CHAPTER FOUR: POLITICAL OBSTACLES TO THE ECOWAS
INTRA-STATE FACTORS

4.1. State-building (sovereignty versus integration)

State-building, nation-building, and political integration are terms used to describe national unity in a given country. Normally, nation-building is materialized through nationalism, a strong feeling of belonging to the same land with a common purpose, or by a unifying political or religious ideology. In West Africa as well as in almost all black Africa, state-building continues to be a matter of security concern since independence. Virtually, because colonial states in the continent were created within artificial boundaries that rarely coincide with those of traditional polities. In the past, religion had played significant political role in integrating different African ethnic groups into one unified entity especially in West Africa, with strong support to the state’s sovereignty. Nationalism on the other hand, had no historical record as a unifying force in all different African regions. What is known in Africa was anti-colonial nationalism, a nationalism that was predominantly expressed within the confines of the colonial state. 77 The obstacle anti-colonial African nationalists faced was how to garner a wide support from the populace. Loyalties tended to move towards traditional units that lay within the boundaries of the same state. African nationalism became more assertive after WW II due to scarcity of jobs and rising inflation. By this time political parties and interest groups in French and British Africa had already emerged to articulate people’s grievances. Political parties became the vehicles of African nationalism, aiming to draw large numbers of peoples under their banners. But they were dominated by urban-centered elite that included middle-class elements like lawyers, other professionals and merchants. Their appeals as such were
city-centered also, as they could not attract effective mass support. Political parties in fact became congress-type organizations and continued to dominate the political scenes in British and French Africa in the early 1950s. They claimed to represent all people and pressed their claims to eventual self-determination by rights of deputation and petitions. When these approaches failed, they resorted to mass demonstrations, national boycotts and strikes.

Notable examples of such congresses among ECOWAS members were the National Council of Nigeria and the Cameroons (NCNC), created in 1944; the Rassemblement Democratique Africain (RDA), an inter-territorial party established in French Africa in 1946; and the United Gold Coast Convention (UGCC) founded in 1947. The NCNC was made up of a large number of affiliated organizations (some 180 in 1945), including tribal unions (which were very important in the growth of Nigerian nationalism). The decision in 1951 to admit members on an individual basis marked the transformation of the Council into a political party. The RDA, similarly, viewed itself as a ‘national front’. It was a broad political organization, including within itself all sorts of ideology; open to every national group, to men of all social conditions, and every Territory, grouped around a programme of concrete, definite aims. Some of these early state-building congresses were short-lived because of political disagreements. In Nigeria, the NCNC became more of a political party and less than a congress. The extent of its national support was limited as it won the backing of Christianized Middle Belt of the Northern Region, it failed to make significant impact on the Muslim North, which formed the Northern People’s Congress (NPC), while the Yoruba established the Action Group (AG) in 1951. The RDA’s national front also broke down because of a political issue of compromising


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with the French authority, as favoured by its president, Houphouet-Boigny. In 1954 in
Ghana, the National Liberation Movement was established with a powerful backing
by Ashanti chiefs. Ashanti nationalism was thus born as an expression of Ashanti
dissatisfaction due the perception of its region's meager share of the nation's
resources. It was a reaction towards Kwame Nkurmah's government, accused of
discrimination against the Ashanti people.

This historical experience in West Africa's political parties' evolution has an
evident role in the problem of state-building today. They were different in structure,
and their social bases of support. For instance, the Convention People's Party (CPP)
in Ghana, and the Parti Democratique de Guinee (PDG) in Guinea, tried to appeal to
the middle-class. While others like NPC in Nigeria and the Parti Progressiste Nigerien
(PPN) in Niger, had a narrow appeal, the NPC especially was the mouthpiece of the
native authorities. Some of them were elite parties, but changed to some degree to
become mass parties for the sake of political elections. The Parti Democratique de
Cote d'Ivoire (PDCI), for example, had many of the characteristics of a mass party
but was more pragmatic than ideological and made formal use of ethnic bases of
support in its organization.\textsuperscript{79}

Leaders of political parties, somehow, recognized the importance of a united
campaign. Therefore, many of them, especially the so-called mass parties like the
CCP in Ghana and the Union Soudanais (US) in Mali, sought to bring trade union and
farmers' organizations, and co-operative groups under their shadow in order to form
one national movement. However, sovereignty became shaky after independence,
alerting the weakness of national integration foundation in most ECOWAS states. For
example, the CCP rule in the post-independence period rested on the expressed

\textsuperscript{79} T. Hodgkin, "Nationalism in Colonial Africa", London: Frederick Muller, 1956, p. 146
support of roughly one in six of the estimated eligible voters. Support declined further under the Republic inaugurated in 1960, though no free elections were held to test the extent of that decline, and the one-party state created in 1964 rested on flimsy foundations. 80

Francophone political parties were more cohesive than their British counterparts. The French system favoured the strongest party and tended to eliminate weak ones. The French also weakened the power of traditional chiefs and institutions and consequently boosted elite cohesion. On the other hand, an overwhelmingly dominant party did not emerge in every case. In Benin and Niger for instance, the party that won control of the government in 1957 lost power at the subsequent elections, leaving the way clear for the new ruling party to make use of the government machinery to strengthen its position. In general, party dominance resulted in high levels of electoral participation in French Africa; in British Africa, by contrast, a high turnout was most likely when, as in the Gold Coast and Nigeria, party fragmentation occurred and inter-party competition increased. 81

It was in the light of such trends, that political parties' relations with nation-building can be assessed. Their main function is expected to be integrative. Conditions to fulfill this objective were set in the constitutions of African states. For that end, during the Nigerian elections of 1979, a political party could only be registered if it met a number of stringent conditions which were designed to satisfy the Federal Electoral Commission that it was not an association confined to a part only of the geographical area in Nigeria; its headquarters had to be in the federal

80 William Tordoff, opcit., p. 64
capital and its executive committee had to reflect Nigeria’s federal character. This was intended by policy-makers to inculcate national values in the place of communal or parochial values, in a way that all ethnic and political groups would respect the sovereignty of the national government. This was a common policy among all ECOWAS member states. The sovereignty of any winning political party is legitimate only if the election was credited as ‘free and fair’. In the one-party system, elections were used by the ruling party to prove that it had legitimate right for continuance in office and for its policies. In most Francophone Africa, several military juntas clothed themselves in civilian garb and organized essentially plebiscitary elections to legitimize their rule on a national level. Nevertheless, factionalism and weak foundation for national integration is usually demonstrated during congressional or parliamentary elections, when voters main concern is local or ethnic-related issues, rather than national.

