nature of the member countries, differences in service regulation standards, costly transportation and inefficient communication links, as well as inadequate information regarding the existence of potential buyers and sellers in member countries are also believed to play important roles in making regional trade liberalisation impossible in the face of ongoing armed conflicts and terrorist attacks is some member states.

With various degrees of armed conflicts being propagated within the region, virtually all the trade reforms introduced by ECOWAS have not yielded any positive result. The policy initiatives that are aimed at liberalising trade among member countries have been very slow in practice. Many policy analysts consider the integration of West African countries is nothing but a fantasy (Sesay 2013). For instance, the protocol on free movement of goods and people that has been adopted more than 20 years ago, and which should have directly impacted on the citizens of various member countries if it had been implemented by the member states, has had no effect on the facilitation of easy movement of goods and services as well as human capital across the region.

While the objective of ECOWAS has been documented and revised, the practical aspect of it has not been implemented effectively from the time the organisation was set up in 1975 up till now.

The recent outbreak of the Ebola disease is noted to have seriously threatened the security situation of the region as it has led to a restriction of some policies by countries that have been declared free of Ebola (Ghana, Nigeria and a host of others), with such countries tightening up their borders against ECOWAS member countries in order to protect their citizenry.

3.4.   Possibility of Trade and Integration in the midst of Armed Conflicts

Despite the enormous challenges being faced as a result of armed conflicts in the West African region, there are some school of thoughts who believe that the region's economic integration, while looking difficult is ultimately achievable. The proponents of this thought asserted that since the adoption of the Lagos Treaty in 1975, various strategic institutions and mechanisms have been put in place by ECOWAS to deal with aspects of integration schemes, even in the midst of various armed conflicts. However, it was acknowledged that the pace at which such integration is being embarked upon has been relatively slow. The proponents expounded on some of the Protocols which have been adopted by member countries since 1975 such as the Mutual Assistance in Defence (MAD), Free Movement of Goods and Services, Democracy and Good Governance, Mechanisms for Conflict Prevention and Management, as well as the Protocol on Non-Aggression which were all established in order for integration to be possible. However, the presence of fully armed security personnel operating the various checkpoints of member states' international borders' has been perceived as being counter-productive to the Protocol on free movement.

Another argument put forth is based on the Revised ECOWAS Treaty. The revised treaty of 1993 is considered by some quarters as being an indicator of the determined mindset of the ECOWAS member states on the further integration through the accommodation of newer developments within the region and the rest of the world so as to put in place the necessary implements to adequately address the potential concerns that might originate from the newer developments. The Article 58 of the 1993 Revised Treaty focused on matters of security as it relates with the prime security interests of every ECOWAS member states and how it is linked with that of other member states (ECOWAS Commission, 1993).

The proponents also elaborated on the Revised ECOWAS Treaty as it seeks to put in place institutions that will further deepen the process of integration of the region. These institutions have

been tasked with important socio-political responsibilities such as health, and sanitation that will be aimed at promoting the well-being of the citizens of member states. It also laid a solid basis for fundamental policy thrust and protocols that will further lead to membership development. Policies such as Democracy and Good Governance has contributed in further deepening the issue of democracy and good governance within the region through the adoption of zero tolerance to undemocratic change of democratic governments Sesay (2013).

This particular protocol has been invoked against regimes in Guinea, Togo, and Niger and the political tensions were successfully doused by the implementation of the invocation. The overall assessment of all these new protocols introduced by the revised treaty have shown that ECOWAS means business as it aims at further integration and the establishment of a more peaceful and predictable region. The risk of interstate war between member states has been noted to be very remote. Lastly, the Trade Liberalisation Scheme and other protocols that hinges on harmonisation of fiscal and economic policies which includes the removal of tariffs and the establishment of a free trade area are all indications of the region's push for economic and security integration.

CONCLUSION AND RECOMMENDATION

This thesis examined the extensive literature review on the two main themes of the study; armed conflict and regional trade while also drawing conclusions as well as offering recommendations. The purpose of the study was aimed at examining the effect of armed conflicts on trade in the West African region. The objective of the study was to evaluate the causes of armed conflicts in West Africa, accessing the effectiveness of ECOWAS' efforts in resolving the incidences of armed conflicts arising in the region, access the effectiveness of ECOWAS in addressing the challenges posed by armed conflicts as well as examining the possibility of further economic integration despite the incidence of armed conflicts.

The West African countries have been clamouring for regional economic integration for a very long time. The efforts that have been put in so far while worthy of being applauded seems not to have yielded the expected results that was envisaged. The constant recurrence of armed conflicts coupled with other barriers related to political instability has raised concerns with respect to economic and security integration in the region. It has been observed that this integration can only be successful if accompanies by an effective political integration process. It becomes a matter on essentiality for member states to strive towards strengthening political ties amongst themselves and also come together to confront any case of armed conflicts that spring up in any country within the region. This would contribute to a rise in the confidence of the economic actors with regards to the coherence of the integration's initiatives.

