

**CONVERGING PRACTICES AND GOVERNANCE IN WEST AFRICA:  
EXAMINING REGIONAL CONVERGENCE IN THE ECONOMIC  
COMMUNITY OF WEST AFRICAN STATES**

by

Emmanuel A. Balogun

A dissertation submitted to the Faculty of the University of Delaware in partial fulfillment of the requirements for the degree of Doctor of Philosophy in Political Science and International Relations

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## **ABSTRACT**

This dissertation examines the role of practitioners in the Economic Community of West African States (ECOWAS) in driving regional cooperation in West Africa. ECOWAS practitioners, called “Ecocrats” help change and define the scope of regional governance practices in West Africa. This research identifies the mechanisms that drive regional convergence—the process in which regional political practices become more constant, as illustrated in areas of peace and security, finance, and public health. Using process tracing and interview data from ECOWAS practitioners and West African-based Civil Society organizations, this project examines how Ecocrats network West Africa through its engagement with non-state regional stakeholders. In understanding the role of Ecocrats, this work emphasizes the governance practices of ECOWAS, its various institutional forms, and cooperation between and among states and non-state actors in West Africa beyond solely legalistic frameworks of integration. This dissertation argues that regional convergence is strongest where ECOWAS engages in deep forms of institutionalization, defined through the process by which modes of behavior and practices become more dependable and durable.

This work contributes to existing scholarship on regional organizations in three significant ways. First, by using a networked approach, this dissertation makes an empirical contribution to the role and utility of intergroup and organizational behavior in regional organizations and identifies the institutional drivers of governance convergence. Second, this dissertation tackles issues of conceptualization and causality by providing knowledge as to how regional governance practices emerge

outside the decision-making realm of West African Heads of State and Foreign Ministers; and third, this dissertation contributes to the theorization of Africa in the study of comparative regionalism by examining bottom-up approaches to the politics of regional institutional change and the conditions in which social practices shape regional institutional formation.

## **Chapter 1**

### **INTRODUCTION**

In early January 1990, the Economic Community of West African States (ECOWAS) deployed an ad hoc intervention (ECOMOG) in an effort to stop civil war in Liberia. This intervention into a civil conflict by a regional organization was the first of its kind not only in Africa, but also in the international system. Throughout the 1990's and into the early 2000's, ECOMOG developed into the permanent intervention mechanism in the region as it was deployed in Sierra Leone, Guinea Bissau, and Côte d'Ivoire to help stop other civil wars within the region. ECOWAS officially imbedded ECOMOG with the ECOWAS Protocol relating to the Mechanism for Conflict Prevention (1999), codifying and legitimating ECOWAS' ability to ameliorate civil conflicts in the region.

Elsewhere on the continent, the East African Community (EAC) recently developed a peace and security protocol in 2013, aimed at creating common measures, strategies, and programs to cooperate in conflict prevention, prevention of genocide, piracy, combating transnational and cross-border crimes, and cattle rustling, among others. The Southern African Development Community (SADC) also has a peace and security architecture that follows the ECOMOG mode, by calling for the creation a regional early warning system, mediation, and security sector reform. Finally, on a continental basis, the African Union (AU), through its constitutive act, is implementing a comprehensive African Peace and Security Architecture (APSA). The AU

implemented the Protocol Relating to the Establishment of the Peace and Security Council or the PSC protocol in 2002. In 2004, member states in the AU also agreed on the development of a Common African Defense and Security Policy. Williams extracts seven norms that also constitute the central tenets of the AUs security culture:

- Sovereign equality of members
- Non-intervention by member states
- Anti-imperialism/African solutions
- Uti possidetis (territory and other property remains with its possessor at the end of a conflict)
- Non-use of force/peaceful settlements of disputes
- No unconstitutional changes in government
- AU right to intervene in member state under grave circumstances (P. D. Williams 2007a).

The role of African Union in the area of peace and security is that it acts as a legitimizing and coordinating body, evidenced by its operational organs. The most notable operations in the AU have been in Sudan (AMIS), Somalia (AMISOM), Central African Republic (FOMUC), and Comoros (AMISEC).

International relations theories that assess the value of regional organizations such as neofunctionalism, neoliberal institutionalism, and realism, argue the activities mentioned here, arise because of weak states trying to pool their sovereignty and by nature of the inherent weakness of the African state. According to these theories, states engage in this behavior not to serve the public interest but to raise the formal status of

crumbling governments—that regional interventions are carried out to increase state stability, and maintain existing regimes (Söderbaum 2004; Welz 2013). In the African context, states enter and act through regional organizations as a form of “shadow governance” which refers to a state where the formal façade of political power is based on informal markets and other entities to shelter corrupt leaders. The idea that states join regional organizations to engage in shadow activities depends on a state’s lack of transparency and suggests that heads of state seek the failure of regional organizations and policy frameworks to further their own interests (Söderbaum 2004).

However if we look closer at the regional dynamics in Africa, this cynical, pessimistic view of regionalism does not match up. For instance, ECOWAS, celebrating its 40<sup>th</sup> birthday in 2015, created a new comprehensive harmonization strategy called ECOWAS Vision 2020, where it calls for the creation of an “ECOWAS of people” and tries to define “unifying tenets of a West African shared vision.” ECOWAS vision 2020 calls for each member state to develop regionally oriented national development policies, managed and controlled by specific regionally dedicated national institutions.<sup>1</sup> An example of this is already in effect, as each member state in ECOWAS developed a harmonized seed regulation policy (with the exception of Cape Verde, Chad, and Togo). ECOWAS Vision 2020 also states all member states to “demonstrably have undertaken the required constitutional and administrative measures to entrench regional approaches and create national implementing agencies needed to implement ECOWAS programs.” The EAC also experienced significant development growth in

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<sup>1</sup> ECOWAS Vision 2020 statement, 2015



the last decade and established an East African Legislative Assembly and Court of Justice to not only manage conflict and promote justice in the region, but to ensure that there is proper regional oversight and jurisprudence in implementing customs and common market institutions.

Additionally, some characterize African region building as a resurgence of Pan-African ideals. For instance, there is the belief that the African Union resuscitates and reinvents Pan-Africanism and is engaged in the reconstruction of a universal African identity through the linking of diverse and complex social networks and relations (Edozie and Gottschalk 2014). It is through this lens that scholars of African regionalism view the AU as pursuing a supranational agenda, by which it engulfs Africa's regional organizations and pursues governance strategies that would lead to a "United States of Africa" by 2063<sup>2</sup>.

While the African Union has been progressive and aggressive in developing a coherent strategy towards unifying Africa, little attention is given to Africa's sub-regional organizations or "regional economic communities" (RECs) and how they have been slow to integrate into the African Union. There is also limited attention to the relationship between the AU and RECs, as it is not as symbiotic as the AU's architecture makes it out to be.

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<sup>2</sup> African Union Vision Statement, 2013

## **Key Questions**

Given the characterization of region building in the African context, as well as the contextual nature of region building in Africa, there are a number of questions to consider. First, who are the drivers of regional cooperation in Africa? Are these drivers responsible for the content, substance, and form of cooperation in region configurations in Africa? Second, how do these drivers shape the complexion of regional institutions? To whom are the drivers of regional cooperation accountable and how do the drivers of regional cooperation in Africa manifest t

The varying dynamics within Sub Saharan Africa require the examination of the distribution of power, inclination towards cooperation, and the main drivers of regionalism and regionalization. To generalize, regionalism can be defined as a multifaceted and comprehensive phenomenon that takes into account the role of the state and non-state actors as well as a range of political, economic, strategic, social, demographic and ecological interactions within regions (Acharya and Johnston 2007). Regionalism shifts the focus away from formal institutions toward studying informal sectors, parallel economies and non-state coalitions. Regionalism also is an analytic response to uneven globalizations, the proliferation of states, and the rise of non-state actors (particularly private companies and civil societies) (Shaw, Grant, and Cornelissen 2011).

Africa's regionalism is distinctive primarily because of how scholars frame or characterize and define the African state. Seen as traditionally weak or "quasi" the fundamental structure of the African state precludes the emergence and development of regionalism to particular path dependencies and state power asymmetries in facilitating regionalization processes. Regionalism, according to this perspective, becomes a venue for states to project images, garner prestige, and alleviate notions that their state or

regional processes are not devoid of adherence to global norms and best practices of regional integration. Thus, it is important to highlight the issue areas and the context in which regionalism develops in Africa, its mechanisms, characterized by formal structures and informal networks, and the possible emergence (and alternative) level in which regionalism emerges.

If this is what makes African regionalism distinct, we might then consider a definition of regionalism that incorporates and accounts for diversity amongst actors. Consider Ba's definition of regionalism as "the pursuit of regional unity as a response to the understood problems of division." Referencing the origins and foundation of Southeast Asian unity, Ba stresses that the importance of regional unity coupled with a shared understanding of how delicately states within the region relate to each other, ASEAN "[are] morally-bound-not to push regionalism too hard or too far lest the whole project fall apart," making regional unity a driver and constraint to ASEAN regionalism (Ba 2009). Thus, a more suitable definition of regionalism in the African context is one that not only accounts for the multiplicity of actors, but accounts for the diversity amongst said actors and how, when put together, these actors develop a more coherent perspective of regionalism and drive region-building.

Some also argue that African leaders heavily favor regional integration policies because they serve as a source of legitimacy and ensure their security. However, the leaders face a dilemma—the need to balance their own self-interest (the legitimacy argument) with preserving sovereignty (the fight against supranationalism argument) (Fanta, Shaw, and Tang 2013; Laverne 1997). For those who believe this is what

African regionalism looks like, the actors are clear: African heads of states who serve as the makers and facilitators of regional frameworks and policies. This perspective also suggests that African states benefit from low levels of economic pressure to integrate. Fanta, Shaw, and Tang argue Africa's pattern of inter-regional relationships are in flux, which the region inherits from its dependency on the Global North (Fanta, Shaw, and Tang 2013). I emphasize that regionalism in Africa might be better by highlighting regional activities and the need to include other actors such as the practitioners within a regional organization and others that engage in policy evaluation and formation.

Africa receives some credit in regards to the work in areas of peace and security (mainly the work done in the area of the Responsibility to Protect) but it is often juxtaposed with the “global”—read: interaction with the United Nations. There are very few bottom-up approaches on how securitization of Africa actually comes from Africans themselves. In the same vein, any African-centric approach for the regionalization of security starts with the African Union and only passively mentions the role of RECs such as ECOWAS. This dissertation makes the case for bottom up explanations and conditions of regionalization. In terms of the general implications for studying African regionalism, focusing on the conditions of regional convergence and examining the founding conditions of regional organizations allows us to trace the evolution of salient issue areas, moving away from a view of the region as a dichotomous entity (formal v. informal, porous or closed, security community or not, etc.). It is also important to understand that scholars and practitioners alike view peace and security as focal points in West Africa because it is a region marred with a history of civil conflicts.

According to Herbst, the key to understanding the regional cooperation in Africa is to eliminate the notion that there is a conflict between sovereignty and regional cooperation (Herbst 2007). Herbst suggests there is a distinctive “style” of African regional cooperation that is *extremely inclusive, formal, non-hierarchical, and attentive to national sovereignty*. Cooperation occurs in this fashion due to the “similar” problems African leaders face. Cooperation, according to Herbst, has failed due to the temporal nature of independence movements, deviation from pan-African ideology, and the multiplicity of nascent cooperative blocs that served the same functions and goals, eliciting redundancy. Herbst views the OAU/AU’s respect for the enduring preservation of boundaries and the limiting of self-determination, after independence, as a form of cooperative success. Another form of success or facilitator of African regionalism is the enthusiasm of signing treaties and accords in IOs such as the UN and WTO. This act is a form of legitimizing juridical statehood. The preservation of juridical statehood is seen as a feat or exceptional, because of an inherent belief that the stability, the governance, and the institutions of states in Africa are not the same as the “empirical” states of the developed world. Herbst underscores this point by arguing regional institutions serve as sites for African leaders to “escape” their domestic problems.

While Herbst’s interpretation of African regionalism highlights the multiple ways African countries formalize cooperation, he also places his emphasis on the role external factors play within the region and characterizes many attempts at cooperation as “failures.” For example, Herbst concludes that African leaders only look towards cooperation when “it is in their interests” and that leaders enjoy the presence of outside

pressure because it secures their position as leaders. This view of African regionalism suggests that Africans have struggled to construct their own version of regionalism based on the metric of economic performance indicators, an inability to develop consensus on how to promote trade liberalization and a mischaracterization of the “overlapping membership problem.” The overlapping membership problem reverts to the logic of African weak state exceptionalism argument, suggesting that African countries enter into multiple regional organizations because of the fragility of the state. Söderbaum juxtaposes new regionalism and the African (particularly South African) experiences and argues regionalism and regionalization are co-constitutive and affect each other (Söderbaum 2011). Söderbaum makes the argument that Africa through overlapping forms of regionalism is developing in a more informal manner.

Perhaps a more useful way of characterizing African regionalism comes from an examination of regionalism in Africa that links scales from the local to the global. An example of this in the literature comes from Shaw who borrows from sociology and suggests the drivers of regionalism in Africa come from the meso-level of governance (a step in-between macro and micro-regions) (Shaw 2010). Meso-level governance is the juncture between macro level forces and every day human interactions. Shaw looks at “ecologies of corridors and triangles, civil societies and media” alongside treatment of security threats, war economies, and peacekeeping initiatives. The meso-level transnational links of formal integration and informal integration underline the idea that regionalism is multileveled and can be bound by its issues. Instead of emphasizing Africa’s inability to overcome its structural issues and weak statehood, Shaw argues

that the conflicts it produces gives way to the emergence and importance of new actors that put pressures on not only states, but the formal structures of integration.

Given these characterizations of regionalism in Africa, this study contributes to theorization of regionalism comes in the form of the method of explanation and the content of what regionalism is. Much of the literature of regionalism in Africa is limited to an observed phenomenon that we presume to be constant at all times. A case in point here is the concept of shadow regionalism, which is where two parallel structures of power exist concerning the formal process of regional organizations while heads of states create a façade that enables regime actors to engage in informal modes of regionalism (Fanta 2008). Another example is in regime boosting, which implies a vivid game of rhetorical and symbolic regionalism, without implementation (Söderbaum 2011)The literature merely provides examples of this concept and no systematic, empirical evidence of a habitualized phenomenon of shadow regionalism or regime boosting. It is important to amend this tendency in African regionalism literature for the reason that it contributes to a characterization of regionalism in Africa that develops and centers on the state and not on the regional activity and ignores African agency.

Another contribution is to expand on the claim that it is not the heads of state that are incentive to engage in regionalism and to move past the logic that is prevalent in international organization literature that states use institutions to further their own goals and design them to work accordingly (Koremenos, Lipson, and Snidal 2001). As it pertains to IOs broadly, Barnett and Finnemore question the enduring value of

international organizations and their founding “DNA” through their probing of organizational change as pathology (Barnett and Finnemore 2004).

I am in agreement with Barnett and Finnemore, on the fundamental claim of IOs (or RECs) as bureaucracies. The point of departure here is on organizational change and organizational progress and its implications on expressions of regionalism. I argue that part of regionalization in Africa is the engagement in organizational change and expansion as crucial and necessary for regional convergence, not as pathology. Thus, as an organization changes and becomes bureaucratized and autonomous from the state, it helps distinguish the exact role the organization plays within the region. Here I am departing from Barnett and Finnemore particularly on their five pathological mechanisms: irrationality of rationalization, bureaucratic universalism, normalization of deviance, organizational insulation, and cultural contestation.<sup>3</sup>

I recognize and emphasize two features of African regionalism. First—organizational dynamism; regional organizations in Africa are susceptible and are likely to change or evolve in response to crises or external pressure from other actors in the region. Second, there is a mix of socio-political organizational culture within different African regionalisms that value the diversity of ideas, identity, and culture in the sub-regions, which undermine a broader notion of Pan-Africanism.

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<sup>3</sup> For elaboration on these mechanisms, see Barnett and Finnemore (2004, 39-40).



## **Regional Convergence in Africa**

Why do we see convergence of practices in Africa and what are the conditions in which regional convergence occurs? How is it that an organization such as ECOWAS, created primarily to develop and harmonize economic relations between West African nations, has evolved to an organization that stresses the creation of an “ECOWAS of people”?

Take for instance two mission statements from ECOWAS:

“[ECOWAS] aspires to promote cooperation and development in all fields of economic activity particularly in all fields of industry, transport, telecommunications, energy, agriculture, natural sciences, commerce, monetary and financial questions, and in social, and cultural matters for the purpose of raising the standard of living of its peoples, of increasing and maintaining economic stability, of fostering closer relations among its members, and of contributing to progress and development on the African continent” – Treaty of ECOWAS, 28 May 1975

“To create a borderless, peaceful, prosperous, and cohesive region, built on good governance and where people have the capacity to access and harness its enormous resources through the creation of opportunities for sustainable development and environmental preservation”—ECOWAS 20/20 Vision Statement 15 May 2015

While the statements, made forty years apart, make it seem as if ECOWAS’ mission remains for all intents and purposes, unchanged, the conditions in the region, the justification and purpose of convergence and harmonization have all changed what region building means and what elements of region building are important in constructing a cohesive and coherent region.