From the above, it is obvious that African states tried to strengthen national unity without which state-building and security would be impossible. However, military intervention in politics, ethnic and tribal considerations, political and personal interests of politicians in the past and the present played major roles in undermining this goal. Many security problems threatened and still in some ECOWAS countries continue to stand on the way to strong national unity and respect for national sovereignty, as will be explained soon. Tribalism and religious differences are still very great obstacles to nation-building in most West African countries. That is why many still believe that single-party system, and few others believe that only military regimes can keep African countries integrated nationally. There is some change among many Africans, especially the new educated generations regarding the factors

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that cause state disintegration. Whether it is trade unionists, intellectuals, students, or the unemployed, many in Africa today are no longer content to simply wear the labels of social origins, tribe, or age. Rather, they increasingly choose to adhere to a particular social group according to individual ideas of solidarity based in religious, philosophical, or spiritual criteria. It is in this way that numerous popular religious organizations, active notably amongst urban youth, are now able to recruit members from throughout society and not from one segment or tribe, as was the case two or three decades ago. However, it must be admitted that this is a slow process, as well as not being true everywhere. Nor does it necessarily yet represent a radical change in the way in which Africans themselves participate in associations, since many still act in accordance with 'traditional' forms of solidarity. 83 Such a political and social evolution can be seen in Niger, Mali, Burkina Faso, Senegal, Guinea, and Gambia. But it must be reiterated that this remains a slow process. An important point to be noted is that the majority of the population of these countries are tied to each other by a common religion, which was the main bond that once united them before European colonialism.

4.2. The military and civilian government

From the previous evaluation of contagious military behaviour, it was made evident that the military most of the time is considered a real element of instability among ECOWAS countries. Similarly, despite their attempt to forge a national integrity, political parties lead to hostility and factionalism among various groups within one country. Some times during elections, violent clashes are frequently reported by the media between supporters of different parties. When a civilian government is formed,
it finds it hard to cope with the opposition party in an environment of political animosity.

The military on the other scale, is considered more cohesive thanks to its organizational characteristics and ideology of nationalism. It is normally (in principle), composed of various heterogeneous elements representing all tribes and regions in the country and receive the same training and experience. Yet in the African context, it cannot be assumed that membership in a heterogeneous army necessarily fosters a national outlook. Evidence shows that recruitment to African armies is so skewed that it becomes difficult to see the military as diminishing ethnic rivalry. When West African states became independence, certain ethnic groups on the account of others dominated the military in each one of these countries. Or the top ranking military posts are controlled by one or more tribes, while the low-ranking remained filled by minority ones. For example, the Ibo in Nigeria, the Zerma in Niger, and northern tribes in Ghana. The fact that the army broke down in many African countries at the same ethnic line as the rest of the society reveals that the military organization itself is not exempt from tribal influences. But as long as it possesses the means of coercion, it stands as a watch on civilian governments for many reasons. This means civilian governments can not function independently without the psychological feeling in mind about the possibility of military intervention. In other sense, democratic governments in West African states have no full political independence of action according to the legitimate power conferred to them by the people through elections. Hence, for any government to be able to function in peace, it has to consider the privileges and power ambition of many top military leaders within its ranks. Most of these privileges can not be justified in any

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64 Olatunde Odetola, _opcit_, p. 138
way as they place the military above the law of the country, and at a higher ground than the rest of citizens. For example, when the soldier-turned civilian president of Niger, Ibrahim Barre Mainassara was assassinated in 1999, before the new military junta delivered power to an elected civilian government, a written assurance has to be made by the civilian elite that no investigation would be conducted on the assassination case. In a few instances, military personnel apparently perceive that civilian authorities threatened to remove their favoured status and prerogatives in the new society. Military leaders would, in turn, use a coup as a means of exercising their power and influence over civilian authorities. As the number of coups began to rise, the specter of coups gave other military officers similar ideas, while civilian rulers became more suspicious of military motives. 85

The principal causes of military intervention and destabilization of democratic governments are the dominance of one ethnic group, multipartyism and low electoral participation, factionalism among political, economic, traditional, and military elite, economic malaise. Conspiracy of foreign powers has to be included also. At times, the military steps in as an arbiter between two warring elite groups. It normally sides with bureaucrats against politicians, and proves itself more capable than civilian governments in the maintenance of national integrity. The argument is that the military is in short of the political capacity for nation-building, mobilizing the masses, and organizing public political participation. Only political parties have such capacity and secure more confidence among the people. Only them can gather new talents and regularize elite recruitment. Only parties can bridge leaders and common masses into a daily contact, only parties can generate enthusiasm on the basis of unity with citizens outside the country.

85 Steven Thomas Seitz, opcit., p. 71
At some point, when the army takes over the government and has a socialist orientation towards the society, it tries to infuse its members into the government in a civilian way. The longer it stays in power, the less willing it is to allow the formation of political parties. For example, ten years of military rule in Mali by Traore had given no opportunity for the development of a party. He had constituted the Military Commission for National Freedom (CMLN) in order to establish the Mali People’s Democratic Union. He had said that the military would never return to the barracks but will govern with civilians. Similar steps were taken in Benin and Niger. In Guinea the army has been completely integrated into civilian administrative structures. It is only in Nigeria and Ghana that this did not take place.\textsuperscript{86}

Several Francophone countries were able to maintain civilian rule for long time because of French military agreements with them, designed in some way to preserve French interests therein. Among the ECOWAS, Cote d'Ivoire till 1999, Senegal, and Togo had full French support in this respect. In the 1990s as France began to review its military commitments, Francophone civilian regimes began to yield to its democratization pressure so that they could secure French logistic and backing in case of threat from their own military at home. In other words, Francophone civilian governments count on French army for stability at home more than that of their own. However, Guinea since 1958 to 1984 under Sekou Toure was able to maintain its civilian regime without dependence on France. Civilian regimes also tend to strengthen each other based on bilateral intervention. An example is the dispatch of Senegalese troops to the Gambia in 1981 to sustain president Sir Dawda Jawara’s government have been successful, and that civilian regimes (often radical and

\textsuperscript{86} Olatunde Odetola, \textit{opcit,} 148
frequently poor) have been more likely than military regimes to use their national armies on external military missions. 87

Another explanation for the survival of civilian governments is the political shrewdness shown by such leaders as Houphouët-Boigny. The contrary can be detrimental, that is the lack of political skill, the manipulation of elections, may lead to the army removal of the government. In some instances, a civilian government invites the army to stage a coup. In Sierra Leone, when Albert Margai faced electoral defeat at the hands of Siaka Stevens in 1967, he exploited his relation with the army commander, Brigadier David Lansana, who belonged to the same ethnic group, the Mende, by calling him for help. The Brigadier responded by arresting Siaka Stevens and declared martial law. The genesis of the coup lay in the development of a kind of symbiotic relationship between the civilian and military elite in the period prior to the initial coup (a coup that was to fail because the army was not united behind its commanding officer). 88 One of the reasons as given by the military that overthrew Nkurmah’s government in February 1966 was to stop political interference with the army and police. This means that the army is virtually outside of the influence sphere of civilian governments among ECOWAS countries. But it retains the right to contain the latter under its watch and influence. Actually, the main reason of that coup might be the military’s growing sense of the strong threat to its corporate interests represented by several of Nkurmah’s measures, in particular the creation of the President’s Own Guard Regiment (POGR). This same factor is also considered among the first reasons that led to the assassination of Niger’s Mainassara.