This being said, a commitment to the resolution of armed conflicts in any country in the region would amount to member states reaping some specific benefits in terms of their own progress in economic and security integration. Although, various past studies have pointed at some negative consequences of armed conflict to member states as well as the spillover effect associated with it, the huge benefits of regional integration should serve as an effective incentive for countries in the region to work closely towards preventing and resolving armed conflicts in the region. If the occurrence of armed conflict in just a single country in the region has the tendency to impede on the overall integration plans of the region as a whole, then the member nations should see it as a matter of prime concern, knowing fully well that the progress towards their own integration too

would be affected seriously as a direct result of the negative externalities the armed conflict will cause.

With many west African countries still at the stage of trying to put their feet on the ground due to the various incidences of armed conflicts that have accorded some nations as failed states, the regional security arrangements should be focused on the measures that will aid the prevention and management of armed conflicts instead of promoting utopian ideas and establishing complex institutional mechanisms. The main emphasis should be placed on cooperation amongst member states to establish very simple but reliable security structures. This will go a long way in stabilising the relations, while also preventing any spillover of armed conflicts as well as securing the emerging common values, thereby laying the foundations for nascent security regimes.

A major area that can assist in speeding up the process of the region's economic integration is the active role that should be played by civil society organisations. It is generally known that civil society organisations are great sources of change and major players in the quest for peace and stability in countries they are domiciled. How they are integrated into the government-established armed conflicts resolution and management schemes remains to be seen but if effectively done will go a long way to assuring an effective economic and security integration in the region.

Also, it is important for ECOWAS and other sub-regional groups to show a strong commitment to the implementation of the requisite treaties and protocols. By collectively promoting such, the region stands to make greater progress with respect to integration and trade liberalisation. Most times, the treaties and protocols in ECOWAS and other sub-regional organisations in West Africa are well drafted, but the major problem lies in the practical implementation, given the fact that member countries lack the political will and commitment to implement them. The countries in West Africa must, as a matter of urgency come to terms with the true meaning of regional integration, while also realising that as members of a region, they are bound by various agreements that will ensure that the goals set for the region take priority over national goals.

LIST OF REFERENCES

Abrahamson, R. (2000). Disciplining Capitalism: Development Discourse and Good Governance in Africa, London: Zed Books.

Adeniran, A. (2012). Regional Integration in the ECOWAS Region: Challenges and Opportunities.

Afolabi, B. T. (2009). Peace-making in the ECOWAS Region: Challenges and Prospects, Conflict trends, Vol (2), 24-30.

Aning, K. and Bah, S. A. (2009). ECOWAS and conflict prevention in West Africa: Confronting the triple threats, New York: New York University, Centre on International Cooperation.

Annan, N. (2014). Violent Conflicts and Civil Strife in West Africa: Causes, Challenges and Prospects. Stability: International Journal of Security & Development, Vol. 3, No. 1, p.11.

Bach, D. (2000). Regionalisation in Africa, Integration and Disintegration, New York, Indiana University Press.

Bah, A. (2012). Civil Conflicts as a constraint to Regional Economic Integration in Africa. England, Routledge.

Besley, T. and Persson T. (2015). Wars and state capacity (Journal of the European Economic Association 6) pp. 522-530.

Bowd, R. and Chikwanha, B. A. (2010) (eds). Understanding Africa's contemporary conflicts Origins, challenges and peacebuilding, Ethiopia, Addis Ababa: Africa Human Security Initiative.

Castens Austin. (2006). Regional Integration in a Globalizing World: Priorities for the Caribbean, (Key Note Speech at the Biennial International Conference on Business, banking and Finance, Port of Spain, Trinidad and Tobago.

Chew, K. (2012). Military coup in Mali: democracy in West Africa endangered.

Chingono, M. and Nakana, S. (2009). The challenges of regional integration in Southern Africa, African Journal of Political Science and International Relations, Vol. 3, No. 10.

De Groot, O.J. (2010). The spillover effects of conflict on economic growth in neighbouring countries in Africa. (Defence and Peace Economics 21(2): 2010) pp. 149–164.

Ebaye, S. E. N. (2010). Regional Integration and Conflict Management in Africa. African Research Review Vol. 4(2), p. 277.

ECOWAS Commission, Revised Treaty, 1993. (Abuja: 1993)

Edeko, S. E. (1992). The proliferation of small arms and light weapons in Africa: a case study of the Niger Delta in Nigeria, Sacha Journal of Environmental Studies, Vol. 1, No. 2, pp. 55–80.

Tuschi, R. H., & Ejibunu, H. T. (2007). Nigeria's Niger Delta crisis: root causes of peacelessness. EPU Research papers, 7(7).

Ernest, A. (2001). Regional Integration in West Africa. (OECD Development Centre, Working Paper No. 170, p.25.

Fearon, J. D., & Laitin, D. D. (2003). Ethnicity, insurgency, and civil war. American political science review, 97(1), 75-90.