The goal of this dissertation is to explain the complexion of African regionalism. To achieve this goal, it is necessary to understand the conditions of convergence in

African regional organizations. The aim here is to examine what issue areas make up the content of African regionalism. I argue that African regionalisms are less about regime-boosting than typically conceived. My project offers another way to assess regionalism in Africa differently than IR theories that argue regional organizations and international organizations serve at the pleasure of the state. I argue that the drivers of regionalism in Africa emanate from the sub-region and expand on the claim that it is not the heads of state that create the incentive to engage in regionalism and move past the logic that states use institutions to further their own goals and design institutions to work accordingly (Koremenos, Lipson, and Snidal 2001). In seeking to understand African regionalism, I look exclusively at ECOWAS and its desire to promote African agency. I examine how ECOWAS from its inception to its current iteration develops a sense of identity and community through the engagement in region-building. At a basic level, I am concerned with identifying the process and drivers of institutional change in ECOWAS, the extent to which there is a convergence of views around the idea of a unified region, and examining the areas in which ECOWAS attempts to facilitate these notions of convergence.

Contrary to those who define and measure regionalism by their sovereignty transcendent properties, regionalism in Africa has been geared toward state preservation, harmonization, and convergence. I argue the actors of interest in African regionalism are independent practitioners in regional organizations, and civil society actors, not just regime leaders. I emphasize that regionalism in Africa is better served by highlighting its activities and the need to include other actors that engage in policy initiation and evaluation. I argue part of regionalization in Africa is the engagement in

habitual organizational change and expansion through institutionalization, becoming highly autonomous from the state.

This dissertation aims to examine ECOWAS in a way that focuses on *activities*, as a way to provide explanations about the complexion of African regionalism. I emphasize regional convergence, in an effort to make the region the focal point of political and policy analysis. By focusing on regional activities as a conduit of region building, I aim to extract the self-evident meanings of region building as well as the discrete effects of region-building.

The introduction of this dissertation continues as follows. First, I discuss the method of process tracing by way of a conceptual introduction of my theoretical framework. Second, I outline my overall research approach and methodology, which includes justification of case selection, sources of data, and instruments of data collection. Third, I outline each of the chapters, highlighting how each articulates regional convergence.

### **Conceptual Framework**

Conceptually, I am interested in examining three separate, but related processes in ECOWAS. First, I am interested in how ideas of regional convergence and region building are disseminated within ECOWAS, how a notion of regional identity is cultivated and maintained within ECOWAS, and how region-building contributes to the

development of a unified West African style or culture of regional governance. In order to examine this, I pull from highlight two approaches, comparative regionalism, and cross cultural elements of organizational theory. These approaches lead to the utilization of the practice turn in constructivism as the theory and method of this project.

### Comparative Regionalism

To address the ways in which ECOWAS engages in region building, I pull from literature of new regionalism and comparative regionalism. To define the region building process I borrow from De Lombaerde and Van Lagenhove (2007, 1), who describe region building as:

“a multi-dimensional process of social transformation whereby actors associated with (sub)national governance levels and belonging to a limited number of different states, intensify their interactions through the reduction of obstacles, implementation of coordinated or common action policies, and/or the creation of regional institutions, thereby creating a new relevant (regional) space for many aspects of human behavior and activities”

This conception of region building is significant to the study of ECOWAS because it takes into account the multidimensional nature of regionalism. This definition of the process of region-building suggests that regionalism does not merely address the material desires for countries to come together and presents a clearer distinction between regional interdependence and regional institution building (De Lombaerde 2012; 33). This definition of region building starts to move us more towards a definition of regionalization and region building that emphasizes the actions and activities of a

region and away from contention over what makes a region.<sup>4</sup> The emphasis on the activities in the region is necessary to accentuate how regional organizations (ECOWAS) shape governance and transcends the state.

Comparative regionalism is also the preferred lens in which to study region building in West Africa as it moves us away from viewing the European Union as the key reference point of what regionalism “should” look like. While neofunctionalism and many other new regionalism approaches have a heavy Eurocentric literature, the Global South is not studied with the same kind of nuance. For instance, there is the belief that the EU is the “mature” case of regionalism, which perpetuates the idea that other regionalism and regionalization projects should or would replicate the EU ideals on achieving peace and sustained economic integration. The implications associated with this belief, is that the EU seeks to create policies that help diffuse the idea that regional integration in other regions ought to develop the way the EU does, politically, socially, economically and ideationally. The idea that the EU has some sort of normative power can be viewed through two lenses: variation of perception and its ability to create policies or shape interactions that induce the diffusion of EU ideals into other regions. The question of the EU’s normative power is associated with the extent to which its brand of regionalism is desirable for other regions and the variation of its internal policies.

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<sup>4</sup> While much of the comparative regionalism literature spends time with the definitional aspect of regionalism, this dissertation is less concerned with the definitional side of regionalism. I will address this tension in the literature review section of the dissertation.

The examination of a possible normative power held by the EU has a few implications. First, it provides a “control” variable on when examining divergent or converging outcomes between regions. For example, European exportation measures as part of a process of institutionalizing Mercosur provides an example of how, even with the presence of the EU’s extra-regional power, its model is not very “exportable” (2006). Controlling for the “idea” of an EU regionalism we still see, even in cases where the EU is involved, different forms of regionalism. Second, the failure of normative power diffusion might mitigate the extent that socialization serves as a mechanism for deepening relations and integration, region to region. As Börzel and Risse point out, region-to-region relations with ASEAN and the EU, as well as the EU and ACP have only resulted in political dialogue and not deeper regional integration.

Comparative regionalism is useful here because ECOWAS provides a unique opportunity to examine regionalism from a vantage point that does not suggest that the structure of ECOWAS, its institutions, or its areas of engagement are derivative from any entity other than ECOWAS. By incorporating the concept and logic of practice, I am able to examine the socialization of actors and processes within ECOWAS. Where the practice turn deviates from critical social theories such as post-structuralism, is in its broadened ontology to focus on more than texts and meanings, but also on the relationship between agency, material, and natural environments.

As it relates to ECOWAS, the concept of practice serves as a lens that helps elucidate the ways in which a unifying principle of West African identity and culture manifests itself. Using the logic of practice as a way to give meaning to ECOWAS’

action in the region over time provides explanatory power to oft considered episodic moments. Practice also brings meaning to how actors within ECOWAS construct the customary conditions of interaction, such as heads of states deciding and agreeing on whether to use ECOWAS as a means to comment on the internal affairs of a member state.

### Organizational Theory

Given the fact that ECOWAS is a regional organization with a defined and autonomous bureaucratic structure, my conceptual framework also includes elements of organizational theory. I use organizational theory to measure and situate my observation of organizational change and dynamism in ECOWAS. Quinn and Rohrbaugh as well as Tompkins argue that organizational change is central to any theory or understanding of organization (Quinn and Rohrbaugh 1983; Tompkins 2005). They suggest that organizational change occurs through the construction and abstraction from observed events, but narrow organizational change into a quartic-model called The Competing Values Framework. This framework utilizes multidimensional scaling techniques which center on organizational focus, structure and time horizons. The means and outcomes produced by these techniques reveal four models of organization. The human relations model which focuses on the members of the organization. The open systems model focuses on the external needs of the organization. The rational goal model emphasizes planning, and goal setting to achieve organizational goals and the internal process model focuses on how information management and communication serve as a means to coordinate and control organizational tasks. These models are interactive and their

outcomes are not path dependent. Interaction between these models varies based on internal and external focus of the organization and the degree of flexibility and control the organization has. While this framework seems highly functional and technical, it is useful when examining ECOWAS because it provides another basis in which to measure and assess the level of interactions between ECOWAS bureaucrats, ECOWAS member state representatives, and how the organs of ECOWAS work in conjunction with each other.

These models work through mechanisms such as task specialization and departmentalization, which deal with the division of activities within an organization. Other mechanisms include coordination, control, and the standardization of work processes. These mechanisms are technical in nature and specified by organizational mandates and formative documents (Mintzberg 1994). This kind of technical framework of organizational change is absent from IO literature, particularly as it pertains to how goals are formulated and how ideas are disseminated.

The focus on organizational complexity, change, and adaptation from organizational theory, is useful for addressing how organizations respond to problems and come to decide what issues are important. It is in the nature of organizations to change and expand in order to adapt to new actors, different scales of interactions between actors, and new information. Put simply, if regional organizations are dynamic and evolving, expansion is inevitable. As it pertains to ECOWAS, organizational theory is useful in conceptualizing West African region building because it provides a way contextualize and measure the ways ECOWAS expanded beyond its original mandate



without disbanding like its regional counterparts SADC (formerly SADCC) and the EAC. Here, I am in agreement with Tieku (2012, 198) that any theory (or approach) to African regionalism must provide a strong material basis, introduce agency, and technical skills and knowledge.

This brief theoretical background provides the context for my conceptual framework. Taking the approaches of comparative regionalism, practice in constructivism, and organizational theory into account, I examine two conceptual phenomena: organizational change/dynamism and regional convergence. Table 1 and Table 2 provide definitions of these concepts.

### **Methodology**

My project examines the conditions in which ECOWAS engages in the regional activities they do and the conditions in which the practice of convergence manifests itself throughout West Africa. The objective of this research is to examine ECOWAS as more than an intergovernmental organization, but rather to examine the extent to which it cultivates and affects feelings of community and identity, through the engagement in activities and issue areas with the intent to conceive a unified vision and reality West Africa. It is not my intent to create a theory of West African integration or African regionalism; rather I use ECOWAS to examine causal process of how West Africa becomes more coherent as a region. Thus, the purpose of my analysis is to account for the key observable aspects of regional convergence and make causal inferences on how ECOWAS engages in region building.

I use process tracing to examine the mechanisms of regional convergence—also known as the explanation approach to making inferences (Beach and Pedersen 2013). I am interested in making within case inferences about regional activities and their implications on regional connectivity. I also use process tracing to gain historical context to help explain outcomes, but also to gain knowledge as to why regional convergence is occurring. I use process tracing explain ECOWAS' founding conditions, the original mandate of ECOWAS, and the specific conditions leading to harmonization. While it is not my intention to theorize, the contribution to theorizing comparative regionalism and African regionalism respectively is to focus on the processes of internalization as a determinant of the structure, form, and substance of regionalism. The emphasis on the activities of ECOWAS and its practitioners provide intelligible evidence of an active process of creating and evolving practices within the organization. Research focused on the internal processes in international and regional organizations focuses on the promotion of normatively good outcomes and that organizational pathology may arise from processes and mechanisms at work within an organization (Barnett and Finnemore 2004; Checkel 2016). I argue that the focus on the internal processes of organization ought to consider the impact and role of individuals driving the process. Put differently, process tracing in this manner is not focused on the intended or unintended consequences of an organization's defined mandate; it is focused on how arguments, practices, and modes of behavior are articulated to produce organizational outcomes that become durable over time. Thus, I am focused on not only how practices are developed, but also how they are sustained, improved, and imbedded into an organizations culture.

To generate evidence to aid in my explanations, I will use account and sequence evidence to identify the causal mechanisms in examining how the organizations get to the point of health infrastructure building. Sequence evidence deals with the temporal and spatial chronology of events predicted by a causal mechanism and account evidence deals with the content of empirical material such as meeting minutes that detail discussions of what took place during an observable event. I also aim to trace practices, defined as socially meaningful and organized patterns of activities, through the context of action. Practices are not only meaningful and behavioral, they are organized and patterned (Pouliot 2014). By tracing process and practice, I capture the social context of the activities from the level of ECOWAS practitioners, with the hope of capturing the intersubjective meanings of engagement.

Focusing on the causal relationships between regional activities and regional convergence is an important in the context of West Africa and ECOWAS because it enables an inquiry into contextual information that often is treated in passing in the literature. For example, much of the literature on ECOWAS suggests that a major source of diversity in the region comes from the Anglophone/Francophone divide amongst the countries in ECOWAS. While it may very well be the case that this divide exists as a hurdle to region-building, there is little to no empirical treatment on how it is a hurdle. Another way this problem manifests itself is in “analysis” of regional institutional mandates. For example, in an edited volume on African security regime building, there is a brief analysis of the ECOWAS standby force, ECOBRIG that merely descriptive—concluding that ECOBRIG (along with other regional standby forces in Africa) present “practical challenges” and lack a sustainable basis without

providing any context or examination of empirical phenomena to substantiate these claims. Put simply, approaches to African regionalism methodologically speaking only manage to engage in description, with a lack of evidence based inferential mechanisms.

Table 1 Conceptual definitions of regional convergence

Concept	Codes	Definition
<b>Regional Convergence</b>	Modes of Integration	FTAs, PTAs, Visa-less Travel, currency unions, transnational civil society/advocacy networks, trade/ecology, corridors, and triangles
	Peace and Security Measures	Privatization of armies, intervention into civil conflict, election monitoring, food security policy, contribution of troops from member states, creation of peace and security architecture (i.e. creation of standby force)
	Health Infrastructure	Creation of frameworks to deal with emergencies and deliver sustainable health services to deal with endemics; coordination on “best practices”, monitoring and evaluation of health services, inequality of health distribution, measuring government consumption, conditionality
	Financialization	the tendency for profit making in the economy to occur increasingly through financial channels rather than through productive activities; how corporations turn away from production and toward financial transactions—focus on governance and incentive systems within corporations requires a look at heterogeneous set of institutions and individual Considers dynamic relationships between the financial sector and the bodies that were intended to oversee it (such as lobbying groups and advocacy orgs) Adoption of government policies that allow for the privatization of capital (decentralization)—accentuates the role of venture capitalists, private banks, and private equity firms.

	Harmonization of Governance strategies	Executive term limits, good governance strategies, mechanism for sanctions, creation of sectoral regulatory frameworks (i.e. agriculture, natural resource regulations, etc.)
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Table 2      Concept Table for Organizational Change

Concept	Codes	Definition
<b>Organization change/dynamism</b>	Treaty Revision	Move from original founding treaty to a revised treaty—focuses on the process in which the treaty is revised and the conditions that lead to treaty revision
	Organizational expansion	Creation of new organs, restructuring of institutional structure, move beyond original mandate into issue areas not explicitly laid out in treaty;
	Use of memorandums of understanding/protocols/Institutionalization	Attempt or act of formalizing ad hoc initiatives. Varies in degrees—MOU least formal, Institutionalization most formal

	Role of Ecocrats/Civil Society/Private Business Networks	Make intelligible the role and content of African agency; create guidelines on how to prepare for responses to crises, etc. in the region; acts as epistemic community; independent from government leaders; internalization of tasks; defining areas of coordination; explicit modes of information processing (feedback mechanisms
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### **Case Selection:**

I examine regional convergence in three areas of peace and security, finance, and public health. I examine ECOWAS because of its history of existence on the continent. ECOWAS, founded in 1975, has transformed its existence, governance structures, and its common values. ECOWAS has undergone two transformations. First, it existed primarily as an organization focused on economic integration, but revised their treaty in 1993 to become more of a political union, and later transformed their governance structure to a commission in 2006. I chose these areas of convergence because they provide a platform necessary to examine both the technical and

organizational organs of ECOWAS within the necessary social context. For example, the area of peace and security is relevant given ECOWAS' history with military intervention into civil conflicts as well as the persistent threat of Boko Haram. The area of finance is important given the presence of the CFA Franc as a monetary zone and the lag in creating the Eco common currency. The enduring Ebola crisis also highlights the significance of studying the regionalization of public health. The time horizon of my research covers from the founding of ECOWAS in May 1975 to the present day. Not all of the cases will cover this time horizon; however, all of the cases will contain key observations and evidence within this period.

In examining the outcome of regional convergence, I am less concerned with the amount of variance on regards to convergence. In other words, I do not seek to discern whether ECOWAS converges in one area more than another area. Rather, I am more interested in the mechanisms of convergence, meaning I am concerned with the contextual factors that lead to regional convergence. I rely on the assumption that regional convergence is already occurring and focus my attention on the factors that lead to convergence. This is not to say that there will be no variance on the outcome. In fact, performing a hoop test to determine case selection, indicates there is more convergence on the area of peace and security than other the other areas of convergence. For the purposes of my research, it is necessary to engage in the examination of the process of convergence before making intelligible claims on what causes more or less convergence in West Africa.



## Regional Convergence in Peace and Security

In explaining regional convergence in the area of peace and security, I explore organizational change, particularly organizational expansion as the mechanism that leads to convergence. Convergence in this case refers to the creation of the ECOWAS Standby Force (ESF). The starting point, I argue, is an implicit understanding of the noninterference norm. The African regional security regime literature posits that there is a strict norm of noninterference between the African countries. However, ECOWAS was the first entity in to intervene in the affairs of a member state officially when it sent troops to Liberia in 1990. This is considered the starting point of the practice of intervention within West Africa. I hypothesize that the member states in ECOWAS did not solidify an understanding of noninterference from the conception of ECOWAS and as a result, ECOWAS has been able to transform itself to converge on the way it intervenes in a member state. Put differently, where in there was a lack of a common understanding in practice of how member states should interact with each other regarding the affairs of their region mates, the practice of intervention over time has led to a common understanding of how ECOWAS handles security issues in the region. The causal chain below simplifies this process; diversity in noninterference serves as the explanatory variable in this case with organizational expansion serving as the causal mechanism.

