

ECOWAS and the Dynamics of
Conflict and Peace-building

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ECOWAS and the Dynamics of Conflict and Peace-building

Edited by

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CODESRIA

Council for the Development of Social Science Research in Africa
DAKAR

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Preface

For over two decades now, West Africa has remained one of Africa's most conflict-ridden regions and the theatre of some of the most atrocious brutalities in the modern world. Surprisingly, however, the region is about the only place in Africa where perhaps the most ambitious and determined internal efforts to find collective regional solutions to conflict have been deployed and sustained, through the Economic Community of West Africa States (ECOWAS). As a regional body formed in 1975 for the sole purpose of regional economic integration, the convergence between economic and political matters precipitated the signing of the Protocol on Non-Aggression and the Protocol on Mutual Assistance on Defence adopted in Dakar (Senegal) and Freetown (Sierra Leone) in 1978 and 1981 respectively, which then provided the basis for ECOWAS intervention in conflicts in the sub-region. The lead role of the ECOWAS peacekeeping force, ECOMOG, in search of peaceful solutions to the civil wars in Liberia, Sierra Leone, Guinea Bissau and Cote d'Ivoire has yielded a mix of successes and failures in a number of cases, while aggravating or creating new tensions in some others.

While the reasons for these contrasting outcomes are numerous, and the context of their challenges (in terms of the capital outlays for peacekeeping, humanitarian assistance and reconstruction) enormous, the comparative advantage that ECOWAS has derived from the experiences is reflected in the various conventions, mechanisms and protocols that are now in place to ensure a more comprehensive conflict prevention framework. The ECOWAS Early Warning Mechanism (ECOWARN) is particularly of note in this regard.

This book provides a nuanced analysis of the above issues and others on the dynamics of conflicts in the region and the roles played by ECOWAS and various actors in the context of the complex interplay between natural resource governance, corruption, demography and the youth bulge, gender and the conflicting interests of national, regional and international players. As a research effort, it explores the value of retrospective analysis at a time when even the regional umbrella body (ECOWAS) is re-thinking its conflict intervention framework, in a bid to mainstream human security within its security sector intervention paradigm and transform itself from an ECOWAS of states to an ECOWAS of citizens.

A number of individuals and organizations played important roles in the making of this book, and their inputs need to be recognized. First, we acknowledge the support of the Government of the Netherlands which provided the funds for the Consortium for Development Partnerships (CDP) – jointly coordinated by the Council for the Development of Social Science Research in Africa (CODESRIA) and the Programme of African Studies (PAS) of Northwestern University, Evanston – to undertake the research. We would like to recognize Professors Adebayo Olukoshi (CODESRIA) and Richard Joseph (Northwestern) for the central role they played in ensuring funding and prosecuting the early phase of the work, which was later completed under Dr Ebrima Sall, the current Executive Secretary of CODESRIA. We also recognize the leadership and support of Dr Kayode Fayemi (now Governor of Ekiti State, Nigeria) who as Director of the Centre for Democracy and Development (CDD) motivated us a great deal; the demonstrable dexterity with which his successor as Director, Dr Jibrin Ibrahim, managed the project is proved by this final product.

We also acknowledge, with thanks, the invaluable support and role played by the ECOWAS team in the planning meetings that eventually led to this book. They include: Colonel Mahamane Toure (Commissioner for Political Affairs); Prof. Bayo Adekanye (Coordinator, Policy Analysis and Strategic Planning Unit & Peace and Security Analyst in the Office of the Executive Secretary); Dr Abdel-Fatau Musah (Senior Conflict Prevention Advisor, who later became of Director of Political Affairs and, now, Director of External Relations); and Dr Said Adejumobi (Political Governance Advisor, now Chief of Public Administration Sector/Coordinator of Africa Governance Report at the United Nations Economic Commission for Africa).

Finally, we are grateful to the anonymous reviewers of the chapters in the book for their very painstaking efforts. We also appreciate the patience and perseverance of the contributors, especially in the preparation of their final chapters, and CODESRIA's publications team – particularly Oyekunle Oyediran and Alex Bangirana – for their patience, meticulous attention to editorial details and management of other production processes of this book.

Thomas Jaye, Dauda Garuba & Stella Amadi