In sum, civilian governments in West Africa continue to be threatened by the military of their own respective countries. Instead of the army being under civilian control as is the case in developed countries, it is the civilian regimes of most ECOWAS member states that are under the control and watch of the army.

4.3. Elite disunity

Patterns of political conflict between African policy makers have a direct bearing on policy decisions and on the dynamics of civil disorder and order in ECOWAS countries. They also have an impact upon the rudiments of political organization, on the creation of a civil society. Conflicts within the ranks of political center are very common form of political struggle in every country. Elite of different ethnic, economic and educational backgrounds with multiple interests, have contended with each to achieve promote differing concerns and oppose measures perceived as detrimental to their good being.

For example in Cote d'Ivoire, old guard and young technocrat politicians have competed with each other for the last four decades for party positions and for cabinet posts. Elite conflict in West African countries takes place in the capital cities and among the upper echelons of the government apparatus. It is related to daily activities of political leadership concerning bureaucratic appointments, policy directions, and governmental allocations. Every member of the elite vies to affect political decisions, strengthen his position in the hierarchy, have a say in the molding of policy, and increase his share of the political bounty. Consequently, in most of these states, cronyism and patronage developed whereby relatives and close friends are awarded favourable governmental posts regardless of adequate merits and qualification. Those involved in these strifes are namely urban elite, civil servants, professionals, big
businessmen, students, intellectuals, in many cases chiefs and religious leaders. Sometimes individuals act alone or form temporary alliances with others so as to bring about a certain change. Some times such alliances last long as interests of key groups have coalesced. In these cases, elite conflicts take the shape of factional dimensions as well.

Many activities of conflicting groups are concluded behind the screen. Allies are gained through lavish entertainment, precious gifts, and appointment promises. Back scene manipulations, agreements, and negotiations are important techniques of struggling for positions and enhancing influence among African elite.

In party systems, elite conflict also takes place in the parliament and in the central party organs. The outcome of votes provides more tangible evidence of alliances as well as of agreements arrived at behind doors. These explicit and implicit modes of elite conflict are sometimes accompanied by more demonstrative manifestations as well: speeches criticizing government actions, grumblings in the market about particular decisions, and most notably, where the tradition of free exists despite formal constraints (Ghana, Nigeria, Senegal) or has been permitted (Cote d'Ivoire), through newspaper editorials, the dissemination of pamphlets, the growth of an underground press. Such conflict assumes more active expressions especially where government performance is unimpressive. In Ghana and Nigeria since independence, and sometimes in Cote d'Ivoire and Togo, when elite have failed to gain concessions they have used petitions, demonstrations, and even strikes to press their claims. Some groups especially students have marched in protest to voice their dissatisfaction, and also have taken to strike action. The tactics of elite conflict remained within the bounds of legal opposition and nonviolent. Because their main aim is to gain benefits

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rather than destabilize the system foundations. Although in some instances, the opposition and others have sought to see the falldown of the governing party. Nonetheless, this pattern changed in 1989 and 1990, when unanswered demands in many countries escalated into active moves for regime change.

Elite conflict usually evokes some formal reaction, as leaders rarely afford to marginalize key elite groups. Houphouet-Boigny is one of the political masters of elite discontent management. He resorted to cooperation, repression, compromise, and contempt alternatively to maintain control. When students in Cote d'Ivoire denounced government orientations and criticized what they considered to be inequitable practices, some of their leaders were dispatched abroad on government grants, some were incarcerated, and others given high positions in the administration. 90 But the most important way of dealing with political dissatisfaction has been through manipulating appointments and shifting policies. The most extreme measures taken when all other channels of appeasement failed, is political excommunication. This has included imprisonment, like did Nkrumah with some of his elite circles, forcing into exile, and physical elimination like did the counter coup leaders with Niger's Mainassara.

It is inevitable that accommodation of elite demands has also involved some overtures towards the external partners of domestic elites. Leaders have periodically met the claims of local business interests (and by extension their foreign counterparts) by lowering taxes, giving preferred access to foreign exchange, providing credit facilities, or granting immigration permits. However costly such actions are, every government has had to make some gestures to elite groups in order to insure its own survival. 91 When elite conflicting demands are personalized, it is easier to solve. But

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90 Naomi Chazan, op cit., p. 192
91 Ibid., p. 192
when they are generalized and opposing, the more difficult the problem is, leading to higher degree of tension. Some governments like Cote d'Ivoire have tried to limit the size of elite groups to avoid confrontation. Some like Ghana under Rawlings have engineered the constant circulation of elite. These efforts decide political instability in most West African countries. Where the elite are well manipulated, there is relative regime stability like in Guinea under Sekou Toure, and Togo under Mathieu Kerekou. Where they are mishandled, like in Nigeria and Burkina Faso, political instability prevails.

The worst kind of elite conflicts that underline several ECOWAS member states' intra-elite disunity, is factional conflict. It reaches out to social and local groups. It is most visible in states that have intermediate social organizations where effective patronage network have thrived, like Nigeria, Ghana, Senegal, and Sierra Leone. Its main goal is government control or bringing about a more major change in the regime. Regionalism for regional economic and political benefits has intensified competition and conflict among various ethnic groups. Advantaged and disadvantaged leaders often struggle in parliament or congress to promote the interests of their constituents. In Ghana, businessmen, tribal chiefs, lawyers, have joined hands against progressive intellectuals, trade union leaders, and independent farmers. In Senegal and Niger, Muslim religious leaders compete with bureaucrats. In Nigeria, ethnoregional leaders have struggle against each other for political power.