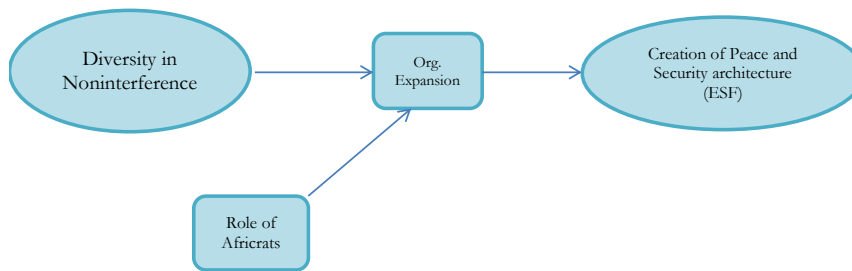


Figure 1 Causal Chain: Regional Convergence of Peace and Security

### Regional Convergence in Public Health

The area of public health in West Africa provides an example of a bottom up approach to region building. In this case, I examine the process in which ECOWAS member states have moved toward more harmonization in regards to scaling up integrated health services in the region. I point to the Bamako Initiative in 1987 and the Abuja Declaration in 2001 where the World Health Organization (WHO) and UNICEF, in conjunction with African Ministers of Health agreed to develop comprehensive strategies to increase access to primary health care by creating minimum health care packages that met community health needs. The Bamako initiative in particular, demonstrated a commitment to community participation in health management and making health care affordable to citizens. Success with these initiatives was contingent on African countries engaging in the proper political processes to facilitate these changes. However, even in countries where there was scaling up and adherence to standards of the Bamako Initiative, cost is still considered a barrier to access to health.

In this case, I argue that approaches like the Bamako Initiative and the Abuja Declaration, though originating from West African states, suffer from top-down

projections on how health infrastructure should look. I choose to look at how ECOWAS, through its designated health organ, the West African Health Organization (WAHO) has institutionalized and shaped by ECOWAS practitioners to create a coherent and responsive regional health infrastructure.

This case highlights the importance of regional connectivity and convergence of practices in building health infrastructure in Africa, which I define as *building frameworks to deal with not only emergencies but also sustainable health*. Public health issues across the continent in Africa are growing in scale. For instance, according to World Bank data in 2014, non-communicable diseases are the second leading cause of death in Africa. Africa also has the highest regionally concentrated diabetes mortality rate in the world. Ebola and HIV/AIDS in West and Southern Africa respectively, also offer an opportunity to assess regional responses and assess the steps taken by actors on a regional scale, and to address proactive v. reactive planning.

Examining regional health infrastructure building serves as a way to understand both local responses to health issues as well as global responses. For instance, during the initial outbreak of Ebola in West Africa, the governments of Guinea, Liberia, and Sierra Leone, and the experts of WHO provided ineffective solutions. Examining the regional level of interaction in the area of health provides a lens that helps reconcile this disconnect between the aforementioned scales of governance and sheds light on potentially more effective forms of governance. Looking at the regional level becomes more necessary if we look at Fielder's global health schematic (2002, see figure below). If we look at how the global health schematic, which examines the interplay between

global and local responses to health crises, as well as the pressure the global, local, and non-state actors place on each other, it is clear that the value and presence of the regional level is missing. By focusing on the activities of the regional, we may regional organizations are uniquely able to create viable health infrastructures in West Africa.

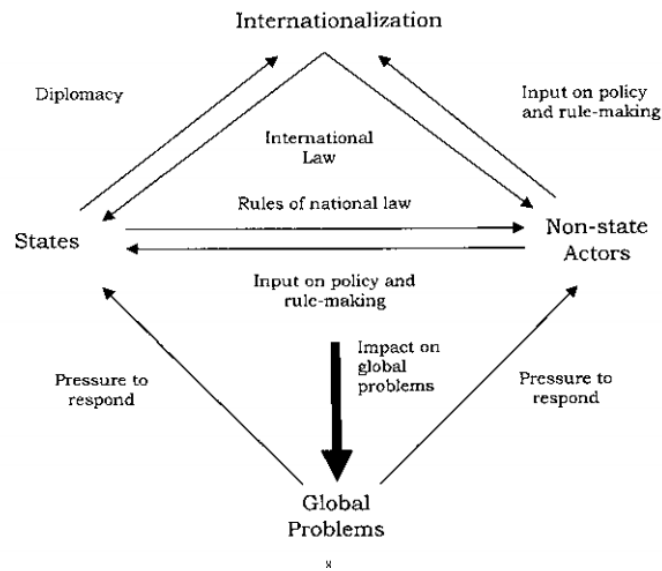


Figure 2 Global Health Schematic, (Fielder 2002)

The scope of this case is to determine the extent to which this kind of engagement in region building resembles a “bottom-up” point of view—that is a view that is less focused on regime leaders as facilitators of the regional health agenda and is more focused on a people-centric approach to governance.

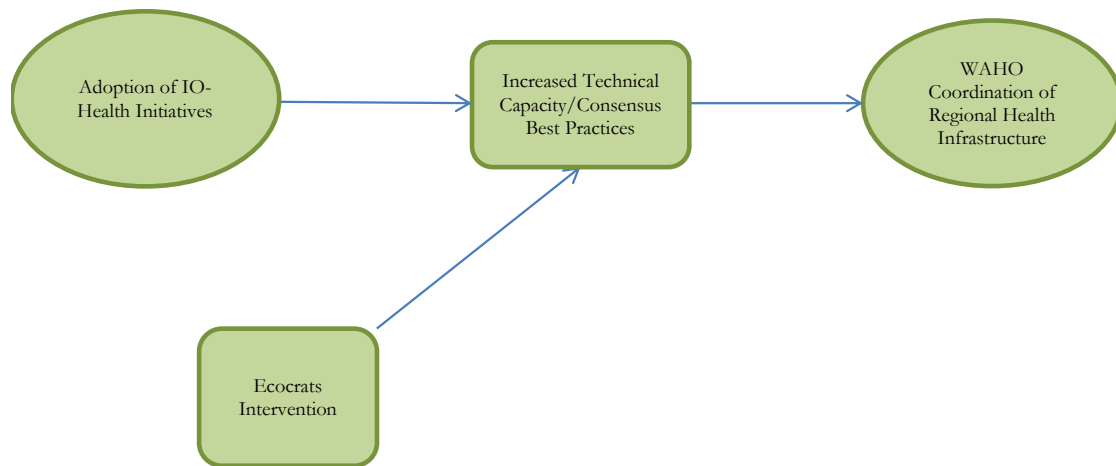


Figure 3 Causal Chain: Regional Convergence in Public Health

### Regional Convergence in Finance

This case highlights ECOWAS’ engagement with private sector financial actors throughout West Africa. Here, I highlight the proliferation of West African owned cross-border banking entities and how these entities create a space to engage in and develop private, region-centered authority. I question what factors, embedded in the region, help facilitate the move to convergence on financialization as a key feature of region-building in ECOWAS. Thus, I examine how member states engage in the fiscal decentralization. Fiscal decentralization, according to the World Bank can include:

“a) self-financing or cost recovery through user charges, b) co-financing or co-production arrangements through which the users participate in providing services and infrastructure through monetary or labor contributions; c) expansion of local revenues through property or sales taxes, or indirect charges; d) intergovernmental transfers that shift general revenues from taxes collected by the central government to local governments for general or specific uses; and e) authorization of municipal borrowing and the mobilization of either national or local government resources through loan guarantees.”

Thus, I argue that the act of national member state governments giving responsibilities to lower levels of government, created a space for ECOWAS and other West-African owned private entities to conduct business throughout the region and lead to the emergence of a new private actors and private authority and encouraged convergence through the creation of the ECOWAS Business Incubator for the Advancement of Women Entrepreneurs (ECOWAS BIAWE). I look at the process of convergence in the financial institutions of ECOWAS—Ecobank, ECOWAS Business Council, and ECOWAS Business forum, particularly the process in which Ecobank has become the regional investment firm not only for member states, but also for other individual investors in Africa. By tracing the process of financialization, I highlight how these firms define the region as the centerpiece of their investment decisions and consider regional culture and identity to be an important consideration when investing (Iheduru 2012).

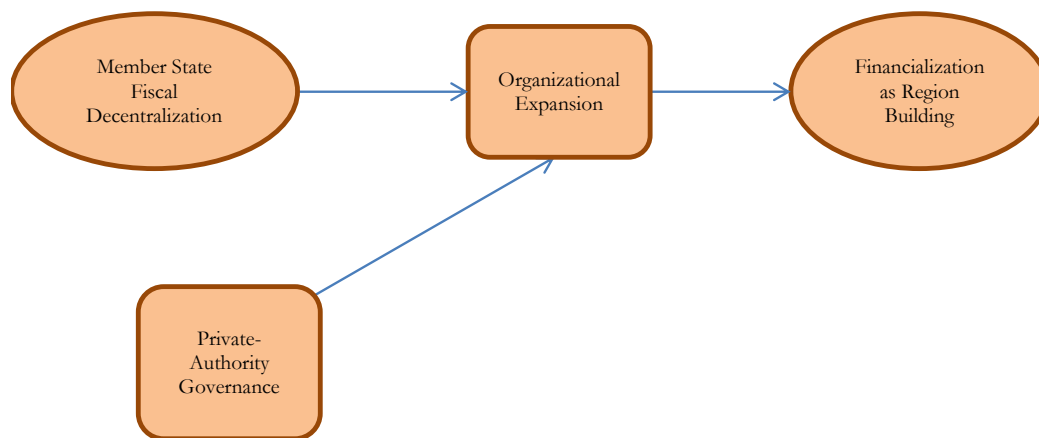


Figure 4 Causal Chain: Regional Convergence in Finance

Underlying all of these cases is a close examination as to how the intervening actors articulate a notion of unifying West African principles of identity and governance. The hypotheses and process tracing maps, as they are laid out, demonstrate the different ways organizational change occurs and the mechanisms that lead to organizational change and highlight an emphasis on the process and conditions in which regional convergence occurs.

### **Data Collection and Sources**

As mentioned, I employ process-tracing as the method to my inquiry. As such, I will collect primary source data in two manners. First, I will collect archival data by accessing the founding documents of ECOWAS. This includes the founding and revised treaties of ECOWAS as well as every official protocol and mandate of the organization. Additional archival data, such as minutes, speeches, and country-to-country dialogue was accessed at the ECOWAS library, located at the ECOWAS secretariat in Abuja, Nigeria. Archival data is important in my desire to use process tracing because it provides the context for my assessment of the founding arguments and conditions of ECOWAS and allows me to use sequential evidence to support my causal claims. I also conducted semi-open-ended interview and site observations. The research process my study involved (1) observation in public summit meetings, (2) interview with members of ECOWAS Commission and related ECOWAS arms (3) interview with members of West African Civil Society organizations.

In the case of Peace and Security, I used archival data, and interview data, gathered from interviews with ECOWAS practitioners from the Political Affairs Peace and Security Department of the ECOWAS Commission. I also solicited interviews from the PAPS sub-divisions. In the public health case, I use secondary sources and archival sources to examine the impact and outcome of the Bamako Initiative and the Abuja Declaration. Interview data was also used here, to sequence evidence on the conditions in which ECOWAS increased its technical capacity and networked the region. These interviews will be with focal point members of the West African Health Organization and the Humanitarian and Social Affairs directorate in the ECOWAS Commission. For my case study on financialization, I rely on cross-sectional data from sources such as the World Bank and IMF to provide concrete examples of the trend towards fiscal decentralization. I also engaged with data from the Emerging Markets and Private Equity in Africa (EMPEA) database and Pitchbook database for investors, to provide context and clarity on how access to capital through private equity has become regionalized in West Africa. I also use interview data, which provided the context for the creation and convergence of ECOWAS BIAWE.

In terms of data management, I used Atlas.ti, CMAP3 and MAPqda to store my interview data. I chose to use these three pieces of software to not only transcribe my interviews, but also to organize, code, and extract contextual meaning from my transcripts. The software is also cloud based and incorporates a number of coding features to make the data transparent and transferrable.



To conclude this section on methodology, I want to highlight how my research contributes to both policy and theory. In regards to policy, my dissertation allows one to assess the impact of policy coordination. How does the region serve as the optimal site for regional health infrastructure building? How does West Africa as a region make it easier for private business/private equity firms and MNCs to do business not just in commercial hubs, but also throughout the region? How do organizations move past competing frameworks and make it easier to facilitate peacekeeping missions and generate coherent logistical steps to solving regional conflicts? These questions have implications for the complexion of not only West African regional cooperation, but also cooperation throughout Africa as a whole.

In terms of theory, my research lends to a potential approach to a more comprehensive perspective on regionalism. By focusing on the processes in which connectivity is developed and enhanced, my dissertation also provides a pluralist perspective that complements the comparative regionalism research agenda. My research also has implications on how we assess the extent to which there is learning from other global south regionalism—for instance, how comparable is “African solutions to African problems” to the “ASEAN way”? How strong of a role do ideas play in constructing African regionalism? How does Africa deviate from the interpresidentialism and special interest laden region of Latin America? My approach provides a way to answer these questions.

## **Chapter 2**

### **CONCEPTULIZING REGIONAL CONVERGENCE: A FRAMEWORK**

Regionalism, conventionally understood focuses on the primacy, importance, and contestation of economic integration within a community as a prior to the development of other conceptions of integration. Conventional approaches to regional integration highlight how deep structures of order dictate the discussion of integration. For example, neofunctionalist and liberal intergovernmentalist approaches to regionalism acknowledge the state as the unit of analysis and concerns itself with actor preferences and the source of those preferences, the domestic level or the state itself (Moravcsik and Schimmelfennig 2009). Other approaches to regionalism share this logic of preference formation by arguing that states calculate and reach their preferences through “ruling coalitions” within the state (Mansfield and Solingen 2010). The stronger the domestic coalitions are, the better the commitment by member states, which leads to an ideal transfer of sovereignty to international institutions, which in turn would be better representatives of intrinsic interests. The outcome of regionalism is a unit that is analogous to a consolidated, domestic, pluralist, polity in which material or economic interests drive regionalization.

Even in attempts to move towards an understanding of regionalism that is inclusive to the role non-state actors play in regional integration, the focus has remained on Preferential Trade Agreements, trade legitimacy, and examining the roles of international organizations (IOs) as purely interstate interactions. The focus on state-centric, self-interested conceptions of regionalism derives from the desire to examine

the outcomes of regionalism and suggestions that the usefulness of integration depends on the economic gains or the potential for economic gains—that regional integration may pay off for political and community leaders (Kühnhardt 2010). Regions are first considered to be markets that facilitate trade patterns and investment conditions, regulate labor laws and consumer patterns and broaden the means in which states become liberalized. Regions, conventionally understood are analyzed and examined in the context of their functional relevance.

In a move towards understanding regions for their social realities, Peter Katzenstein famously coined the term “A World of Regions” and posited that the region can be defined by its material, ideational, and behavioral geopolitical characteristics (Katzenstein 2005). Much has been written on how regions have political units, how regions are ‘socially constructed’ and how regions have facilitated globalization and internationalization. Thus, region-building can take many meaningful and substantive forms. This was not always the case. As Börzel (2016, 41) argues, mainstream theories of regional cooperation and integration (such as neofunctionalism) share a bias towards taking states as the main drivers of regionalism (Börzel and Risse 2016). Comparative regionalism scholars shaped the field around questions of scale, territoriality, levels of analysis, and functionality. Comparative Regionalism scholars have also dealt with questions of “old” and “new” regionalism, suggesting that regions, in their various configurations, can mature and explicate the emergent roles of civil society, non-governmental organizations, and other forms of informal actors that transcend traditional actors such as governments.

This chapter develops the conceptual framework of region-building in West Africa. I build this conceptual framework around the following general question: How is region-building informed by questions of identity, unit and substantive diversity among regional actors, and institution building and evolution? These conceptual components capture the multidimensional nature of African regionalism. In building this conceptual framework, I argue the practice turn in constructivist IR theory, comparative regionalism in the African context, and network governance/regionalism all serve as the vehicle for defining the scope and uniqueness of African regionalism. Taken together, these components will accentuate *region convergence as a process* and less so as a determinant and fixed outcome of state-driven activities. A process-driven focus on region building moves us towards examining phenomena within a region through episodic moments and considers regional activity—dynamic or dormant, stable or unstable, as part of a process of convergence. Looking at region building through the process of networking regional activities broadens the scope of regional institutions and allows for those within the sphere of regional activity to become more empowered while simultaneously increasing the relevance of regional institutions.

Understanding regional convergence as a process of networking regional activities moves the comparative regionalism literature towards better understanding the intense inequalities created by the uneven impact of globalization. What prompts the desire to examine the networked nature of regionalism and non-state actors' activities is the proliferation of global issues. The proliferation of gangs, drugs, viruses and pandemics, all serve as integral parts of globalization and the networked nature of regionalism helps locate a particular space where these issues are converging and the

increasing the need for harmonized responses<sup>5</sup>. Regions vary in scale and sizes of their economies as well as the type of actors within each region. In Africa, some argue that the ineffectiveness of states to create an environment that facilitates the ease of business leading to the creation of meso-level transnational links that drive regionalization<sup>6</sup>. Instead of emphasizing Africa's inability to overcome its structural issues and weak statehood, a perspective that stratifies the diversity of issue areas and the actors that drive and create linkages between society and state, leads to the emergence and importance of new actors that put pressures on not only states, but the formal structures of integration.

What is meant by "region building"? How is it different from regionalization and regionalism? Regionalism, broadly understood, represents a phenomenon denoting formal and often state-led projects and processes and a body of norms, values, objectives, ideas, and a type of regional order (Schulz, Söderbaum, and Ojendal 2001; Wunderlich 2007). Regionalization, broadly understood is an empirical trend depicting a multidimensional process of intra-regional change that occurs simultaneously at several levels of social, political, and economic interactions (Hettne 1999). These

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<sup>5</sup> See Shaw (2003) and Rittberger and Nettesheim (2008) for commentary on the emergence of new issue areas relative to the uneven impact of globalization.