Fithen, C. (1999). Diamonds and war in Sierra Leone: cultural strategies for commercial adaptation to endemic low-intensity conflict, London: Department of Anthropology.

Galtung, J. (1969). Violence, peace and peace research. Journal of Peace Research 3, p. 169.

Gilmour, J G (2012). The terrorist threat in North-West Africa: Part One. Journal of Military and Strategic Studies 14(2)

Hartzenberg, T. (2011). Regional Integration in Africa. Switzerland: World Trade Organization, Economic Research and Statistics Division. Staff Working Paper ERS, p.3.

HRW (2003). The regional crisis and human rights abuses in West Africa: A briefing paper to the U.N. Security Council, New York.

Isma, R. (2001). A comparative perspective of ECOMOG peace operations in Liberia and Sierra Leone (Doctoral dissertation).

Kameri-Mbote, P. (2005). Environment and Conflict Linkages in the Great Lakes Regions, International environmental research centre.

Keili, F. L. (2008). Small arms and light weapons transfer in West Africa: a stock-taking. In Disarmament Forum (Vol. 4, pp. 5-11).

Kelly, M. (2003). Ten Principles of Complexity and enabling infrastructures. Complex Systems and Evolutionary Perspectives on Organizations: The Application of Complexity theory to Organizations, S. I. Elsevier.

Levitt, J. (1998). Humanitarian Intervention by Regional Actors in Internal Conflicts: The Cases of ECOWAS in Liberia and Sierra Leone. Temp. Int'l & Comp. LJ, 12, 333.

Luwam G. Dirar. (2014). Rethinking and Theorizing Regional Integration in South Africa. Emory International Law Review, Vol. 28, p.138.

Mayer, B.S. (2000). The Dynamics of Conflict Resolution: A Practitioner's Guide, San Francisco: Jossey- Bass.

McSherry, B. (2006). The Political Economy of Oil in Equatorial Guinea. African Studies Quarterly, 8(3).

Mildner, S. A., Lauster, G., & Wodni, W. (2011). Scarcity and abundance revisited: A literature review on natural resources and conflict. International Journal of Conflict and Violence (IJCV), 5(1), 155-172.

Moeletsi M. (2009). Architects of Poverty: Why African Capitalism Needs Changing, 133–34.

Newland, K. (1993). Ethnic conflict and refugees, in M. E. Brown, Ethnic Conflict and International security, Princeton: Princeton University Press, p. 191.

Obi, C. (2012). Conflict and peace in West Africa, Uppsala, Sweden: The Nordic Africa Institute.

Omeje, Kenneth (n.d). Conflicts in West Africa Introduction.

Panagariya, A. (2000). Preferential trade liberalisation: the traditional theory and new developments. Journal of Economic literature, 38(2), 287-331.

Piccolino, G. and Minou, S. (2014). The EU and Regional Integration in West Africa: What Effects on Conflict Resolution and Transformation? Working Paper Series.

Rourke, J. T. (1995). International Politics on the World Stage, (Guild-ford, Connecticut: Dushkin Publishing Group/Brown & Benchmark Publishers.

Ross, D. (2004). The missing peace: The inside story of the fight for Middle East peace, (New York: Farrar, Straus and Giroux.

Sesay, A & Omotosho, M. (2011). The Politics of Regional Integration in West Africa, (WACSERIES Vol. 2 Num 2, p.14

Sesay, A. (2013). Fighting Bush Fires: ECOWAS and Peacemaking in West Africa (Abuja: ECOWAS Commission: 2013.

Shaw, T. (1990). Regionalism and the African Crisis: Towards a Political Economy of ECOWAS and SADCC, West African Regional Co-operation (Edited by J. E. Okolo and S. Wright, Westview Press, Boulder.

UNDP (2011).

UNHCR (2013). Refugee statistics: full data.

United Nations Conference on Trade and Development (UNCTAD). The Least Developed Countries Report 2007.

Van Ginkel, H. and Van Langenhoven, L. (2003). Introduction and context", In H. van Ginkel, J. Court and L. Van Langenhoven (eds.), Integrating Africa: Perspectives and Regional Integration and Development, Belgium: United Nations University Press.

Vinck, P, Pham, P N and Kreutzer, T. (2011). Talking Peace: A population-based survey on attitudes about security, dispute resolution, and post-conflict reconstruction in Liberia, (Berkeley, CA: Human Rights Center, University of California.

Voz di Paz and Interpeace. (2010). Root causes of conflict in Guinea-Bissau: The voices of the people, Guinea-Bissau: Voz di Paz/Interpeace, p.52.

Walker, A. (2012). What is Boko Haram? Special Report 308, Washington D.C.: United States Institute of Peace.

Yabi, O. G. (2010). Role of ECOWAS in Managing Political Crisis and Conflict: The Cases of Guinea and Guinea-Bissau, Abuja: Friedrich-Ebert-Stiftung.

Zenoumenou, D. (2012). The challenge of ending political violence in Guinea- Bissau, (Pretoria, South Africa: Institute for Security Studies.