Military governments have sometimes yielded to factional demands by transferring power to civilians, or by initiating political reforms, as has been the case in many several ECOWAS countries in the 1990s. However, as civilian governments may resort to repressive measures against political opponents, military governments have always been in a greater position to do so. Political factionalism is contained by
coercion and warning. For instance, under Traore, Kerekou, and Mainassara’s regimes, although all dressed in civilian clothes, they silenced elite factional demands by the use of force and intimidation. Under Buhari-Idiagbon regime, repression had become a reflex. The government broke up a press conference of the Academic Staff Union of Universities, detaining four of its officers. Many of Nigeria’s clamorous interest groups were banned, including the National Association of Nigerian Students, whose September 1984 national conference was violently dispersed. After long-running tension between doctors and the government erupted in a strike in February 1985, the Buhari government banned the Nigerian Medical Association and another doctors’ association and arrested their leaders. Many critics who were not arrested were watched and warned. Normally vigorous centers of articulate opinion fell silent in a spreading climate of fear.\(^\text{92}\)

This has revealed the vulnerability of political structure in West Africa. Elite and other group conflicts are all directed towards narrow interests that undermine national stability. That’s the reason why many political thinkers argue on the existence of civil society in most West African states. It remains to be seen how regional economic and political integration can be materialized, while the small level intra-state political and economic integration towards sustained national development is still hard to achieve in ECOWAS member states.

\(^{92}\) Larry Diamond, "Nigeria Update", *Foreign Affairs*, 1985, Vol. 64, No. 2, p. 329
4.4. Ethnic armed rebellion

Broad categories of conflicts have plagued Africa in general since independence. Conflicts about self-determination, territorial claims between neighbouring countries, and about secession. The latter is basically challenges to the regime in power at independence and afterwards. Running through types of conflict in Africa, however, is the thread of ethnicity, which the source of many conflicts, whether they are professed to be about territory, self-determination, or secession. 91 One of its major causes is the government inability to accommodate certain minority groups into the national system in a satisfactory manner that would lead them to accept its legitimacy. All secessionist conflicts have pursued violent means to achieve their goal. However, they have all failed to make success in their political demands except Eritrea that was able to secede from Ethiopia in the 1991 and become independent. Still in other countries such kinds of political turmoil continue especially in the Sudan, which can be considered the worst in the continent.

West Africa also had its share of this factor of great security threat to the very integrity of a country. Mali, Mauritania, Niger, Nigeria, and Senegal all have gone through armed rebellions for political and territorial separation. In fact, the crises still go on in Mauritania and Senegal, while they are now latent in both Mali and Niger. Nigeria had been able to completely terminate that phase in its last three decades. The Biafra war that lasted for three years and more, leaving hundreds of thousands of dead between 1967 to 1970. It was based upon political and economic reasons. The overthrow of Johnson Aguiyi Ironsi government, conflict over political representation, and the discovery of oil in the east, all helped fomenting the Nigerian civil war. But from another perspective, there are arguments supported by current

political, religious, and ethnic upheavals suggesting that such a threat also remains latent in Nigeria and may explode at any given time.

As a further elaboration of the ethnic problem in Niger, the Tuareg were the first ethnic group to challenge the sovereignty of the Nigerien government over them. Numbering about 8 percent of the total population, the Tuareg are linguistically and physically different from the majority of Nigeriens. The major bond that ties them with the rest of the people is religious, which in some way mitigates political and ethnic hostilities to a certain extent. Calling for a Tuareg state of their own in the north of the country, they have frequently formed armed rebellions that have frightened the government of its national stability. Due to limited military and financial capabilities, including lack of full support from the common Tuareg masses, (mostly illiterate pastoralists), and also due to the government political compromises, a peace treaty was concluded in the late 1990s, according to which some of their leaders were given ministerial and other governmental positions. Majority of their combatants were incorporated in the Nigerien armed forces after surrendering their weapons to the government. The Arabs who constitute 2 percent of the population also took up arms in the 1990s to protest against the government, which they perceived to discriminate against them. The same violent approach was also used by the eastern Toubou ethnic group, which makes an equal population percentage like the Arabs.

Equally important, armed rebellions by the Tuareg ethnic entity had destabilized national security in Mali, where many government soldiers were killed in the 1990s. A peace agreement was also reached that ended the last phase of series of ethnic conflicts in the country.
This source of security instability emanating from a political dimension, amalgamated with an ethnic element, has alerted the governments of both ECOWAS member states of the seriousness of the question. Consequently, an agreement of bilateral military cooperation for border security was signed in order to assist each other in the case of any armed rebellion. Although the agreement did not point a finger a specific ethnic group, but it was clear that it meant no other than the Tuareg citizens of both countries.

The ECOWAS member country, Mauritania, is a sparsely populated country of some two million people that has been impoverished by desertification and endemic ethnic conflicts. 94 Two-thirds of the population are mixed Arab-Berber, known as Moors. The rest are minority groups who inhabit the southern region bordering Senegal. The government had to fight several armed ethnic resistance, like the Popular Front for the Liberation of Saguia el-Hamra and Rio de Oro (Polisario), the guerrilla movement fighting for the independence of a territory. However, the military coup of 1978 renounced Mauritania’s claim to Western Sahara, after rising military expenses and economic decline that weakened security stability in the country. In 1984 a successful military counter coup took over under Colonel Taya pursued a policy of linguistic and cultural Arabization. This had led to another conflict with the southern Toucouleur and Soninke African groups. From these groups an armed guerrilla organization, the African Liberation Forces of Mauritania, was formed, and had mounted many attacks against government forces. The authority is still unable to end the politicized ethnic crisis despite democratization process that began after the Gulf War. Taya’s regime had received substantial military and financial support from Iraq. Meanwhile, the army continues to enforce an undeclared policy of expelling

non-Moors, who live in the south from their homes. 95 The dreadful consequence of this practice is continued internal warfare with potentially dangerous external roles.

The implication of these armed crises illustrated in the aforementioned three ECOWAS states is that they are likely to create a regional issue in the future. The Berber Tuareg of Mali and Niger are ethnic cousins of the Arab/Berber Moors and could be agitated to violence by the racial and cultural conflict in Mauritania. Mali, in particular, is in more danger because of the across the border activities of that conflict. It would be rational to consider Mauritania’s security fragility in conjunction with those of Niger and Mali in multilateral endeavours for peaceful solutions.

Similarly, the civil war in Liberia had some ethnic appeal in it. When Taylor ordered the arrest of Johnson, the latter was able to run to the encamped Armed Forces in Liberia (AFL) at the Barclay Barracks. It was there that he pondered to the fears and anxieties of the dominant military elements by suggesting that Taylor was making a final attempt to eliminate the Krahn (Doe’s ethnic group). This strategy succeeded in gaining the support of Boley, who broke away from his Council of State colleagues and joined forces with Johnson. 96

There is an anxiety that the military split in Cote d’Ivoire may turn to become an ethnic armed crisis, if not in present time, some where in the future. Because as explained earlier, most of the rebel soldiers are from the north and belong to different ethnic groups and religion.