<sup>6</sup> Shaw (2008) examines mechanisms on the meso-level of governance (similar to micro-regions). Meso-level governance is the juncture between macro level forces and every day human interactions. Shaw examines "ecologies of corridors and triangles, civil societies and media" alongside treatment of security threats, war, economies and peacekeeping initiatives. Meso-level transnational links of formal integration and informal integration underline the idea that regionalism is multileveled and can be bound by its issues.

definitions are highly contested and much of the comparative regionalism literature argues that the concepts of regionalism and regionalization are context specific. One might also conflate region building, regionalism, regionalization with regional integration, which, broadly understood, is the process in which states come together to achieve goals of peace and security or economic harmonization. Region building is a much deeper process that does not rely solely on the material interests of states or their leaders or decision makers. Regional building is also not linked to the strength of domestic institutions and political commitments. Region building occurs at the lower levels of political and social activity and does not occur through a set of preferential or strong material incentives to comply with rules regarding governance (Pevehouse 2016).

Here, we can revisit the definition of region building from De Lombaerde and Van Langenhove:

“a multi-dimensional process of social transformation whereby actors associated with (sub)national governance levels and belonging to a limited number of different states, intensify their interactions through the reduction of obstacles, implementation of coordinated or common action policies, and/or the creation of regional institutions, thereby creating a new relevant (regional) space for many aspects of human behavior and activities”(Van Langenhove and De Lombaerde 2007)

This conception of region building is significant to the study of ECOWAS because it takes into account the multidimensional nature of regionalism beyond, for example, the official-level state interests, trade agreements, and political bargains often emphasized. This definition of the process of region-building presents a clearer

distinction between regional interdependence and regional institution building (De Lombaerde 2012; 33).

De Lombaerde and Van Lagenhove's definition of region building is important as a starting point towards a definition of region-building in West Africa for a number of reasons. First, their definition suggests region building is a process. Defining region building through "intensifying interactions" indicates that region building is not only something that persists over time, but it is a process of deepening. Understanding region building as a process of deepening captures and embraces the idea that regional connectivity ought to be embedded in human and regional activities. Second, the definition implies that region building is a "constructive" process—we must take the region apart (reduction of obstacles) in order to build it up. Traditional evidence of this phenomenon may come in the form of free trade agreements (FTAs) or preferential trade agreements (PTAs) in which the "obstacles" are government policies that delimit or de-incentivize countries from entering into transactional relations with other countries. De Lombaerde and Van Lagenhove's definition of region-building moves past power-based conceptions of the region, where drivers of region-building derive from states attempting to cope with (potential) negative externalities of interdependence and towards that region building can and does occur from a logic of social action and the outcome of this logic is important for more than states.

While De Lombaerde and Van Lagenhove's definition of region building is inclusive – for example, it is inclusive of regional activities outside the scope of government (a focus on governance), inclusive of a logic of social action, and inclusive

of unit diversity (meaning, state and non-state actors), I argue that diversity in actors and issue area are prominent features of regional convergence. I contribute to De Lombaerde and Van Lagenhove's definition of region building by arguing region-building also consists of an examination of what and who drives practices within the region. Therein, region building is not just about implementation and institution creation, but is about the processes and the scope of interactions that lead to rhetorical, symbolic, and material representations of the region.

Understanding region building through the processes and scope of interactions between and among heterogeneous actors is important in the context of West Africa for two reasons. First, it contributes towards a mechanistic understanding about regionalism in Africa that is missing from conventional approaches to African regionalism. Whereas African regionalism is often critiqued for its ineffectiveness due to weak domestic institutions, a desire to "pool sovereignty" or the persistence of overlapping memberships to regional institutions, a mechanistic approach to region building provides an explanation for the complexion of African regionalism, rather than ascribing to conventional arguments about the structure of the region. Second, explaining the driving forces behind the style of interaction between actors within West Africa from the bottom-up—that is from those who work within civil society/grassroots, bureaucrats within ECOWAS, to the leaders of West African countries, accounts for the uniqueness and the cultural elements of West African society, elucidating the value and the content of regional identity. Understanding region-building in West Africa through the examination of bottom-up practices within ECOWAS helps measure identity, indicate how ideas are widely shared throughout West Africa, and how much these ideas of identity and region building relate or deviate from factors of African



regionalism.<sup>7</sup> In focusing on the driving logics and interactions of region building in West Africa, we can begin to move towards rethinking the conventionally self-interested and material driven concepts typically associated with African regionalism, notably concepts such as regime-boosting and shadow regionalism.<sup>8</sup>

Regional Convergence in West Africa can be *defined* through the practices at the bureaucratic and functional level that drive regional convergence, resulting in a bottom-up process to region building, *driven by* “Ecocrats”—actors within the bureaucracy of ECOWAS that facilitate, network, and “normalize” the bureaucratic and functional practices within ECOWAS. Ecocrats, different from heads of states (who are conventionally understood as the drivers of regional integration in Africa) part of ECOWAS and work primarily through the ECOWAS commission to<sup>9</sup> create space in their institutional designs for interaction with civil society, other regional institutions, non-governmental and intergovernmental stakeholders and assures the retention of its cohesiveness and competence as an organization<sup>10</sup>. Not only are Ecocrats important for

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<sup>7</sup> I use language from Checkel (2015, 563) to highlight how my perspective to region building answers his call on how to measure and account for the empirical role of ideas and identity in comparative regionalism.

<sup>8</sup> Region building in West Africa (and Africa more broadly) has been bound to ideas such as regime-boosting, a “vivid game of rhetorical and symbolic regionalism, without implementation” and shadow regionalism, a façade of formal regionalism and diplomacy that is driven by bureaucrats from the state working with illegal businesspeople in order to bolster patronage networks and weaken political challengers or serve as instruments for self-enrichment (Söderbaum 2012).

<sup>9</sup> Explained in Chapter 3

<sup>10</sup> While one might consider “Ecocrats” to be elite in their own right, the focus here is on their interactions, which are “bottom-up” in nature. By focusing on Ecocrats, I emphasize that the range of regional activities and their interactions within these

the bureaucratic and functional purposes, but through the scope of their interactions, they articulate the cultural contours of West Africa. They are able to reach peer institutions, are able to understand the livelihood, and needs of those in rural and politically underrepresented communities. Region building in West Africa takes into account the cultural contexts, diversity among actors, and a shared understanding of how states and other actors within the region relate to each other. Region building is interpenetrative in nature, meaning interpenetration occurs when the ideas and perspectives of each party intermingle as concerns are discussed, generating a mutual understanding. The goal is to change the way the other actors understand what values matter. Region building becomes an active process that encourages all actors and stakeholders to be open to agreement, open about differences, and encourage those within the region to use regional institutions as instruments and opportunities to achieve constructive social change. This is vastly different from the logic posed by scholars who believe regional configurations hinge on the relative frequency of coalitions and their strategic interactions (Pevehouse 2003; 2015).

The definition of region building in West Africa offered here is important and distinctive for two reasons. First, it is a direct response to approaches of African regionalism that argue that regionalism is a project for self-interested, “rent-seeking” Heads of States. Regional organizations in Africa, traditionally understood, are merely a

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activities are not guided by the interests of ECOWAS Heads of State. Ecocrats create and shape recurring interactions with civil society, technocrats, and other international/regional organizations.

venue for African elites to secure their positions, “show the world and their citizenry that they are promoting the cause of regional integration (Söderbaum 2012, 7), and to engage in illegal interactions to protect their own interests. Region building in West Africa, understood through the practices of Ecocrats removes these assumptions and offers agency to those “lower-level” bureaucratic actors that can and do assure policy implementation. Second, by taking into account cultural contexts, this definition captures the complexities and realities of African diversity. We are not just dealing with “nation-states” in West Africa, rather we are faced with thousands of tribal distinctions, thousands of language barriers, dynamic economic and political foundations, and a wealth of diverse problems that cannot be relegated just to the state. Focusing on the realities of African diversity, we can conceive an idea of region building that is not tethered to static notions of self-interest and rent-seeking power mongers. The interpenetrative component indicates that region building permeates mutually. Region building is not a result of just one or a few episodes of intensified interactions; rather, intense interactions at the regional bureaucratic level serve as a means of normalization and networking. In this regard, region building is less functional than typically characterized.

I break down the rest of the chapter into three parts. First, I bring in the concept of practice to undergird the significance of region building as a process. Second, I examine the comparative regionalism literature broadly, and the alternative explanations for regional convergence in Africa, to highlight the need for a process, practice-based regional convergence. Third, I summarize my framework and highlight how regional

convergence in West Africa incorporates shared representations of collectivity and offers a conceptual and ideological recognition of regional diversity.

### **Logic of Practicality: Region Building as a Process**

In an effort to move constructivism past characterizing action in social life through logics of consequences, appropriateness, and argumentation, Pouliot makes the argument that these logics focus on thought-processes of actors(Pouliot 2008). Using the idea of logic of practicality, borrowed from Bourdieu, Pouliot argues that the logic of practice shows that peace exists in security communities when officials engage in the practice of diplomacy. His explicit aim is to “bolster the practice turn in IR” by amending the representational bias that both rationalism (the epitome of representational bias) and constructivism suffer from. Practice, according to Pouliot, differs, but builds on Hopf’s idea of a logic of habit by addressing three limitations: its embeddedness in an “internalization scheme”, habit being contingent on past experiences rather than iterative (though one can argue that past experiences and iteration are mutually constitutive), and forcing researchers to look for explicit invocations of practice(Hopf 2010). Pouliot aims to reach at what he calls the “inarticulate in social life—background knowledge that every social being carries and uses in daily practices” (2008, 296). Essentially, it is a move away from conscious knowledge formation and reasoning to the study of the thoughtlessness, common sense, and tacit social behavior. The focus on communicative and pragmatic aspects of discourse and structures of signification (Holzscheiter 2013) gives constructivism the ability to be reflexive about the type of knowledge it is producing. Adler and Pouliot (2011) argue that world politics, structured by practices, which give meaning to international action, make strategic interaction possible(Adler and Pouliot 2011).

Despite these approaches, concept rigid conception of practice is elusive. Kustermans states the concept of practice in international relations is a “moving target,” arguing that practice is used to refer to institutions, the creation of knowledge, and as a way to theoretically define change in world politics (Kustermans 2015). Specifically, Kustemans (2016, 177) argues that the “practice turn” in IR lumps together three concepts: practice—defined as all of us doing all of our doings, the myriad of human behaviors going on all at once; practical knowledge—defined as one’s skill at doing what we do; and practices—defined as the things that we do, the organized activities that we encounter and participate in. Kustemans parses out the practice turn to address claims that the practice turn is inconsistent when it comes to defining change in world politics, with some theorists arguing and questioning whether change is endogenous or exogenous (Hopf 2008) to change in world politics. All three conceptions of practice in IR are necessary for articulating an agentic approach to region building, as the concept of practice engages with social facts, which Kustemans argues “are rendered as fragile accomplishments” and practices “dissolve into social process” (Kustemans 2016, 178).

What are the implications of the concept of practice to comparative regionalism? First, constructivist approaches to cooperation and integration have begun to take the place of neoliberal institutionalist and neofunctionalist approaches. Börzel (2015, 48) highlights how literature on security communities (Adler and Barnett 1998) and transnationalism had underlying arguments about socialization, but still suffered from state-led approaches to regionalism. Constructivist approaches focus on shared values and understandings and normative ideas on how the region should look. For example,

studies on Southeast Asian regionalism and in particular the Association of Southeast Asian Nations have contributed much on this front. Conventional approaches to regionalism in Southeast Asia viewed ASEAN's stance on nonintervention and its slow, consensus-based decision processes as reflective of narrower state interests or regime security interests. Constructivists challenge the conventional approaches by, highlighting how the "ASEAN way", which is rooted in an informal understanding that ASEAN be a non-interventionist organization, contribute to a shared understanding of political values such as self-determination, regional resilience, regional consensus, and unity (Ba 2016). The concept of practice gives us a theoretical frame in which to search for empirical evidence of how a process such as the ASEAN way becomes institutionalized.<sup>11</sup> Instead of looking at the outcomes and effects of regionalism in an isolated manner, the concept of practice gives us an analytical tool to examine the context and most importantly the process in which social constructions become reality.

The concept of practice, as it pertains to region building in West Africa refers to the empirical manifestations of actor interactions. Here, I am concerned with the everyday, routinized activities of stakeholders and Ecocrats, the decisions they make on who to interact with, and the ways in which ECOWAS engages, develops, and prioritizes regional issue areas and how engagement in these issue areas leads to

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<sup>11</sup> Ba (2016, 17) argues that institutionalization is the process by which practices are made more dependable and are just as purposeful as contractual expressions of cooperation—this definition accentuates why focusing on the process of how the region comes together is more than just rhetorical or symbolic, process legitimizes and deepens interactions

normalization and becomes essential to the social fabric of the region.

Methodologically, practice is part of the process of region building. Practice refers to the mechanisms that lead to region building. Bueger and Gadinger (2015) argue that practice approaches entail a distinctive view on the drivers of social relations.

“In seeing “practices as the stuff that drives the world and makes it hang together—the everyday practices of diplomats, terrorists—or financial analysts become the object of investigation. Focusing on them allows us to better understand dynamics of order and change—practice theory implies emphasizing process—appreciating the collectivity of knowledge, recognizing the materiality of practice—[W]e talk about commitments rather than shared assumptions in order to emphasize the heterogeneous character...” (Bueger and Gadinger 2015).

Placing a scope on the “stuff that drives the world and makes it hang together” in West Africa helps explain ECOWAS’ transformation as an organization beyond possible “norm cascades” in security culture or “historically determined divisions.”<sup>12</sup> As such, focusing on practice and process elicits an understanding region building in less fixed terms as they are typically conceived. For example, old approaches to African regionalism have focused on the following components:

Pan-African roots/resurgence

Poor domestic conditions

“shadow regionalism” and “regime boosting”

Resource-driven regionalism

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<sup>12</sup> See (P. Williams and Haacke 2008)

Regional regime symmetry: region building occurs only through democratic regionalism

Taken together, these approaches to African regionalism assume the complexion of the region is driven by the structural preconditions of weak states and delimited agency by poor regional leadership, with the objective to assimilate the form and function of the region towards the preferences of leaders engaged in a zero-sum game. According to some, the characteristics and components of African regionalism arise as a result of weak states trying to pool their sovereignty and by nature of the inherent weakness of the African state. With this logic, states engage in this behavior not to serve the public interest but to raise the formal status of crumbling governments—that regional interventions are carried out to increase regime stability, and maintain existing regimes (Welz 2013). States enter and act through regional organizations as a formal façade of political power based on informal markets and other entities to shelter corrupt leaders. The idea that states join regional organizations to engage in shadow activities depends on a state's lack of transparency and suggests that heads of state seek the failure of regional organizations and policy frameworks to further their own interests (Söderbaum 2004).

While it is important to understand the foundations and the conditions in which these perceptions of African regionalism manifest in the corners of West African society, it is also important to highlight how these components rely on assumptions of the state that end up limiting regionalism to the behaviors and attitudes of the few. Unpacking these components provides a point of departure that highlights the limited scope of the literature on regionalism in Africa and demonstrates the necessity for an



approach to regionalism that emphasizes societal practices, embraces unit diversity, and does not cast African social activity as normatively deviant. Put differently, disentangling these components of African regionalism allows for a reexamination of the drivers of regionalism, rather than relying on structural characteristics and assumptions of the African state and of African leaders.

### **Pan-African Resurgence**

The project of regionalism in Africa and particularly West Africa is often linked to the endeavors and the spirit of famed Ghanaian President and leader, Kwame Nkrumah<sup>13</sup>. Nkrumah is often cited as the father of Pan-Africanism, which can be described as an ideology based on the idea that African people within the continent and abroad all share a common history and identity. Pan-Africanism rests upon the following broad principles, “Africa as the homeland of Africans and persons of African origin, solidarity among people of African descent, belief in a distinct African personality, rehabilitation of Africa’s past, pride in African culture, Africa for Africans in church and state and the hope for a united and glorious future of Africa (Esedebe 1994; Spence, Shaw, and Brown 2005). Pan Africanism is also described as a movement based on principles of unity, solidarity, and collective reliance from the people. The philosophical, cultural, and social promotion of Afro-centrism, manifested through Maafa studies (study of African enslavement), calls for Africans on the continent and in the diaspora to recognize hundreds of years of suffering and to embrace the development of a historical narrative of Africa premised on African agency and less

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<sup>13</sup> While Nkrumah is singled out, other prominent Pan-Africanist were W.E.B. DuBois, Julius Nyerere, Marcus Garvey and Sekou Toure.

so on depictions of Africa that derive from the West. In the context of regionalism, the Organization of African Unity (presently known as the African Union), created in 1963 is often considered a product of Pan-Africanism, as it represented an entity that “promoted unity and solidarity of African States”, called for the intensifying of cooperation among African states, and coordinate all facets of African society in a harmonious manner (OAU Charter Article II, 1 and 2). Put simply, pan-Africanism in post-independence Africa served as a reclamation project for African leaders and countries to regain control and perspective of the African identity—a project that called for the redemption and realization of people to reconstruct their ideologies and remove the stigmas of colonization. Nkrumah particularly advocated for economic viability and focused on the responsibilities of Africans in the area of development (Nkrumah, *Revolutionary Path* 1964).

Pan-Africanism as a component of African regionalism has served as a “rallying slogan, a springboard, and an ideological vehicle for cultivating the common efforts of African peoples to advance their political efforts globally” (Edozie and Gottschalk 2014, xxvii). Pan-Africanism in the context of regionalism perpetuates itself as a way for actors in African regionalism to reconstruct a universal African identity. Pan-Africanism in the regionalism context is an ideological networking tool that sculpts ideas of African identity and agency, driving towards a common conception of what it means to be African.

Most discussions of Pan-Africanism in regionalism focus on the African Union (AU) as a manifestation of Pan-African ideology and Pan-Africanism in practice. The AU, in this example, reinvents Pan-Africanism, using it for cultural and social mobilization and uses Pan-Africanism to drive its political and economic agenda in

order to create relevance for the African actor in a global arena (Edozie and Gottschalk 2014, xxix). The AU also reinvents Pan-Africanism because it develops a novel set of mechanisms to promote political, social, and economic developments in Africa, moving away from reliance on state leaders and their tenuous commitments to regional integration. For example in considering economic development Murithi (2005) argues Pan-Africanism, “reinvented” by AU questions the fixation of the sovereign state as the ideal form of political community and driver of economic development and suggests the AU, in its effort to solidify a common identity, built upon needs of local Africans in articulating the scope of development (Murithi 2005). Thus, Pan-Africanism [as conceived by the AU] as a component of African regionalism validates questions on the utility of sovereignty constructions that dismiss and restrict the self-determination of Africans associated with the state project.<sup>14</sup> As a response, Pan-Africanism becomes an ideological tool used to investigate and embrace the diversity of the African actor/subject while problematizing the postcolonial condition.<sup>15</sup>

Nevertheless, putting aside the AU conceptions, the idea of Pan-Africanism, loosely conceived, is a useful component of African regionalism because it removes the emphasis of the state as the main unit of analysis and allows us to investigate the multitude of mechanisms that may be driving regionalism in Africa. Pan Africanism may be about a larger collectivity of states but it also may be about connections at other

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<sup>14</sup> Such sovereignty constructions come from traditional IR theorists such as Stephen Krasner (2004) and Robert Jackson (1990) who link the progress of development to the strength or weakness of sovereignty, suggesting post-colonial African states have only achieved “quasi-sovereignty”.

<sup>15</sup> For more on the impacts of Pan-Africanism and Postcolonial states, see Ashcroft et al., 2006; Grovogui 1996, Edozie 2008.

levels and involving a range of actors that are both state and non-state. Where traditional statist notions of African regionalism suggest regionalization depends on the willingness and commitment of African leaders, a loose conception of Pan-Africanism suggests that attention to the sites and intensity of societal interaction may breed an idea of African identity that is not tethered to the state. Shared ideas and identities become intelligible through the activities of regional organizations such as ECOWAS, which in turn create a conception of what it means to be West Africa or African more broadly. While ECOWAS and the AU are typically considered “state-centric” entities by many, the evolution of ECOWAS, (through the institutionalization of its security organs) and the creation of more civically oriented institutions through the ECOWAS Commission, the content and drivers behind ECOWAS’ engagement in West Africa has not been state centric. The expanded scope of ECOWAS (and the AU in some regards) has served as a mobilizer within West Africa, thus providing a theoretical and practical space for cultivating notions of what it means to be “African” and moving towards a possible substantive meaning of the statement “African solutions to African problems. Pan-Africanism as a component of African regionalism is also important to identity formation. As Checkel (2016) argues, the creation of the OAU/AU appeared to be the work of strong African leaders such as Obasanjo, Mbeki, Nkrumah and Kaddafi, however in practice; the organization was driven by a shared identity about African security order and a broad acknowledgment of the post-colonial condition.

The concept of Pan-Africanism can and ought to be strengthened and narrowed when applied to region-building in West Africa. Pan-Africanism often is used as a catch-all term to indicate a non-material mechanism that drives regional integration. Pan-Africanism is used in a global context, inclusive of the African diaspora and in an

Africa specific context. Pan-Africanism is often described as an ideological stance as well as something tangible. While the loosely defined version of Pan-Africanism is useful in accentuating the role of African agency and takes into account the cultural contexts of African diversity, it is still necessary to distill a context-specific definition of Pan-Africanism that applies specifically to region-building in West Africa.

A logical starting point would be from the words and works of Kwame Nkrumah who vigorously advocated for African solidarity and unity and also pushed for a self-reliant Africa. Keenly aware of Africa's promise, Nkrumah often argued for Africa's resource independence, thus, using Pan-Africanism as a mechanism to induce ideological unity could lead to material independence. For instance, in a speech to the OAU, the predecessor to the AU, in 1964 he stated:

“...We must unite for economic viability, first of all, and then to recover our mineral wealth in Southern Africa, so that our vast resources and capacity for development will bring prosperity for us and additional benefits for the rest of the world...[C]ommon territory, language and culture may in fact be present in a nation, but the existence of a nation does not necessarily imply the presence of all three. Common territory and language alone may form the basis of a nation. Similarly, common territory plus common culture may be the basis. In some cases, only one of the three applies. A state may exist on a multi-national basis. The community of economic life is the major feature within a nation, and it is the economy, which holds together the people living in a territory. It is on this basis that the new Africans recognize themselves as potentially one nation, whose domination is the entire African continent.” (Nkrumah 1964; 1973)

For the context of West Africa, we can consider Pan-Africanism to be a rhetorical, symbolic, or material representation of West African-led political initiatives, under the pretense that said representations illuminate notions of unity and solidarity. Pan-Africanism in practice works to harmonize West Africa through policies, regional governance, and cultivating practices that lean towards a shared West African identity

and way of “doing” that relate to enduring political challenges. The activities of ECOWAS, motivated by elements of Pan-Africanism, inform social and socialization patterns and the significance of particular social practices. The role of informality in the context of ECOWAS becomes even more important when considering the domestic volatility as a mechanism for weak or poor regional integration in West Africa that explains away traditional definitions of pan-Africanism.

### **Domestic Conditions**

Domestic volatility is often used as a justification for poor regional integration. There is an assumption that regionalism in developing countries is a way to “pool sovereignty” because member states are not able to provide the full range of goods and services for its citizenry. Countries who opt for regional integration, tend to enter in such agreements because they find that internally they do not have the resources to compete, therefore relying on comparative advantage. The drivers of this conception of regional integration begins with questions on the motivations of states that experienced a relative decline in capabilities and bargaining power as a sovereign, unilateral entity. The relative disparity shift hypothesis contributes to this idea, as it concerns itself with the understanding of variance in regional institutions (Grieco 1997). In essence, regional integration serves as an avenue for countries that cannot serve their own interest through their material or economic capabilities. Deeper integration requires the analysis of the economic and political aspects of “non-border” policies that countries engage in (Lawrence 1996). This creates an understanding of how countries perceive themselves in the international system and engage in cooperative dialogue.

Domestic volatility is often considered a driver of African regionalism. The presence of civil and ethnic conflict, corruption, the lack of intraregional trade, and

unstable, non-diversified economies are all results of what has been classified as “traditionally weak states” in Africa. As a result, regional integration became a common practice in post-independence West Africa, in the form of “multinational economic formations” such as free-trade areas, customs unions, and common markets. By 1969, there were twenty-one attempts at regional economic integration in the form of regional organizations in West Africa, which were not successful (Abangwu 1983) These attempts were not successful due to the perceived lack of commitment by African leaders, but also by the lack of “internal preconditions” for integration (Abangwu 1980, 139).

Domestic volatility in West Africa manifests itself inside and outside the electoral arena, through territorial conflict (often land-related conflict) and ethnic conflict. Boone highlights the struggles for internal stability in Cote d’Ivoire stemming from “locally rooted, partisan-cum-regional divisions” which created a legacy of competitive regional divisions within the state, a legacy of local political repression through patchworks of local states with ethnically defined entitlements, intensely politicized land rights in rural areas, and incomplete consolidation of a national political class full of members who compete for advantages instead of improving national politics (Boone 2007). This phenomenon, according to Boone, has led to an embrace of “open-economy” policies that arise from eroding national integration—weakening of the centralized government, through the embrace of economic liberalization in Cote d’Ivoire gave rise to new territorial competition and land conflict.

Domestic fragmentation can also lead to a foreign policy that preferences regional integration. For example, Nigeria’s experience with domestic strife began with civilian rule being compromised in 1966 by a military coup, civil war belaboring the

country in 1967, and military rule lasting until 1979.<sup>16</sup> Weak federalism and military dominance created a domestically unstable Nigeria. Osaghae (1998) argues the Nigerian government could not and did not pursue serious foreign policies, which he attributes to the “extremely disturbed” and “unstable” domestic political structure in Nigeria but, progressed toward the end of military rule, beginning with Yakubu Gowon and his pursuit of regional integration in 1971 and the Mohammed/Obasanjo government utilizing Nigeria’s oil wealth to pursue foreign relations from 1975-1979.<sup>17</sup>

In an attempt at domestic solidarity, Nigeria established a new constitution during its “Second Republic” from 1979-1983. Nigeria formally moved to a federalist system and adopted the Federal Character Principle, aimed to thwart the fear of political domination by geo-ethnic areas. The goal of the Federal Character Principle was to serve as a mechanism for proportional representation to ensure ethnic inclusivity and incite domestic solidarity (Dent 1989; Ukwu 1987). However, federal-state relations in the Second Republic were characterized by rivalry, conflict, and confrontation (Osaghae 1998) Some attribute this to the state’s need to reassert its autonomy, which had diminished significantly under previous military rule. The state and federal government also clashed over resource allocation, due to the imbalanced revenue generation by the federal government (Abegunrin 2003; Inamete 2001). The federal government also had

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<sup>16</sup> This characterization of domestic volatility is extremely simplified. For a detailed look at Nigeria’s post-colonial experience see Osaghae, Eghosa E. *Crippled Giant: Nigeria since Independence*. Bloomington: Indiana University Press, 1998.

<sup>17</sup> Osaghae, *Ibid*, 105. Here, the author refers to the Mohammed/Obasanjo government and their desire to intervene through denouncing policies such as Apartheid in South Africa, liberalizing British petroleum in Rhodesia, which led to an independent Zimbabwe, and the backing of the MPLA over the United States backed UNITA and FLNA. Nigeria had a crucial role in uniting other African nations and backing the MPLA.



control over the police force, which limited the state's role in maintaining order. This led to increased paranoia of state governors and the prospect of military rule subduing the progress of civilian rule. The Second Republic fell after elections in 1983, reverting Nigeria to military rule.

The brief examples of Cote d'Ivoire and Nigeria are used to point to how conventional approaches to regional integration in Africa posit how domestic limitations lead to weak state consolidation, which leads African states to opt for integration through regional organizations. As Mansfield and Solingen (2010, 150) argue, domestic political institutions are a key influence on PTA formation, adding that states with highly dissimilar institutions have much to gain from forming a regional preferential trade agreement and that regime types also explain decisions to enter into regional organizations.<sup>18</sup> Domestic contexts do matter greatly in a discussion of region building, particularly when explicating the need for engagement in certain areas of social life or in the case of ECOWAS, the reasons for interference in the affairs of member states. However, the mechanisms used to explain regional formations and/or regional trade agreements are often related to the preferences and the leaders of the state. Extrapolated to the African context, domestic volatility often considers a static condition of the African state and often considers the fragility of the state to be a hurdle in measuring the effectiveness and the reach of regional governance.

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<sup>18</sup> See also Pevehouse 2005, Mansfield et. al. 2007 for extended analysis on the role of veto players and the decisions heads of state face when deciding to enter into regional trade agreements.

### **Regime-Boosting and Shadow Regionalism**

Tethered to the narrative of domestic volatility and Pan-Africanism as components of African regionalism is the idea that cooperation is constrained by African leaders and their belief that participation in regional agreements is guided by underlying motivations and strategies by ruling regimes and regionalization is used as an instrument to boost absolute state sovereignty and not the broader interest of society (Söderbaum 2011, 68). In this approach, Pan-Africanism is seen as a hindrance to regional integration, as African societies and economies are too weakly integrated into the global economy. As a result, African leaders purposely engage in weakening the state to create a shadow state that permits leaders to pursue their own interests, without the constraints of a formal state bureaucracy (Reno 1995). In essence, the weakness of African states drives African leaders to create different strategies to enhance power and authority (Clapham 1996; Fanta 2008).

Fanta (2008) argues that shadow regionalism manifests itself as a component of African regionalism because of the parallel existence of neopatrimonialism at the regional level. Shadow regionalism refers to:

“A situation where two somewhat parallel structure of power exists in regard to the regional integration process. One is the formal process marked by the regional organizations and agreements reached at the regional level, while the second process concerns the informal links that are established among the many actors interacting within the region-- African states adopt a dual strategy. One refers to the official stance and is in line with the regional or international regulations. The second one is not officially recognized but still better allows the state leaders to achieve some of their aims. The unofficial support that states provide to insurgents in a neighboring country offers a very good example also because it is widespread and is a historical phenomenon in Africa”

The problem with considering shadow regionalism as a defining component of African regionalism is two-fold. First, it assumes that African leaders are out to subvert

the regionalism process and that African leaders are intimately involved with all processes of region building. Second, shadow regionalism, defined here, suffers from a lack of a nuanced approach to issues of scale. Shaw, for example, proposes that “informal” interactions from non-state/sub-state actors be considered at the “meso-level” of regional analysis to account for the diversity of political economy and culture on the continent (Shaw 2000). Taken from this perspective, intensified “informal” interactions or the unofficial stances taken outside of regional organizations are not necessarily subversive, as proponents of shadow regionalism suggest. Further, those who conceptualize shadow regionalism offer only neo-patrimonialism as an explanation, but do not provide mechanisms for how, why, and what drives shadow regionalism, leaving one to presupposed that shadow regionalism is another way to legitimate corrupt African leaders.

Perhaps discussions of shadow regionalism’s use neopatrimonialism as a reason for the complexion of African regionalism is because African states are expected to “function like a state” and when they do not, states are labelled hybrid or informal with networks that exist outside the state structure and follow a logic that is more particularist rather than national betterment (Cammack 2007). Concepts like shadow regionalism look past (or take for granted) the impact of social and communal relations, which in some cases perpetuates the “patronage” nature of African culture. State/society relations in this frame becomes purely transactional, in that citizens of Africa are beholden to bargaining situations with “big-men” who can provide basic needs that they might not typically have access to, such as medicine in rural areas. The society side of the equation never possesses agentic qualities—people, under this logic, have no choice

but to engage in neo-patrimonial behavior, which explains why civil society in Africa remains weak and silent (Cammack 2007, 601).

Taken at face value, shadow regionalism is not a useful frame to use a component of African regionalism. However, if we remove the normative stance that region building ought to be an open, democratic, and transparent space to signal a particular kind of African state, the content of shadow regionalism can be useful. The “second strategy” of shadow regionalism, which highlights how informal actors are integrated into the region building process, actually helps to network the region. Put differently, the networked part of regionalism in Africa, and in particular ECOWAS are more useful because it allows us to look at not only the actors driving the process, but how the practices of ECOWAS and the engagement of networking remove skepticism and pessimism of citizens by placing the emphasis on issue areas and the amalgamation of heterogeneous actors focused on said issue areas. In essence, the networking of “informal” actors is not meant to serve boost the legitimacy of African leaders, rather it is to help identify specific stakeholders that are inclined to cultivate cross-cultural ties. Another key distinction is in the assumption that the informal, non-institutionalized interactions characterized by shadow regionalism operate outside of the regional organizations. The networked approach offered here examines the ways ECOWAS engages intentionally or unintentionally, directly or indirectly, with actors classified as “informal.”<sup>19</sup>

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<sup>19</sup> For example, in Asian regionalism, Katzenstein (1997, 3) focuses on the impact of informal interactions by highlighting the inclusive character of Asia’s market-driven integration and contrasts with the exclusive character of Europe’s formal institutions—he argues that private keiretsu networks worked with the Japanese government and Chinese networks to substitute for rule-based regional institutions, explaining the causal

It is important to emphasize that regime-boosting and shadow regionalism, typically conceived, limits the exploration at what actual drives regionalism in Africa. Regime-boosting reinforces the idea of neo-patrimonialism by promoting idea that regional cooperation helps secure African leaders and ask little in return (Herbst 2009, 144; Söderbaum 2011, 7). Regime-boosting occurs through “summitry” which is events where African leaders gather and construct imaginary narratives of regional organizations, which “involve no real debate and no wider consultation within or between member states” (Simon 2003, 71; Söderbaum 2011, 7). This claim of summitry does not take into account the informal and closed-door conversations that occur at the summit meetings, as it assumes regionalization only occurs in the spaces of summits and in the conversations of heads of states. Regime-boosting does not take seriously the role of the ECOWAS commission or the relational ties created in the interactions between leaders at extraordinary summits. It would also seem that regime-boosting and claims of neo-patrimonialism as components of African regionalism contradict each other. While both concepts work to secure the African leader, neo-patrimonialism highlights the transactional nature of regional relations, while regime-boosting argues regionalization is rhetorically symbolic. Neither reflects the actualities of regionalization in ECOWAS nor do they discern the drivers or mechanisms of regionalism in West Africa.

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power of these networks through norms and domestic state structures. Informality in the Asian context is viewed as more legitimate than informality in the African context, however it is worth probing the similarities.

## **The Role of Governance**

While the components of African regionalism mentioned above are tied to assumptions about the African state and its constitutive parts, the important drivers of regionalism in West Africa take on a different complexion. Comparative regionalism as a subfield has moved to embrace the varieties of regional cooperation and integration to include the societal based conceptions of the region and drivers of region building. Comparative regionalism has taken a “governance-turn” to emphasize and broaden the scope of regional cooperation past viewing and thinking of regionalism as merely an interstate project (Börzel 2016, 53). This governance turn accentuates the role and process of civil society and market actors, and provides a framework for comparing the institutional settings in which these actors coordinate. Governance in comparative regionalism takes three forms: hierarchy, market, and networks (Börzel 2016, 53). The governance turn in comparative regionalism allows for the comparison of regions, which are not tied to formal bureaucratic structures and procedures, but actively links and stratifies the importance of informal processes and societal interactions.