Therefore, armed ethnic rebellions in ECOWAS countries is another security problem that is bound to be a puzzle for the community to solve in order to see its economic and political future dreams through. The account above dealt with armed rebellions against installed regimes that had manifest effects on national policy-

95 Richard L. Sklar, opcit., p. 227
96 Max Ahmadu Sesay, opcit., p. 404
making. But there is another uncertain social factor of security perplex in the majority of West African countries that has not yet assumed political organized armed struggle. That is the question of tribalism and tribal hostilities.

4. 5. Tribalism and politicized ethnic rivalries

In all black African countries only Somalia, Swaziland, and Lesotho are ethnically homogeneous. All the rest have several or many tribal subdivisions that make state-building very difficult. But somehow, many writers take exception to the words “tribe and tribalism”. The word “tribe” itself is an invidious term of colonial vintage that denigrates African ethnic groups. This explains why more than 30 million Yorubas with a centuries-old civilization are classified as a “tribe”, unlike the Basque “community” or just plain Serbs and Croatians. The fact that African themselves use “tribalism” for the purposes of group and supposedly historical identity - and find journalists and diplomats willing to believe them – is no proof of its primordial origins. 97 African ethnicity, like ethnic consciousness elsewhere, uses any number of primary identities like area of origin, religion, culture, and language, to build a group’s internal cohesion in the face of competition for power and resources from other groups.

The evolution of the present tribal hostilities between many groups in most African states has its basic origin in colonialism. The different diffusion of economic change during the colonial period and the administrative divisions of the colonial state activated local identities and underlined the differences between major groups (the Zerma and Hausa in Niger, the Yoruba, the Igbo, and the Hausa-Fulani in Nigeria, the Sara and the Toubou in Chad). Electoral competition during transition to

independence politicized these distinctions. Because democratic competition gives an undue advantage to numerically superior ethnoregional units, the underrepresentation of smaller, although frequently more educationally and economically advanced groups, exacerbated a feeling of inequality. Interethnic hostility grows, particularly when religion and culture obviously distinguish between groups. In some cases, even when religious affiliation is the same still the phenomenon persists. The Hausa, the Kanuri, and the Tuareg in Niger appeared to consider the Zerma tribe as a common political enemy. Because the Zerma had more control over political affairs of the country after independence, and were accused of discriminating against others. Only recently the biggest majority, the Hausa, 56 percent of the population seems to take over. Interestingly, the other minorities except the Zerma, seem to accept Hausa leadership without tribal animosity, probably because social linkages have developed adequately bridging tribal gaps between the Hausa and others.

Virtually, all governments in Africa had to contend with the possibility of communal insurrection. They have, therefore, enacted policies to deal with ethnic strife. Several basic strategies have been designed and implemented. The first is political reorganization of the federal system in Nigeria after the Biafra civil war. The second is the enhancement of national identity. That is the introduction of national symbols, values, and enculturation through education, indoctrination, and linguistic policies, with the objective of inculcating identities to replace or coexist with ethnic ones. Many African leaders tried to make their people think nationally instead of tribally. Nevertheless, many incumbent others indulged in ethnic patronage to strengthen their won authoritarianism, or to distribute power and resources and maintain political stability. For instance, after an assassination attempt on his life in

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the 1970s, Sekou Toure confined and surrounded himself in his palace by mainly people from his own ethnic groups.

Many tribes in most ECOWAS countries lack confidence in the impartiality of their governments. And these governments have not yet developed the objective maturity to stand outside the various ethnic groups they rule. But yet, this does not annul the possibility of cooperation for political or economic gains. In countries where tribes form a fundamental numerous boost for winning elections, cooperation between some times, rival tribes, takes place whenever possible. For example, Chief Moshood Abiola's apparent success in the Nigerian presidential election of June 1993 showed his ability to win inter-ethnic support as he could never have won by relying narrowly on the votes of his fellow Yorubas; the fact that he was a Muslim was probably important to northern voters. On another occasion, economic incentives lead to cooperation between different tribes. In Senegal, peanut-producing peasants shared economic interests, which both transcended and reinforced communal divisions. Though exploited as a socio-economic category and marginal to the political operation of the state to which they were subject, the peasants were able to secure concrete benefits by giving their support to a local leader who had influential connections in the capital city. Leaders of the Mouride Muslim brotherhood were particularly effective patrons; they articulated peasant grievances and persuaded the government to double the peanut producers' price in a single year.

After independence, present tribal hostilities were not that much serious. People were more preoccupied with liberation from foreign rule than with other issues. Prior to that when European colonialists ruled African countries, different ethnic groups or

100 William Tordoff, op cit., p. 92
tribes did not have compete for political power nor was there economic competition. Of course the strategic art of ‘divide and rule’ had been used to play the tribes one against the other, which bore fruits after independence. For instance, majority of Muslim tribes in West Africa shunned European education which they considered incompatible with their way of life. In countries where there were Christian and other non-Muslim entities, it was observed that these non-Muslims were the ones who benefited from European education, and as a result, were more eligible to take over political power after independence. In some countries where most population was Muslim, it was usually a certain minority tribe that accepted colonial schools, and had the privilege of ruling the country. For example, the Zerma tribe in Niger, the Akans in Ghana, and the Sara in Chad. Only after colonial departure that the perceived political and economic threat began by the educationally underprivileged ethnic groups.

Though the military in the newly independent West African countries was not free from tribal influences, a kind of inter-tribal cooperation had been possible in the first post-colonial decades. In Nigeria, the first military uprising saw an Ibo officer commanding Hausa soldiers who killed the country’s Prime Minister (Hausa), and the Northern Nigerian Premier and spiritual leader (Hausa); another Ibo officer commanding Yoruba soldiers killed the Western Nigerian Premier (Yoruba), and top-ranking Yoruba and Hausa military officers. Thus, the internal cohesion of the military broke down only after the first coup following upon what are now considered to be partisan policy and planning on the part of the General (himself an Ibo) who took over power. From this epoch on, different ethnic groups have begun to realize the role of governmental institution dominance by one ethnic group or more. Ethnic

considerations in promotions and other rewards have been observed to be as strong in the military as in civilian societies. In Nigeria, there were claims towards the end of 1965 that some services personnel, officers and men had access directly or by invitation to some politicians for promoting their personal interests in the service, on a tribal basis. In both Ghana and Nigeria, rumours abound of the promotions awarded to military officers on a purely tribal basis. Tribalism or ethnicity, as explained earlier, is a concept that links a modern Western institution with the traditional society. These observations signified the time that politics started penetrating deep into West African states.\textsuperscript{103} In Ghana, Nigeria, Niger, Liberia, Sierra Leone and other ECOWAS states, rivalries exist in the army between northerners and southerners, or between this and that tribe.