The “governance turn” alone does little to help discern who and what the drivers of region building in West Africa. The governance turn is analytically useful to incorporate disparate parts of the region (civil society and the state actors), but it does not help explain the institutional design or effectiveness of region building projects. The governance turn fits into a framework on region building in West Africa because it embraces the totality of laws, norms, policies, and institutions that define, constitute, and mediate relations between citizens, societies, markets, and states within the region. Governance becomes important when accounting for the diminishing role of government, or when considering the activities and actions of actors outside of the

purview of the government. A useful conception of governance includes systems of rule at all levels of human activity-from the family to international organization in which the pursuit of goals through the exercise of control has transnational repercussions (Dingwerth and Pattberg 2006; Rosenau 2002).

Hierarchical governance and market governance provide insights as to how regional structures are preferentially ordered, what processes are important to regional integration, and the how the interaction between the formal and informal shape the outcome and effectiveness of regional governance. These approaches, while emphasizing the composition of the region, do little to inform us as to how the drivers of regionalism converge to “network” and build the region. The network governance approach, defined as “interfirm coordination that is characterized by organic or informal social systems, in contrast to bureaucratic structures within firms and formal contractual relationships between them” serves as an analytical tool that helps contextualize the dynamics of region building in West Africa. A networked governance approach to regionalism might be the proper avenue for the governance turn to be applied to West Africa and ECOWAS.

Network governance approaches identify specific non-state actors and civil society stakeholders who are typically removed from analysis of regionalization. Ohanyan (2014, 3-6) in her analysis of conflict management in politically divided areas, examines which actors are pushing towards conflict management and how relationships between regional actors are cultivated locally(Ohanyan 2014). Ohanayan also highlights the structural composition of networks to reveal interests driving regional formation and questions if the institutional make up of a region conditions prospects of conflict management. Taking a network approach bolsters the necessity to look at region

building from the bottom-up and also considers the role of institutional composition in regional building. Put differently, a networked approach engages the process of region convergence, its conditions, and how informs us as to how the process and conditions of convergence contribute to the complexion of the region. In the context of ECOWAS, this means that the regional activities that make up the process of region building help define the composition of ECOWAS. In understanding the networked effects of regionalism, we understand the ways societal contexts and heterogeneous actors embed notions of the region.

### **Regional regime symmetry in ECOWAS**

While the effects of region building in West Africa might have normative implications, particularly in regards to regional regime symmetry, regional convergence is not subject to an engagement in democracy promotion. This is not to accept the oft cited premise that African states are inherently weak, rather, it is to suggest that region building is not a rhetorical or symbolic “means to an end” for “ruling or crumbling” elites. Regionalism being relegated to a manifestation of democracy promotion in some way aids the “domestic volatility” mechanism, especially, the idea that the regime types within a given region must be mostly the same for deep processes of regionalization and region building to occur (Kahler and Macintyre 2013; Kühnhardt 2010). The assumption associated with regional regime symmetry is that regional groupings must be democratic in nature, in both member states and through the processes at the regional level. The question of whether regional institutions have the capacity to be democratic entities centers on three perspectives. First, regional institutions cannot be democratic because of the difficulty of fully engaging and mobilizing citizenry (democratic deficit). Second, regional institutions can be democratic as the development of institutional



processes and the substantive features of a regional organization can facilitate democratic practices and procedures. Third, the determination of a regional institution's democratic-ness depends on the degree of access and transparency.

There are a number of theoretical reasons for the argument that there is a democratic deficit in African regionalism that stem from analyses outside of Africa. For example, Dahl (1999) broadly states international organizations cannot be democracies due to the inherent difficulties of democratic ideas and practices extending itself to the international system. Dahl argues there is no extant democratic political culture that allows citizens to exercise control over international decisions and invokes Gabriel Almond's three public opinions to enumerate his point, suggesting an attentive public even on the domestic level cannot grasp the complexity of international decision-making. The central argument is that the problem of the public good becomes hard to define and that elite opinions end up dominating, effectively eliminating civilian direct preferences. IOs are incompatible with notions of democratic practices because the lack of formal systems of representation that gives equal weight to all citizens or sites where citizens can debate and air grievances.

Using the European Union as an example, Moravcsik (2004) highlights the legislative powers held by the European Parliament, and demonstrates member state executives serve as central decision makers in the EU, and EU policy is not ideologically extreme. He suggests then that the EU does not suffer from a democratic deficit. The contrast in the African context would be that African leaders make any semblance of transparent governance unintelligible, contributing to a democratic deficit. Follesdal and Hix argue against the idea of ideological diversity in their claim that a democratic polity requires contestation (Follesdal and Hix 2006). Follesdal and Hix

argue EU decisions have contested effects. These effects work in a multi-leveled polity where national parliaments can monitor the legislative processes of the European Parliament, underscoring a transparent process of governance.

Democratic deficit discussions on transparency and accountability seem to highlight a dilemma between the rational design of regional institutions and the “rational citizen” and its preferences, evidenced by intergovernmental literature. Stasavage (2004) argues transparency in IOs might be good for its democratic-ness but it also involves costs. IOs act and become more efficient at making decisions in secrecy, but it conflicts with the public’s trust and confidence IO decision making because of the lack of openness. Public bargaining satisfies constituents, but satisfaction can limit optimal and efficient decision-making, evidenced by the example of the closed-door practices of the EU council of ministers

The argument for regional regime symmetry also focuses on the outcomes of regionalization. Some argue that regionalization can lead to an international level of deliberative democracy (Steffek, Kissling, and Nanz 2008). Deliberative democracy emerges based on the level of interaction a civil society organization interacts with IOs. To the degree that IOs recognize, consult with, and cooperate with civil society as well as integrating civil society organizations into dispute settlements, more transparent institutions will emerge. Interaction in areas such as human rights and the environment indicate the salient preferences from the citizenry and what is transmitted to the IO. As a mechanism for regional convergence in West Africa, democratic-ness can only emerge through transparent modes of integration among not only member states but also its citizenry. These approaches also highlight the transactional nature of a democratic character in regionalism that scholars of African regionalism attribute to

neo-patrimonialism and suggest that democratic characteristics of regional organizations like ECOWAS are meant to be one-sided.

In West Africa, Nigeria is commonly referred to as the “regional hegemon” because of its size, population, oil wealth, and its influence across the region (Lewis 2007). However, some would argue that Ghana has replaced Nigeria in prestige (evidenced by US President Barack Obama “skipping” over Nigeria in both of his visits to Africa), as many consider Ghana to be a positively maturing democracy in West Africa, meaning that there have been successful and successive changes in government for a sustained amount of time. Underlying this tension between Ghana and Nigeria is the reality that ECOWAS member states have had mixed experiences with domestic stability. For example, post-electoral violence ravished Côte d’Ivoire in 2003 and 2010 and more recently, there was a coup attempt in Burkina Faso. Comparative politics literature would attribute the enduring struggle towards “good” democratic practices to a flawed process of democratization<sup>20</sup>.

Democratization as a component of regionalism challenges elite centrism in regional socialization and eliciting greater demands for openness within a region. In Southeast Asia for example, democratization contributed to ASEAN’s quest to be a more durable and effective regional institution—democratization enhanced the legitimacy of the regional project by opening regional space to civil society, making the region less vulnerable to personal preferences and habits of elites and inducing a greater respect for the rule of law (Acharya 2003, 376-277). Under this assumption,

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<sup>20</sup> For definitions and measures of democratization, see Linz (1975); Held (1996); Collier and Levitsky (1997); Katz (1997); Coppedge and Gerring (2011); Coppedge (2012)

democratization would help enable or facilitate regionalization, as it helps provide the institutional space for regionalization processes to occur.

In the context of Africa, democratization in Africa is, impeded by a multiplicity of actors, attitudes, and conflicts (Diamond 2008). Some consider governance in Africa to be in a state of transition, with trends of autocratic personal rulers, highly centralized and overpowering presidencies as well as democratic impulses and institutions (Diamond 2008). Processes of democratization in Africa over the last twenty years have produced areas of complexity and contestation such as illegitimate military intervention, the emergence of hybrid regimes, democratic institutionalization and endemic corruption, among many others (Lynch and Crawford 2011). These dynamics are symptomatic of the abstract dimensions of democratization in developing nations, namely determining how and what democratizing factors are most important and salient for a society, the undefined roles of the state and society during the nascent stages of transitions and the variability and uncertainty of the elites and institutions.

How does the democratization as a mechanism argument fit into a discussion on region building in West Africa? On the regional level, ECOWAS' institutional evolution signifies the importance of a democracy and good governance and strictly condemns the unconstitutional changes in government, promotes the free and fair elections, and encourages peaceful transitions.<sup>21</sup> ECOWAS has implemented four sets of reforms in an attempt to make a normative political environment for its member states that extended past economic integration ideals and efforts and towards ideals of

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<sup>21</sup> See ECOWAS institutional change chapter for more on the institutional changes

democracy and good governance, specifically political pluralism, transparency, responsibility, and participation (UNHR 2006). The four reforms are explained below.<sup>22</sup>

### **Declaration of Political Principles of ECOWAS (1991)**

This declaration acknowledges ECOWAS' recognition of a need to "intensify and strengthen their integration efforts" in order to achieve regional solidarity (ECOWAS 1991). ECOWAS' political principles stress that the organization will "promote and encourage the full enjoyment by all our peoples their fundamental human, political, economic, social and cultural rights." It also highlights ECOWAS' commitment and belief in liberty and "inalienable rights to participate by means of free and democratic processes" within member states.

### **Revised Treaty (1993):**

ECOWAS revised its original 1975 treaty to account for the political, security, and social complexities of the region. The revised treaty contains 93 Articles versus 65 in the original treaty and covers more areas such as migration, tourism, human resources, transfer of arms, and social capital. An important area of expansion is in the various protocols amended to the revised treaty that supplement Article 58 (regional security). Article 76 and Article 77 give ECOWAS dispute resolution power and sanction power, both of which strengthen the decision and discretionary power of

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<sup>22</sup> This chapter highlights the symbolism associated with these reforms, however a more in depth discussion about the process and context in which these reforms emerged will follow in the institutional change chapter.

ECOWAS. The domain expansion in the revised treaty symbolizes ECOWAS' goal of deepening democratic and liberal values and ideals, quelling violent regime change, and developing a preventative framework that transcends particular types of conflict. The revised treaty is ambiguous, enabling the organization to expand through the implementation of protocols and to specify the normative goals of the organization.

**Protocol relating to the Mechanism for Conflict Prevention, Management, Resolution Peace-keeping and Security (1999):**

Known as “The Mechanism,” this protocol states as its principles that the promotion and consolidation of a democratic government and democratic institutions are necessary in its member states. The mechanism also refers to the promotion and reinforcement of self-determination for ECOWAS members. The main function of the mechanism is to consolidate and coordinate peace between member states and set up an appropriate framework for the rational and equitable management of natural resources, which may be the causes of frequent interstate conflicts (Article 2 (i)). The mechanism mainly creates institutions such as the ECOWAS monitoring group (ECOMOG) and an Early Warning System that focuses on observation and monitoring potential conflict situations in member states.

**Protocol on Democracy and Good Governance (2001):**

This protocol is perhaps the most important indicator of ECOWAS' promotion of democratic ideals. Article 1 of this treaty stipulates that all member states should have a separation of power between the executive, judicial, and legislative branches of government. Accession to power occurs through free, fair, and transparent elections and there is zero tolerance for power obtained or maintained by unconstitutional means. Article 1 also stresses the preference for popular decision-making and "strict adherence to democratic principles and decentralization of power at all levels of government." In essence, Article 1 serves as a "bill of rights" for ECOWAS. Section II of the protocol explains how member states should exercise their rights to free and fair elections. The protocol also establishes the role of the armed forces and security forces in a democracy, stressing the importance of non-partisanship, authority vested under legal civilians, and loyalty to the nation. Member states are also required to provide a venue to alleviate poverty, promote basic human needs for their population, venues for the exchange of students and academics, culture, and religion.

Section VII defines rule of law as "not only good laws that are in conformity with the provision on human rights, but also a good judicial system, a good system of administration, and good management of the State apparatus" (Article 33 (1)). Section VIII emphasizes the important role for women and children in consolidating a democratic region, stipulating that member states need to guarantee children's rights and give them access to education. The protocol puts the onus of implementation on member states and threatens the use of sanctions, ECOWAS suspension, and the refusal to support candidates presented by the member state concerned for elective posts in international organizations (Article 45) if states do not abide by the contents of the protocol.

These institutional reforms might signify that ECOWAS is indeed trying to construct a democratic regional environment and highlight a set of normative principles for ECOWAS to diffuse to the people. We can see some effects of this looking at Afrobarometer data, which shows that seventy-two percent of West Africans believe that democracy is the most preferable form of government and sixty-three percent of West Africans believe ECOWAS countries have free and fair elections, (twenty four percent of that group believe their electoral system has minor problems).<sup>23</sup> Domestic level institutional changes (i.e. constitutional changes) would also aid in discerning the effects of democratization on region building.

### **Conclusion**

Taken together, the factors listed here all serve as possible mechanisms in positing a bottom-up approach to region building. The goal of this chapter is to develop a framework in examining how the region comes together by focusing on understanding the factors and interaction patterns that facilitate convergence in ECOWAS. For example, while some scholars consider “summitry” as a form of projection by self-interested African leaders, this chapter asserts that such analysis is ignorant of the distinct modes of interaction among relevant African regional actors. The practice of summitry under the framework developed here is part of a deeper socialization process that emphasizes the role of personal ties rather than on how the practice is interpreted

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<sup>23</sup> This according to Round 6 data collected between 2014-2015 of the Afrobarometer



by actors external to Africa. Another important role of this chapter is to show that region building in West Africa is dynamic—a process that arises and evolves over time. The emphasis is placed on the drivers of region building as a way of examining regionalism in West Africa and Africa more broadly beyond whether it is “effective” or if it “works”. By emphasizing the drivers of region building in West Africa, I contribute a narrative on region building that does not take for granted the form or “outcome” of regional interaction, but instead, places a scope on the degrees of interaction among actors that allows for new patterns and forms of regionalism to emerge. The framework presented here accentuates the need to examine and highlight experiences, interaction, and features within ECOWAS that drive actors towards a common conception of what the role of the region is in governance. As the comparative regionalism literature has called for increased attention to identity-laden and social context variables (Checkel 2015), the conceptual framework presented in this chapter brings together the concepts of practice, the tenets of pan-Africanism, and networked governance as highly interactive properties that comprise the building of a practical, inclusive, and connected West Africa, with ECOWAS as the conduit.

In the chapters that follow, I highlight how regional convergence in West Africa takes two paths. First, I will highlight the organizational dynamism and evolution in ECOWAS, from an organization built to deal in areas of economic integration, to an organization with political and security mandates, and to the organization that it is today that minimizes the role of the heads of states and is embedded in the social areas of West African life. The second “path” to convergence emphasizes the specified regional

activities that represent networked region building and the emergent properties of regional convergence in ECOWAS.

### **Chapter 3**

#### **REGIONAL CONVERGENCE IN PEACE AND SECURITY**

The creation of ECOWAS in May 1975 signified the culmination of over fifteen years of achieving “Pan-African” ideals with the realization of economic integration among West African countries. Soon after the creation of ECOWAS, it became apparent that a hurdle to economic integration in West Africa would come in the form of political instability, extra-African influence, and the potential of large state dominance in the region. Considering these variables, the dynamics of peace and security in West Africa led to a shift from a commitment to economic integration, to a need to integrate based on peace and security and good governance, evidenced by its unprecedented intervention in the Liberian Civil War in late 1989.

While the Liberian Civil War created an opportunity to test the commitment of ECOWAS member states to mutual defense, it is unclear why an organization, built to forge economic integration, would engage in collective security. The organization at the time of its intervention in Liberia failed to implement its mandates and protocols that would facilitate deeper economic integration. Low levels of intra-regional trade persisted, cultural and colonial diversity, and poor infrastructure delimited the ability for ECOWAS member states to cultivate economic harmonization (Ukeje 2005). The history of ECOWAS after its intervention in the Liberian Civil War is one of a continued commitment towards building the organizational capacity to intervene in the affairs of its member states. One might posit that ECOWAS’ engagement in collective security is an example of “mission creep,” or pathological organizational behavior (Barnett and Finnemore 2004). Viewed from this vantage point, ECOWAS expanding

beyond an organization primarily focused on the project of economic integration, eventually becoming an organization focused on political, social, and cultural integration, suggests ECOWAS expanded because it was successful in its initial attempt at military intervention (that is, drumming up enough collective political will and resources to deploy, not success of the mission) and would rely on this initial success to structure other organizational ambitions in the area of peace and security.

In this chapter, I argue that mission creep and pathological behavior and other conventional approaches to regional cooperation are the wrong lenses in which to examine ECOWAS' expansion and process of regional cooperation in the area of peace and security. Instead, I highlight ECOWAS' engagement in regional convergence in the area of peace and security, defined as the process in which regional political and social practices are harmonized and become more constant over time. Regional convergence provides a more process driven examination of how peace and security become rooted features of ECOWAS, rather than a product or outcome of mission creep or pathological behavior. Regional convergence occurs through the formation and creation of social and political networks within and between ECOWAS and regional stakeholders in West Africa. In the area of peace and security, I explore how organizational change, particularly through the confluence of institutional change and the activism of Ecocrats within the ECOWAS Commission for Political Affairs leads to convergence in practices related to regional security. Namely, what are being converged are practices for ECOWAS military intervention and the normative understanding of democracy and good governance in West Africa. The starting point, I argue, is an implicit understanding of the noninterference norm. African regional security regime

literature posits that there is a strict norm of noninterference between the African countries (Jaye 2008). However, ECOWAS' intervention in Liberia in 1990 and its subsequent interventions thereafter suggest otherwise. In response, I argue member states in ECOWAS did not solidify an idea of noninterference from the conception of ECOWAS and as a result, ECOWAS has been able to transform itself to converge on the way it intervenes in a member state. Put differently, where in there was a lack of a common understanding in practice of how member states should interact with each other in particular regarding the affairs of their region mates, the practice and use of intervention (militarily or symbolically) from Liberia in 1990 to Burkina Faso in 2015 has led to a common understanding of how ECOWAS handles security issues in the region.