\textsuperscript{102} T. O. Odetola, \textit{opcit.}, 55
\textsuperscript{103} Ibid, p. 65
CONCLUSION

West African states are engulfed in many problems of all kinds that are bound to obstruct any sort of regional integration. Economic unification for the purpose of maximizing collective benefits can not be feasible while most ECOWAS member states are economically very poor. It is known that the majority of the world poorest countries are in Africa. In 1991, the UN declared that two of these poor countries are members of ECOWAS. Those states within the community that had economically performed well in the past are deteriorating today. For example Nigeria, Ghana, and Cote d’Ivoire that were considered the best in ECOWAS, their situation nowadays is not of much different from other poor members like Mali, Niger, Guinea, and Burkina Faso. While the Francophone states of West Africa have a stable currency thanks to their economic relations with France, those that have national currencies of their own have not been able to keep their monetary systems strong as they were in the past. Nigeria and Ghana’s currencies had long ago lost their value in an unimaginable manner. About this, there is no hope neither from their governments nor their masses that these currencies could ever be revived again. The economy continues to fall with no sign of amelioration.

Rhetorically, several African leaders throughout the continent were optimistic about Africa’s renaissance in the new millenium. But this optimism shows now sign of realization as the situation in most African countries maintains the same trait of stagnation. In such kind of reality of unproductivity, hoping to integrate economically in West Africa alone will be like a mirage that will always be an illusion. ECOWAS is considered the most active and determined regional group that tries to achieve its goals. But from all the critical analysis expounded so far, it is evident that this will not be successful so as to be a good example for the rest of the continent. Given this fact,
how is it possible that the whole continent is expected to merge as a single unified economic and political entity?

The European Union can not be a model for African Union because of the sharp contrast between the two in economic, political and military terms. The countries within EU are not recipients of foreign aid. Rather, they are economically independent donors with strong influence on other countries. Whereas, with the exception of Nigeria, all ECOWAS member states are dependent on foreign aid for their economic survival. Nations of such caliber cannot have the prerequisite political and economic strength that can permit them to pursue an economic integration in the method designed by ECOWAS for West Africa. It was explained that Francophone members of the community are virtually neo-colonized by their multi-dimensional relations with France until this day. The economic, the political, the cultural and educational systems are strongly influenced by this relationship with the former colonial master. As such, no any regional arrangement that poses a threat to France's national interests in French Africa would be successful without a payment of high price by Francophone states. The example of Guinea Conakry in the time of Sekou Toure has always been sufficient a lesson for other Francophone countries to ponder over. Indeed, the Guinea independent franc was worthless outside the country and there were few goods inside Guinea it could buy. Moreover, corruption, black-marketeering, and smuggling became very rampant. At the end of such independent economic experiment, Guinea found no way out but to turn back and join the Franc Zone in 1986. There was no solution suggested by ECOWAS to address the Guinea monetary problem in the light of community’s objective. This implies that self-reliance, as a fundamental principle to help ECOWAS breakthrough its goals is unforeseeable in the near future. It is not only France that has strong influence in
Africa, but the United States today has become very important for West African countries as a foreign aid donor nation. Germany and Japan too play relatively similar economic role as that of France and US. In another way, West Africa’s economic dependency is further perpetuated.

For ECOWAS to achieve regional economic integration, first of all its member states have to break loose from economic dependency on extra-territorial countries, the matter that would grant it political sovereignty in the real sense of the word. Only then will it be capable of collectively pursuing economic reforms to reach that goal. But of course, other security constraints show that this step is unlikely to be taken by any member, as it will harm its national interest. For till today, national interest occupies priority position over collective regional interest. As long as the latter does not guarantee the vitality of the former, it is then difficult to pursue. Among these is the military that often destabilizes political stability in West Africa.

The problem is that, the army always comes to power under the pretext of saving the nation from corrupt politicians. In certain context this claim is true, as many civilian governments proved incapable of guaranteeing sustained economic growth and political stability. However, this problem is to be left to the people responsible for electing such a government. A civil society is the democratic answer to a corrupt democratic government, not the military. The military role in all civilized societies is preservation of security from internal and external threats. It is expected to be under the control of civilian leaders of a civilian government which is accountable to the people. Because in most cases in which the army was able to take over political leadership, it didn’t prove itself to be better than the government it removed from power. Moreover, military governments are coercive imposition of rule rather than legitimately and democratically acquired one. That is a violation of people’s
democratic right which is usually followed by series of violations of other fundamental civil rights and freedom. Hence, political consciousness has to be spread among the people in order to create solid foundation for a civil society as a supervisor of political affairs run by the government. Since it is the people who elect the government, then they have the right to "de-elect" it as well, through similar democratic procedure. They have the right to peaceful demonstration to voice out their discontent against the government as a whole, or with certain top elite whose policies are not in conformity with its constitutional obligations. Plebiscite or referendum is the political method that can be used in the process of "de-election" by the people.

In addition, checks and balances of power in West African governments need to be reformed. Because in all ECOWAS countries this principle has been neglected over decades. When single-party systems were adopted by many African leaders allegedly to harness national stability, the government executive branch assumed political monopoly at the account of the legislature and the judiciary. When it was the army, the executive became the center of all command with full control over the other two branches. In both cases, there was no significant watch over the top ruling elite who most of the time pursued interests that had no much to offer the masses. Accountability was not respected, bureaucratic and political manipulations became means of maintaining public and political offices. When the democratic strategy of checks and balances of power is restored or introduced to ECOWAS member states' political systems, then "non-confidence vote" and "Impeachment" processes will be introduced to curb corruption and betrayal of political offices by government leaders. Any government that fails to fulfil its responsibilities in accordance with the democratic mandate it is entrusted with, can be brought to accountability by the
democratic process of non-confidence vote. Any president, Prime Minister, or any top official who appears to abuse his power or is accused of serious corruption harmful to the nation, can be impeached from office and brought to stand trial in the court of justice. This is what constitutes the civil society necessary for political stability and national development.

Such political mechanisms need to be guaranteed by the constitution as an electorate check over civilian governments. In this manner, the army in ECOWAS member states can be neutralized from physically intervening into politics, removing thereby democratic governments altogether from power. It would not have any justification to stage a coup against any elected government because the army makes an insignificant percentage of the electorate that elected the government. Therefore, it does not have the majority right to be the sole guardian of democracy in the country. The people are the overwhelming part of the election process and as such, preserve the right to get rid of violators of democracy. Only when such a political evolution takes place in West Africa, can ECOWAS members have the ability to consider the matter of regional economic, and later, political integration.