Through organizational expansion, evidenced by ECOWAS' two transformations, first in 1993 with its revised treaty and second, its transformation into the ECOWAS Commission in 2007, ECOWAS built the institutional capacity for expanding its peace and security mandate. Ecocrats built upon this capacity by working with peace and security-oriented civil society entities and forging an embedded relationship between ECOWAS and peacebuilding organizations, such as the West African Civil Society Institute (WACSI) and the West African Network for Peacebuilding (WANEP) to shape the peace and security architecture (both practices and agenda) of ECOWAS.

ECOWAS' precedent of intervention in Liberia has tremendous normative and practical implications as it regards the development of the West African peace and

security dynamics. While it is important that ECOWAS has developed many codified protocols and treaties, they alone (meaning the mere presence of the document) do not induce regional convergence. As such, these codified institutional changes also need the Ecocrats to extract meanings on to them. The meaning of noninterference in West Africa evolves through the networking and activism of Ecocrats. By examining regional convergence as a process where modes of behavior are not only changed, but made constant, we can move beyond arguments that view the practice of military intervention as sustainable only through the collective will of states or through the will of large, dominant powers, such as Nigeria. As institutional capacity increased, so did the Ecocrats pursuit of a creation of political networks that were inclusive of peace and security stakeholders in that work directly with local populations in West Africa.

The chapter proceeds in four parts. First, I describe the origins of peace and security in ECOWAS and argue that the founding conditions of ECOWAS make peace and security inherent to regional stability and condition the region to the practice of intervention. In this section, I will also examine the institutional mechanisms prior to the intervention in Liberia to provide a context for ECOWAS' initial ideas surrounding noninterference, highlighting a diversity of views regarding the right to interfere in member state affairs. The impetus of this section is to show how the security dynamics in West Africa prior to Liberia showed the limitations of state-driven responses to civil conflicts in the region. Second, I discuss ECOWAS' two transformations and institutional development in the context peace and security. Here, I argue that in order for ECOWAS to improve its capacity as a broker of peace, institutional innovation was needed. Here I discuss the Peace and Security protocols that precede the ECOWAS

Revised Treaty to provide an understanding of ECOWAS' approaches to peace, absent the integration of civil society stakeholders. I also examine two key institutional documents, the Protocol Relating to the Mechanism for Conflict Prevention (1999) and the Supplementary Protocol of Democracy and Good Governance (2001) to bring to bear the institutionalization of peace and security into the operational framework of ECOWAS. These institutional developments are all considered to be part of the first ECOWAS transformation. The final part of this section discusses the second ECOWAS transformation into the ECOWAS Commission and the creation of the ECOWAS Conflict Prevention Framework, (ECPF), which builds further on the institutionalization of peace and security in ECOWAS. Third, I discuss the process of regional convergence in the after the second ECOWAS transformation by examining convergence in two forms: the incorporation of the West African Networking for Peacebuilding (WANEP ) into the ECOWAS Early Warning Directorate and the process of incorporation of humanitarian law practices into the ECOWAS Standby Force. I conclude the chapter by highlighting how the scope of regional convergence in peace and security in West Africa provides an approach that can be used systematically throughout other regional organizations in Africa.

### **Founding Conditions of ECOWAS: Origins of Non-interference**

The creation of ECOWAS in May 1975 signified the culmination of a process toward bringing West Africa together after many failed attempts at regional cooperation due to civil conflict in Nigeria and the extra-regional role of France in its newly independent, former colonial states in West Africa. The process of regional integration began with during the Nigerian Civil War in 1966-1970, where General Yakubu Gowon

of Nigeria argued that domestic consolidation of the countries in the region, especially Nigeria's, was crucial to any efforts of regional integration:

“We were primarily concerned, however, with ending the domestic crisis as it was our belief that the greatest contribution we could make at that time to the cause of regional integration and African unity and the independence of African states was a strong and united Nigeria under effective central leadership. The disintegration of Nigeria would have robbed black Africa of an influential and respected voice in international affairs and the result would have been a considerable addition to the African population living at a subsistence level and conditions of economic dependency.” (Gowon 1984)

General Gowon would also argue that the civil war was a test of “diplomacy” and loyalty of [the] immediate Francophone neighbors” who were under pressure from France to pick a side in the secessionist movement in Nigeria. On one hand, France and particularly Côte d’Ivoire were concerned about Nigeria’s economic potential, thus, both entities toyed with the idea of commenting and exploiting Nigeria’s situation of civil war. On the other, Cote d’Ivoire and Nigeria were also part of the Organization of African Unity Charter, which forbade the intervention into the affairs of sovereign nations. On the onset of the conflict, Niger, Mali, and Upper Volta (Burkina Faso) were unequivocal in their opposition to recognizing Biafra:

“It seems to us that at a time when we are trying to form larger and more coherent groupings, the break-up of Nigeria is an example neither to be encouraged nor intimated. A very serious precedent for the political unity of every country—Mali’s position is clear. At a time when we are discussing African unity, a grouping of the African peoples, it seems inconsistent to encourage secession on a tribal basis.” (Modibo Keita, President of Mali, 1968)

Faced with this tension, Côte d’Ivoire did not initially comment on the secessionist movement and it was not until Julius Nyerere’s open support and



recognition of Biafra as an “independent” and “sovereign” entity that Cote d’Ivoire came out as the only West African state to recognize Biafra as a sovereign state, disregarding the practice of noninterference in the affairs of sovereign states. President Felix Houphouet-Boigny of Cote d’Ivoire justified his recognition of Biafra by arguing that it was “utopian” to believe that Nigeria, based on its large size and population could ever be consolidated.

Cote d’Ivoire’s support of Biafra, despite the failure of its secession efforts is crucial in understanding the founding conditions of ECOWAS. Cote d’Ivoire’s tactical, yet deliberate support of a secessionist movement in Nigeria was a representation of a disregard for the normative practice of noninterference in West Africa. While the OAU Charter made state sovereignty a “sacrosanct principle of inter-African affairs” (Taylor 2013), the recognition of Biafra signaled a potential hurdle to integration based on a potential Anglophone/Francophone divide, a prospective inter-state conflict between Nigeria and Cote d’Ivoire, and established a legacy of extra-regional interference and meddling by France. What forged was an alliance or entente with Nigeria and other Francophone states who objected the recognition of Biafra, but also believed that it would not be in the interest of West African unity to have a constant state of civil conflict inflict the region. President Senghor of Nigeria in a press conference in 1968 argued and initially pushed for mediation in the Nigerian civil war and Sekou Tour of Guinea openly criticized Houphouet-Boigny for trying to coordinate a campaign in West Africa to recognize and support Biafra.

While the history of the Nigerian Civil War deserves more detail and nuance that falls outside the scope of this chapter, it is cited here to highlight how West Africa and the subsequent founding of ECOWAS was guided by an elusive understanding as to what the practice of noninterference entailed. West African leaders and heads of state were unabashed about commenting on the affairs of their other sovereign states. This is contrary to some approaches to regional cooperation, particularly in ASEAN, where founding conditions underscore the importance of non-interference to the point where it becomes the prevalent logic and practice in a regional organization. On the contrary, in West Africa, there is the implicit understanding that commenting or intervening in the affairs of neighboring states is expected and that said interventions were necessary to secure and protect the cause of African unity. The fact that Cote d'Ivoire was the only country at the end of the Nigerian Civil War to actively support and engage in the recognition of Biafra, while members of the entente were actively against it under the guise of protecting a prospective common West African "grouping," indicates that interference is and has been permissible as an normalized and normative practice in the region. Thus, conventional approaches that suggest non-interference in state affairs characterized the politics of African states (P. D. Williams 2007b), examining how nonintervention was interpreted and put into practice prior to the creation of ECOWAS provides a context for regional interactions prior to the creation of ECOWAS shaped the institutional design (or the form) of ECOWAS and the normative practices that would later become embedded in the organization.

#### Peace and Security in ECOWAS: Pre-Liberia

Shortly after the creation of ECOWAS, the organization passed the first institutional protocol, which mandated a principle of non-aggression within the region. The Protocol on Non-Aggression, signed in April 1978 comes after Nigeria, the de facto head of the organization experienced back to back military coups in 1976 and 1977. While internal conflict appeared endemic in the region, the threat of aggression between member states was not readily apparent. The substance of the 1978 Non-Aggression Protocol suggests that the Heads of State in ECOWAS were concerned with both adhering to the UN and OAU charters that protect sovereign nations based on territorial integrity. It also suggests possible lingering sentiments from the Biafra episode prior to the creation of ECOWAS. For instance Article two states:

“Each Member State shall refrain, from committing, encouraging or condoning acts of subversion, hostility or aggression against the territorial integrity or political independence of the other Member States”

Subsequent articles of the protocol also prevent foreigners both resident and non-Resident from being “aggressive” towards other ECOWAS members. Dialectically, the use of “aggression” in this manner does not only refer to inter-state conflict. Aggression here also refers to the supposition that states within ECOWAS could possibly influence the politics and subvert a regional rival through external forces—and commenting on the affairs of other member states could also serve as a form of “aggression”.

The adoption of the Protocol of Non-Aggression of itself is understandable. Given the volatility of the region and the novelty of the organization, it makes sense for ECOWAS to develop a safeguard to protect member states from the

threat of other member states. The Non-Aggression protocol was significant in that it served as a symbolic representation that ECOWAS would not fall victim to the changing political dynamics of one member state (Gowon 1984, 416). However, in 1981, ECOWAS passed another Peace and Security related protocol: The Protocol Relating to Mutual Assistance on Defense (A/SP3/5/81). This protocol goes much further than the Non-Aggression protocol and states that any threat against a member state in ECOWAS is a threat against the whole region (Article 2) and that member states resolve to provide “mutual aid” to any member state that is under the threat of aggression (Article 3).

The Mutual Assistance Protocol has two significant features that are important for governance and peace and security convergence. First, are the “rules of engagement” by ECOWAS in the instance of inter-and intra-state conflict. Second is the first attempt at institutionalizing a practice of interference by ECOWAS in a member state. Concerning the rules of engagement, Article 4 in the protocol states:

“Member States shall also take appropriate measures such as specified in Articles 17 and 18 of the present Protocol in the following circumstances:

- (a) In case of armed conflict between two or several member states if the settlement procedure by peaceful means as indicated in Article 5 of the Non-Aggression Protocol mentioned in the Preamble proves ineffective.
- (b) In case of internal armed conflict within any Member State engineered and supported actively from outside likely to endanger the security and peace in the entire Community. In this case the Authority shall appreciate and decide on this situation in full collaboration with the

Authority of the Member State or state or state concerned.” (ECOWAS 1981)

Article 4 is the first instance in ECOWAS where the organization articulates its understanding of the practice of noninterference. The Mutual Assistance protocol does not merely assert that member states are only responsible for the peace and security in the threat of inter-state conflict, but it explicitly mentions mutual assistance where internal armed conflicts that are supported from the outside. This language is important in determining what grounds ECOWAS can justify its means of intervention in internal conflicts. Article 4(b)—particularly the phrase “engineered and supported actively from outside likely to endanger the security and peace in the entire community”, allows for variable interpretation of what external or engineered support would look like in the region and define what constitutes as aggression. Put differently, so long as a member state could prove or frame a narrative that internal aggression towards its state derived from an external actor (which would not be hard to prove, given the extensive extra regional presence actors such as France had at the time), ECOWAS would have the ability to intervene on the behalf of that member state. Article 18 of the Mutual Assistance protocol puts the rules of engagement in internal conflicts in plain language:

“1. In the case where an internal conflict in a Member State of the Community is actively maintained and sustained from outside, the provisions of Articles 6, 9 and 16 of this Protocol shall apply.

2. Community forces shall not intervene if the conflict remains purely internal.”

According to Article 18, ECOWAS cannot intervene if the conflict remains purely internal. In one regard, this would allow any Head of State to consider a civil

conflict purely internally driven in an effort to keep other states from interfering in the conflict. Conversely, if a rebel group attempted to subvert a member state and organized this effort external to the state, it gave ECOWAS permission to intervene.

The Mutual Assistance protocol is also significant for codifying a collective will to create institutions within ECOWAS to implement its governance ideas into practice. The Mutual Assistance Protocol would rely on three institutions: The Authority Heads of State, The Defense Council, and the Defense Commission. According to Article 6 of the Mutual Assistance protocol, the Authority Heads of state would decide on the necessity of military intervention in the instance of conflict and would deploy a military unit, called the Allied Forces of the Community (AAFC). The AAFC would be a contingent of military officials from member states, led by a Force Commander, typically a senior serving military officer in a member state (Article 12 and 13). The Defense Council would consist of Ministers of Defense and Foreign Affairs in member states (Article 7), with the possibility of expansion given the severity of the conflict. The Defense Council was also responsible for threat assessment and for developing a strategy in the instance of intervention. The Defense Commission would consist of a “chief of staff” from each member state charged with examining the technical capacity of defense matters in the instance of intervention (Article 11). In instances where ECOWAS would determine a state or an actor to be an aggressor in a conflict, ECOWAS would consider any existing defense agreement to be invalid—thus the ECOWAS mandate would supersede any bilateral arrangement that would protect an aggressive party (Article 20).

On June 8 1981, one month after the Mutual Assistance protocol entered into force, Okolo (1983) points to commentary on Radio Nigeria stating: “The significance of [Mutual Assistance protocol] cannot be over-emphasized, particularly at a time when almost every African country is becoming more and more vulnerable to external aggression” (Okolo 1983). However, Okolo also points out potential problems with the protocol, mainly its prospective inefficiency, its lack of an actual standing army (AAFC would be a contingent of earmarked troops from each member state), and potential hurdles in deploying said force (Okolo 1983, 181). Despite these potential hurdles, the Mutual Assistance protocol reveals three important aspects that affect the legacy and development of ECOWAS down the road. First, the protocol reveals that there was a collective concern about internal and external hostility among and within member states. Second, the protocol also indicates that ECOWAS thought it was necessary to create an institutionalized way to intervene in member states, should a threat emerge. Put differently, there was a collective belief that ECOWAS needed some “teeth” in regards to peace and security. Third, the creation of the Defense Council and Defense Commission also signified a reliance on a specialized unit to deal with issues of peace and security. The protocol was the first codified signal that ECOWAS would be operating beyond the scope of economic integration and would consider issues of security.

The protocol also illuminates the formative development of intervention as a practice in West Africa. Considering conventional approaches to the study of regional organizations, it is significant and unique that ECOWAS member states at this time would agree or conceive of a scenario where other member states could (in theory); collectively agree to deploy to intervene in a civil conflict. Under conventional

conceptions of international relations, one might argue that the protocol is an attempt by member states to combat a common threat or an instance of norm localization—a reconstruction of foreign norms to ensure that the norms fit with the cognitive priors of the regional (local) actors (Williams 2007, 256; Acharya 2002). However, the precedent set with this protocol signifies not only the way ECOWAS thinks about and practices security, it sets a precedent for normalized and routinized behavior to be (ideally) interpreted evenly, but also to be contested on its way to becoming durable. The protocol also counters the narrative of ECOWAS serving as a venue for regime boosting, as the commitment to collectively quelling internal conflicts coupled with these initial rules of engagement demonstrate a move away from self-interested Heads of State. Notably absent from the protocol is any narrative on how mutual assistance would translate on the ground and in member states. Also absent are any provisions that protect citizens in member states. The protocols are also limited in that they do not consider the absence (at the time) of the free movement of people and goods, which would also limit the operationalization of the protocol.

The Protocols of Non-Aggression and Mutual Defense had both practical and normative significance for the development of ECOWAS. They made clear the commitment to an ECOWAS-led preservation of peace and security. More importantly, they signified that ECOWAS would work to embed certain practices and ideal into the organization. However, the protocols lacked a tether to the member states and did not, on their own have and it would take nine years after the creation of the Mutual Assistance protocol to test whether ECOWAS' normative commitment to regional security could materialize in practice.



## **ECOWAS Peace and Security Mechanisms: From ECOMOG to ECPF**

### **Creation of ECOMOG**

In December 1989, Charles Taylor and his rebel forces, the National Patriotic Front of Liberia (NPFL) invaded Liberia and launched a brutal civil war.<sup>24</sup> ECOWAS had initially declared the conflict in Liberia as “purely internal,” and it took seven months for ECOWAS to convene and discuss a possible intervention into the conflict. Nigerian President Ibrahim Babangida in a newspaper interviewed commented on the breakdown in society and the loss of credibility and the ability to govern to justify an intervention into Liberia. At an ECOWAS summit in June of 1990 in Banjul, The Gambia, ECOWAS member states were informed of sub-state actors providing funds and small arms to both sides of the conflict and Nigeria decided to set up a Standing Mediation Committee (SMC), made up of Nigeria, Ghana, The Gambia, Sierra Leone and Togo (ECOWAS 1990; Yoroms 1993, 87).<sup>25</sup> The Standing Mediation Committee convened an extra-ordinary session in Bamako, Mali in November 1990 to establish the ECOWAS Ceasefire Monitoring Group (ECOMOG) to oversee a peace

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<sup>24</sup> While this section alludes heavily to the events of the Liberian Civil War, the detailed, comprehensive account of the events leading up to the war and the war itself are beyond the scope of this work. For an in-depth perspective and analysis of the Liberian Civil War, see Adebayo 2002; Adebajo and Rahsid (eds) 2004; Kabia 2009

<sup>25</sup> The Standing Mediation Committee was established through a number of community decisions from August 6-7, 1990 at an ECOWAS Summit.

plan signed by all warring factions. The SMC invoked Article 6(4) of the Mutual Assistance protocol, which makes any decision made by the Authority Heads of States, enforceable by all member states. There was no need for full consensus by all member states, which caused most of the Francophone states in ECOWAS to pause in their support for a Liberian intervention. With the exception of Togo, there were no Francophone states that were party to the development of ECOMOG as an entity to quell the conflict. ECOWAS member states also accused the Standing Mediation Committee, particularly Nigeria, for protracting the conflict.