There is obvious discrimination on the part of most African leaders regarding the issue of political integration. The best example of this is in Niger and Cote d’Ivoire. During the democratization process in Niger in the early 1990s, a certain Colonel Diori Mamadou Djallo was excluded from standing as a presidential candidate for the reason that he was of Malian origin. Similar pretext was used in 1999 in Cote d’Ivoire against Alassane Outara who was also prevented from standing in the presidential election despite the fact that he had big support from large part of the Ivorian society.

Thus, it is inconceivable that while African leaders planned for a future political integration, yet discriminate against each other for belonging to countries that are to
be part of this designed goal. This is an issue of fundamental menace to ECOWAS's objective that has to be addressed by the community. But there has never been any concern about it as it is considered an internal issue. The problem will hence be more complexed if the whole continent is analyzed in its design of continental political unity.

Ethnic problems are bound to hamper efforts of national unity and state-building. And without this solid foundation for national integrity, ECOWAS countries won't have the national stability that would allow them to approach the issue of regional economic and political integration. Solution to social instability caused by ethnic or tribal hostilities seems to be very difficult. But the seriousness of the crisis varies from one country to another, meaning that there are answers that can succeed in one country but will not work in another. The latter case is in a country where ethnic problem is coupled with religious differences. And two problems are listed within the security issues of post-Cold War era.

Even distribution of national wealth, even development of different regions in West African countries, and preservation of minority rights in a democratic system are suggested as solutions. In states like Nigeria where ethnic groups occupy distinct geographical regions, federalism assuring some sort of autonomy can help mitigate tribal and religious tensions. In others where national harmony is better like in Senegal, Niger, and Gambia, respect and minority right preservation can be a workable security framework.

Freedom of expression, press, and freedom from state intimidation are necessary requirements for the establishment of civil societies within all the members of ECOWAS. The law has to protect the people form such menaces in order to attain social and political stability that would contribute in materializing the objectives of
CHAPTER 5: CONCLUSION

West African states are engulfed in many problems of all kinds that are bound to obstruct any sort of regional integration. Economic unification for the purpose of maximizing collective benefits can not be feasible while most ECOWAS member states are economically very poor. It is known that the majority of the world poorest countries are in Africa. In 1991, the UN declared that two of these poor countries are members of ECOWAS. Those states within the community that had economically performed well in the past are deteriorating today. For example Nigeria, Ghana, and Cote d’Ivoire that were considered the best in ECOWAS, their situation nowadays is not at much different from other poor members like Mali, Niger, Guinea, and Burkina Faso. While the Francophone states of West Africa have a stable currency thanks to their economic relations with France, those that have national currencies of their own have not been able to keep their monetary systems strong as they were in the past. Nigeria and Ghana’s currencies had long ago lost their value in an unimaginable manner. About this, there is no hope neither from their governments nor their masses that these currencies could even be revived again. The economy continues to fall with no sign of amelioration. This is despite the fact that there are appreciable efforts by major powers and international financial institutions in financially assisting many of these African states. Africa’s external financial situation is extremely serious now, barring unexpected changes in Africa’s terms of trade, it is very likely that this situation will deteriorate. Without a major push, aid levels are likely to remain constant, while repayments from past loaned aid will rise. New investment in Africa
has tailed off in recent years and few expect much in the way of a recovery over the next several years. 104

Rhetorically, several African leaders throughout the continent were optimistic about Africa’s renaissance in the new millennium. But this optimism shows no sign of realization as the situation in most African countries maintains the same trait of stagnation. In such kind of reality of unproductivity, hoping to integrate economically in West Africa alone will be like a mirage that will always be an illusion. ECOWAS is considered the most active and determined regional group that tries to achieve its goals. But from all the critical analysis expounded so far, it is evident that this will not be successful so as to be a good example for the rest of the continent. The main thrust of the integration strategies of the economic communities in West Africa has not been helpful, as the emphasis has been on integration of markets rather than of production.

A lot of valuable time has been spent on measures at liberalization of trade with little or no impact on the volume of intra-sub-regional or even inter-state official trade. The whole debate on regional cooperation in West African trade has generally taken for granted the validity of the market approach and incrementalism. The framework of ECOWAS was, therefore, largely influenced by approaches to apparently similar problems in Western Europe. The fields of cooperation covered by the ECOWAS scheme accordingly corresponded to the trade preoccupations of organizations such as the European Free Trade Association (EFTA) and the EEC, where the existence of mature economies was an established feature, rather than to a context in which the structural transformation of economies was the overall goal. 105

The European Union can not be a model for African Union because of the sharp contrast between the two in economic, political and military terms. The countries

within EU are not recipients of foreign aid. Rather, they are economically independent donors with strong influence on other countries. Whereas, with the exception of Nigeria, all ECOWAS member states are dependent on foreign aid for their economic survival. Nations of such caliber cannot have the prerequisite political and economic strength that can permit them to pursue an economic integration in the method designed by ECOWAS for West Africa. It was explained that Francophone members of the community are virtually neo-colonized by their multi-dimensional relations with France until this day. The economic, the political, the cultural and educational systems are strongly influenced by this relationship with the former colonial master.

As such, no any regional arrangement that poses a threat to France’s national interests in French Africa would be successful without a payment of high price by Francophone states. The example of Guinea Conakry in the time of Sekou Touré has always been a sufficient lesson for other Francophone countries to ponder over. Indeed, the Guinea independent franc was worthless outside the country and there were few goods inside Guinea it could buy. Although a major diplomatic turning point was reached with the death in December 1993 of President Félix Houphouët-Boigny of Côte d’Ivoire, the last African nationalist leader with close personal ties with several generations of French politicians, arguably the most profound changes have occurred in the economic domain. They first took the form of the redirection of French trade and capital investment away from francophone states to others in the continent, notably Nigeria, Kenya, Zimbabwe, and South Africa; followed, more ominously, by the 50 per cent devaluation of the CFA franc in January 1994, thereby signaling the demise of the franco-African preferential monetary and trading area

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known as *la zone franc*. This, more than any other single event since independence, might truly mark the dawn of a new era in franco-African relations.\textsuperscript{106}

Moreover, corruption, black-marketeering, and smuggling became very rampant. At the end of such independent economic experiment, Guinea found no way out but to turn back and join the Franc Zone in 1986. There was no solution suggested by ECOWAS to address the Guinea monetary problem in the light of community’s objective. This implies that self-reliance, as a fundamental principle to help ECOWAS breakthrough its goals is unforeseeable in the near future. It is not only France that has strong influence in Africa, but the United States today has become very important for West African countries as a foreign aid donor nation. Germany and Japan too play relatively similar economic role as that of France and US. In another way, West Africa’s economic dependency is further perpetuated. For instance, US spends substantial amounts of money in support of US exports to African markets. The same in support of US investors. The combined effect is the emerging dominance of African markets and economies by American products and investors, even in those sectors that African countries have potential. American investors are invading those sectors of African economies, especially in services, utilities and infrastructure, creating a situation where considerations of the generation and repatriation of American of American profits are likely to over-ride the imperatives of African economic development in economic policy making.\textsuperscript{107}

For ECOWAS to achieve regional economic integration, first of all its member states have to break loose from economic dependency on extra-territorial countries, the matter that would grant it political sovereignty in the real sense of the word. Only


then will it be capable of collectively pursuing economic reforms to reach that goal. But of course, other security constraints show that this step is unlikely to be taken by any member, as it will harm its national interest. For till today, national interest occupies priority position over collective regional interest. As long as the latter does not guarantee the vitality of the former, it is then difficult to pursue. Among these is the military that often destabilizes political stability in West Africa.

The problem is that, the army always comes to power under the pretext of saving the nation from corrupt politicians. In certain context this claim is true, as many civilian governments proved incapable of guaranteeing sustained economic growth and political stability. The December 1999 coup in Cote d'Ivoire, in which General Robert Gnik overthrew the regime of Henri Konan Bedie, marked the onset of a period of instability, violence, and economic uncertainty that, if unchecked, will have serious economic, political, and demographic implications for Cote d'Ivoire's neighbouring states. Many Ivorians question the legitimacy of President Laurent Gbagbo, and his victory rapidly disintegrated into political and ethnic fighting between his supporters and those of rival opposition leaders Alassane Outtara.108

However, this problem is to be left to the people responsible for electing such a government. A civil society is the democratic answer to a corrupt democratic government, not the military. The military role in all civilized societies is preservation of security from internal and external threats. It is expected to be under the control of civilian leaders of a civilian government which is accountable to the people. Because in most cases in which the army was able to take over political leadership, it didn't prove itself to be better than the government it removed from power. Moreover, military governments are coercive imposition of rule rather than legitimately and

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democratically acquired one. That is a violation of people’s democratic right which is usually followed by series of violations of other fundamental civil rights and freedom. Hence, political consciousness has to be spread among the people in order to create solid foundation for a civil society as a supervisor of political affairs run by the government. Since it is the people who elect the government, then they have the right to “de-elect” it as well, through similar democratic procedure. They have the right to peaceful demonstration to voice out their discontent against the government as a whole, or with certain top elite whose policies are not in conformity with its constitutional obligations. Plebiscite or referendum is the political method that can be used in the process of “de-election” by the people. Because basic rights, individual freedom and democratic participation are often lacking in African countries. Yet, without them people feel alienated and are unable to devote their energies to development and productivity. Indeed, in a place where injustices are the norm rather than the exceptions, it is almost impossible to expect a momentum of progress.109

In addition, checks and balances of power in West African governments need to be reformed. Because in all ECOWAS countries this principle has been neglected over decades. When single-party systems were adopted by many African leaders allegedly to harness national stability, the government executive branch assumed political monopoly at the account of the legislature and the judiciary. When it was the army, the executive became the center of all command with full control over the other two branches. In both cases, there was no significant watch over the top ruling elite who most of the time pursued interests that had no much to offer the masses. Accountability was not respected, bureaucratic and political manipulations became means of maintaining public and political offices. When the democratic strategy of

checks and balances of power is restored or introduced to ECOWAS member states' political systems, then "non-confidence vote" and "Impeachment" processes will be introduced to curb corruption and betrayal of political offices by government leaders. Any government that fails to fulfill its responsibilities in accordance with the democratic mandate it is entrusted with, can be brought to accountability by the democratic process of non-confidence vote. Any president, Prime Minister, or any top official who appears to abuse his power or is accused of serious corruption harmful to the nation, can be impeached from office and brought to stand trial in the court of justice. This is what constitutes the civil society necessary for political stability and national development.

Such political mechanisms need to be guaranteed by the constitution as an electorate check over civilian governments. In this manner, the army in ECOWAS member states can be neutralized from physically intervening into politics, removing thereby democratic governments altogether from power. It would not have any justification to stage a coup against any elected government because the army makes an insignificant percentage of the electorate that elected the government. Therefore, it does not have the majority right to be the sole guardian of democracy in the country. The people are the overwhelming part of the election process and as such, preserve the right to get rid of violators of democracy. Only when such a political evolution takes place in West Africa, can ECOWAS members have the ability to consider the matter of regional economic, and later, political integration.

There is an obvious discrimination on the part of most African leaders regarding the issue of political integration. The best example of this is in Niger and Côte d'Ivoire. During the democratization process in Niger in the early 1990s, a certain Colonel Diori Mamadou Diallo was excluded from standing as a presidential
candidate for the reason that he was of Malian origin. Similar pretext was used in 1999 in Côte d'Ivoire against Alassane Ouattara who was also prevented from standing in the presidential election despite the fact that he had big support from large part of the Ivorian society.

Thus, it is inconceivable that while African leaders planned for a future political integration, yet discriminate against each other for belonging to countries that are to be part of this designed goal. This is an issue of fundamental menace to ECOWAS's objective that has to be addressed by the community. But there has never been any concern about it as it is considered an internal issue. The problem will hence be more complexed if the whole continent is analyzed in its design of continental political unity.

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Senegal, Niger, and Gambia, respect and minority right preservation can be a workable security framework.

Freedom of expression, press, and freedom from state intimidation are necessary requirements for the establishment of civil societies within all the members of ECOWAS. The law has to protect the people form such menaces in order to attain social and political stability that would contribute in materializing the objectives of the community. The basic foundation of this is education. Illiteracy and limited level of education are very endemic to West Africa. That is why several governments and leaders were very much concerned about this issue that mass education, and programmes of illiteracy elimination had important consideration in government agendas. Simple cause-and-effect governs the relation between declining economic performance and declining standards of living; the former brings about the latter. But when looked at in the context of efforts to revitalize the continent, it becomes clear that causes and effects travel a two-way street. In a world economy that places a premium on technology and information processing, only a healthy, secure and literate population can engineer an economic upturn. Desperate living conditions fuel both social unrest and the internal strife and civil wars as identified earlier as a major cause of social and economic crises in a number of African countries. These in turn, discourage outside investment, cripple domestic productivity and erode the will of citizens to work for a better future. In short, government initiative, private investment and assistance from overseas will be unable to establish the conditions for sustained economic growth unless there is an improvement in the standard of living of the African people.\textsuperscript{110}

\textsuperscript{110} Ibid., p.4
Without achieving such minimal criteria, economic and political integration will be impossible in West Africa. If it is impossible there, then it will be an illusion for AU to pursue similar continental objectives.