ECOMOG, created by the SMC, aimed to be the main mediating arm of ECOWAS and to replace the role of the OAU and other external peacekeeping mechanisms (Tarr 1993). The creation of ECOMOG is a useful starting place to highlight institutional innovation and failure in ECOWAS. ECOMOG was institutionally innovative in that it was the first instance in post-colonial Africa that there was an organic, African-created mediation unit to intervene in a civil conflict. The SMC, directly after creating ECOMOG pushed for elections and the creation of an interim government in Liberia, which ECOWAS would monitor. ECOWAS' foray into Liberia now is symbolic to the development of non-interference in West Africa. ECOMOG was symbolic in that the SMC thought enough to develop a collective mechanism to restore governance in Liberia, eschewing the OAU and UN's notion of territorial integrity and opting for a "homegrown" solution to what was an already brutal conflict. However, ECOMOG in its nascent stage is also widely considered an institutional failure due to the inability from ECOWAS as an organization to support the mission of ECOMOG with proper organizational, administrative, and peacekeeping

resources. Particularly, in invoking Article 6 of the Mutual Assistance Protocol, ECOWAS would have and should have been able to deploy a standing army, representative of all ECOWAS member states. In practice, Nigeria, Ghana, Guinea, and The Gambia were the only countries to contribute troops to the ECOMOG mission. In addition to the operational failure of ECOMOG, Charles Taylor did not view ECOMOG as legitimate enough to take seriously, evidenced by his ignoring of the first two ECOMOG-led peace talks, Banjul I and Banjul II (ECOWAS 1990). Most importantly, ECOWAS as an organization was extremely divided on how to proceed in Liberia. Initially, Côte d'Ivoire, and Burkina Faso were strong opponents to intervention, primarily due to their involvement in aiding Charles Taylor's insurgent movement. Francophone countries also took the perspective that ECOMOG intervention was a collective spectacle that "looked like a rescue mission" for Samuel Doe and many Francophone states stressed their frustrations about the lack of consultation afforded to Francophone states during the decision-making process for intervention.<sup>26</sup> (Mortimer 1996).

It would appear that both Anglophone and Francophone states within ECOWAS would contribute equal amounts of troops and resources to the mission would hinge the success of ECOMOG at the onset of the Liberian Civil War towards a collective effort. Beyond the operational hurdles, the success and struggles of ECOMOG also reveal an important feature of the practice of intervention in ECOWAS'

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<sup>26</sup> Mortimer in his account also highlights a reluctance to intervene based primarily on personalistic ties: Blaise Compaoré of Burkina Faso and Félix Houphouët Boigny were related by marriage and there was speculation that Houphouët-Boigny wanted to dispose Doe, who had his nephew-in-law killed during the overthrow of William Tolbert in 1980.

formative stage. Member states would struggle to build trust and standards for equal commitment and contribution. This struggle would necessitate a focus on the conditions in which all member states could commit to a collective mission of ECOWAS. Put differently, ECOWAS would need to focus on a way to build inclusive consensus among its member states and later, other regional stakeholders. ECOWAS attempted to address the need for inclusivity by creating the “Committee of Five,” a group of mostly Francophone ECOWAS member states that would become more active in the negotiating and peace processes in the Liberian Civil War. The Committee of Five consisted of Cote d’Ivoire, Senegal, Togo, Guinea-Bissau, and The Gambia and this group would lead ECOMOG negotiations with Amos Sawyer, the interim head of Government and Charles Taylor in 1991 during the Yamoussoukro Accords. The Anglophone/Francophone divide, often considered an obstacle for ECOWAS effectiveness, is important to understanding how the practice of intervention evolves over time in the organization and how ECOWAS evolves as an organization to move beyond these linguistic differences to converge the region.

The negotiation phase that emerged out of the creation of ECOMOG would also prove to be an important factor in the formulation of the practice of intervention in West Africa. Banjul I, Banjul II (1990), and Lomé (1991) were products of the Anglophone-led SMC, while the Yamoussoukro Accords (1991) were the first negotiations led by the Committee of Five. The Yamoussoukro Accords are significant in that they were the first negotiations that would bring Charles Taylor and Amos Sawyer to negotiate a peace. The Yamoussoukro Accords also called for an independent negotiating entity, the International Negotiation Network (INN)-led by former US

President, Jimmy Carter to facilitate the electoral process in Liberia, along with the Committee of Five (ECOWAS 1991). The negotiations emphasized ECOWAS' desire to consolidate Liberia, a necessary atmosphere to conduct free, fair, and democratic elections, and to embed ECOMOG troops in designated areas throughout Liberia to facilitate the disarmament process on both sides of the conflict. The content of these negotiations, centered on the creation of democratic institutions and cessation of violence would serve as the basis in which ECOWAS would build its capacity to intervene over time. Further, while some may imply that the inclusion of the INN was an indicator of ECOWAS' inability to tackle the negotiation process between the warring factions, the conscious inclusion of the INN also signifies the collective will to include stakeholders that would contribute to the institutional capacity of ECOWAS to push the ECOMOG mandate. By the end of the Yamoussoukro Accords in October 1991, ECOMOG was to cover all of Liberia and supervise the encampment and disarmament of all warring factions in Liberia. The warring parties agreed to ECOMOG's presence in Liberia and afforded ECOWAS' neutrality in the war. ECOMOG would also monitor all entry points into Liberia. In short, ECOMOG would oversee a majority of the escalation process in Liberia—in theory. Though the Committee of Five felt successful in what they negotiated, the operationalization and capacity to see this through was short-sighted and limited.<sup>27</sup>

How would ECOWAS overcome these divides and how would Peace and Security feature more prominently in ECOWAS as an institution? One can look

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<sup>27</sup> Interview with Hyacenth Okwu-Vice President of ECOWAS Finance, October 2016.

into the series of organizational reforms from 1993-2002, which I term ECOWAS' first great transformation.

### ECOWAS' First Transformation: The Revised Treaty (1993-2007)

The substance of the Yamoussoukro Accords and the process of including Francophone countries into the negotiation of peace in Liberia suggest two things. First, it suggests that ECOWAS needed to have a more direct and formal decision making system in the organization in order for it to be legitimate in the region. At the onset of the Liberian Civil War, regional rivalries would prove to be a hurdle for an integrated approach to peace. Second, the creation of ECOMOG and the initial pursuit of peace in Liberia provide an institutional “consciousness”—that is, we can articulate the priority areas for ECOWAS as an organization and begin to decipher what regional cooperation would look like in West Africa. However, the lack of direction on how to operationalize ECOMOG in a productive and resourceful way, coupled with disagreements on who should lead future instances of conflict, and in some cases questioning if ECOWAS should continue down this path of interference, brought to bear the question of how to strengthen ECOWAS as an institution to make it more inclusive, given the unevenness of the region in governance and development.

The question of ECOWAS' direction was first addressed during the fourteenth session of the Authority Heads of State from July 4-6 1991, in the midst of the negotiations of the penultimate Yamoussoukro Accord. ECOWAS released what it would call the Declaration of Political Principles of ECOWAS (A/DCL.1/791). The Declaration of Political Principles articulated the aforementioned “institutional

consciousness” of ECOWAS and indicated that the authority heads of state recognized a need to transform ECOWAS into an organization committed to peace and security. ECOWAS includes in the preamble to the declaration that it is committed to the creation of a “stable and secure” political environment, free from threat of security, a consciousness of the rapidly changing international political landscape and a renewed determination among the member states to consult each other more regularly and committing to a harmonization and adoption of common policies and international negotiating positions. The Declaration of Political Principles and the session in general struck a tone of a need for an institutional “reset” of sorts—heads of states stressed during the summit the need to “speak as one ECOWAS” and to build trust by “limiting the presence of external influences” which end up codified in the Declaration (ECOWAS 1991).<sup>28</sup> The session also set in motion the creation of a revised treaty.

The Revised Treaty was the first instance where collectively, ECOWAS member states committed to the transformation from an organization purely focused on economic integration and cooperation, to an organization focused on a more comprehensive form of political and socio-cultural integration. For instance, Article 4 (a-k) of the revised treaty was a new section, which articulates the fundamental principles of ECOWAS:

- a) equality and inter-dependence of Member States;
- b) solidarity and collective self-reliance;

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<sup>28</sup> ECOWAS Speech Archives: Abuja, Nigeria, retrived October 12, 2016.

- c) inter-State co-operation, harmonization of policies and integration of programs;
- d) non-aggression between Member States;
- e) maintenance of regional peace, stability and security through the promotion and strengthening of good neighborliness;
- f) peaceful settlement of disputes among Member States, active Co-operation between neighboring countries and promotion of a peaceful environment as a prerequisite for economic development;
- g) recognition, promotion and protection of human and peoples' rights in accordance with the provisions of the African Charter on Human and Peoples' Rights;
- h) accountability, economic and social justice and popular participation in development;
- i) recognition and observance of the rules and principles of the Community;
- j) promotion and consolidation of a democratic system of governance in each Member State as envisaged by the Declaration of Political Principles adopted in Abuja on 6 July, 1991; and
- k) equitable and just distribution of the costs and benefits of economic co-operation and integration.

The fundamental principles articulated here signify a more concentrated effort to emphasize the need for member states to become “good neighbors” and identifies a governance preference and standard to be upheld by member states in order to achieve “good neighbor status. The fundamental principles in other words, establish a normative commitment to democracy as a form of governance and a commitment of all member states to abide by and adopt the rules of the community.



The key to ensuring that ECOWAS member states would adhere to the fundamental principles of the revised treaty was the implementation of a clearly defined decision-making mechanism in ECOWAS. Article 9 (2) states that decisions in ECOWAS must be adopted by unanimity, consensus, or two-thirds majority of member states. Section 4 of Article 9 makes decisions binding on member states and institutions of ECOWAS. The decision-making mechanism was not spelled out previously in the original ECOWAS treaty and served as the major contention in the establishment of ECOMOG.

Article 6 of the revised treaty reconfigures the institutions of ECOWAS and their functions. The institutions of the original treaty vested most of ECOWAS' operationalization in the Authority Heads of State. In the revised treaty, there would be the establishment of the following institutions, tasked with the day to day functioning of the community:

- the Authority of Heads of State and Government;
- the Council of Ministers;
- the Community Parliament;
- the Economic and Social Council;
- the Community Court of Justice;
- the Executive Secretariat;
- the Fund for Co-operation, Compensation and Development;
- Specialized Technical Commissions; and

- Any other institutions that may be established by the Authority.<sup>29</sup>

The revised treaty and especially Article 4 and Article 6 signify ECOWAS' transformation in that the organization decided to commit resources into improving the political and security dynamics in West Africa, if only by recognizing political stability was a major hurdle to the original goal of economic integration. ECOWAS' first transformation, beginning with the revised treaty, signified that ECOWAS as an organization wanted to converge on the idea of a stable and democratic region—and in doing so, its functioning will have to less to do with the Authority Heads of State and more to do with institutions that could focus on various sectors in West Africa. Table 1 highlights the main substantive differences in the revised treaty as it relates to peace and security.

Examining the development of the revised treaty in the context of ECOWAS' first transformation is important in understanding the evolution of regional convergence. The revised treaty establishes a baseline of normative behaviors and paints a picture of how states should look. Also, for the criticism ECOWAS received at the time, particularly in its inability to put a stop to the Liberian Civil War, it was forward thinking in its revision of the treaty and left things ambiguous with the idea that they provide an opportunity to be expanded and re-appropriated as regional dynamics shift. This is the case in the creation of the institutions created in Article 6 of the revised treaty. Articles 80-85 of the revised treaty provide provision on the rules of engagement

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<sup>29</sup> ECOWAS Revised Treaty, Article 6 (1) 1993

between ECOWAS, non-state actors, other regional stakeholders, regional economic communities and other international actors and task the coordination of these relationships to the Executive Secretariat. For example, Article 81 calls for the explicit involvement of regional stakeholders in the economic integration process, while never officially indicating how this would materialize.

Along with the revised treaty, there are two protocols associated with the first transformation of ECOWAS, which are crucial to understanding the organization's institutional development and the process of regional convergence in peace and security. The first protocol is the Protocol Relating to the Mechanism of Conflict Prevention, Management, Resolution, Peace-Keeping and Security (known as "The Mechanism"), entered into force in 1999. The Mechanism also asserts plainly, a commitment to the building of stable democratic institutions and member states. The objectives of the Mechanism were for ECOWAS to begin to put their normative ideas on security into practice. The Mechanism incorporates ECOMOG as a standing mediation entity in the region, while also committing member states to cooperation on the free movement of people, generating peace-keeping support for member states, safeguarding the cultural heritage of member states, and moving toward the development of an ECOWAS standing army. The Mechanism would also consist of its own institutions, primarily mediation and Security Council, a sub-regional early warning unit, and the defense and security commission. The Mechanism, as it pertains to ECOWAS' first transformation is the first attempted at merging institutional change in the organization with concrete procedures to induce practical change in the region as it pertains to peace and security—as the Mechanism comes after two major ECOWAS

interventions in Liberia and Sierra Leone. Article 25 of the mechanism provides the context as to when the Mechanism is applied to member states:

- In cases of aggression or conflict in any Member State or threat thereof;
- In case of conflict between two or several Member States;
- In case of internal conflict that threatens to trigger a humanitarian disaster, or that poses a serious threat to peace and security in the sub-region;
- In event of serious and massive violation of human rights and the rule of law.
- In the event of an overthrow or attempted overthrow of a democratically elected government;
- Any other situation as may be decided by the Mediation and Security Council.

The Mechanism spells out more clearly the terms to engage in a conflict with member states. If a major criticism of the ECOWAS response to the Liberian Civil War was a lack of communication or controversy relating to the justification for intervention, the Mechanism is explicit about the conditions of ECOWAS involvement and decisions to enter into civil conflicts in West Africa.

Another way ECOWAS attempted to deepen the institutional commitment towards creating a more democratic region is the Supplemental Protocol of Democracy and Good Governance in 2001. This protocol takes Article 25 (e) of the mechanism-the right to intervene on any attempt to overthrow a democratically elected government and strengthens it by calling for constitutional convergence on democratic

elections and institutions in member states. The protocol also establishes a procedure to develop an electoral monitoring mechanism in the organization. More importantly, it outlines the role of armed forces, police, and security forces in a democracy, to be adapted by member states. The protocol also has provisions for poverty alleviation, education, and social welfare of people, rule of law, gender and youth inclusion, and gives ECOWAS sanctioning powers if member states do not adhere to the provisions on its population.

ECOWAS' first transformation shows the struggle for evolution by an organization that was trying to adapt to the conflict-driven realities of West Africa, while trying to converge around ideals of democratic governance through the form of institutional change. However, this first transformation of ECOWAS highlights a tension between institutional convergence, normative convergence, and convergence in practice. Institutionally, ECOWAS was still very much "elite" dominated. Decisions were made primarily through the Authority Heads of State or Ministers whom were appointed by their respective Heads of State and expected to represent the positions of their country. This made the process of developing the operational components of the Mechanism and the Protocol for Democracy and Good Governance difficult to negotiate. According to Kebba Tour, a current Ecocrat who was part of a contingent from Guinea on behalf of Prime Minister Lamine Sidime that worked on the implementation phase of the 2001 Supplemental Protocol:

"We could not come to agreement on how to disperse the funds. Countries that had not paid their community levy would come and we ourselves were struggling with the uneven democratization process. So many of us, who were sent by our governments, felt we needed to

advocate for [their governments] and so, there were often stalemates in the implementing process.<sup>30</sup>”

The institutional changes also suffered from neither substantive issues in that the substance of the institutional changes focused on formal state changes nor address how the informal areas of political life could contribute to the improvement of democratic governance. Put differently, the substance of the institutional reforms in the first transformation do not adequately address the regional dynamics such as the intensive interactions between states and international actors, non-governmental organizations, corridors, ecologies, and triangles that gave way to many of the environmental hurdles ECOWAS experienced during its initial interventions into civil conflicts.

Normatively, the first transformation indicated a concentrated desire to converge on democratic governance through the linkage of peace and security. From the Declaration of Political Principles to the Supplemental Protocol, ECOWAS made a concerted effort to have issues of democracy and good governance incorporated into the institutional fabric of ECOWAS. What explains the commitment to democratic governance? Conventional approaches that argue African regionalism is the project of regime-boosting; the idea that regionalization is used as an instrument by heads of states to prop up existing regimes, leaders can show support and loyalty for each other, which enables them to raise their profile, formal sovereignty, without ensuring that policies actually get implemented (Soderbaum 2012, 67). However, the process and commitment to institutional reform and the debate by ECOWAS practitioners and

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<sup>30</sup> Kebba Toure, Interview ECOWAS Secretariat October 14, 2016

ministers to create protocols that strengthen the discursive process of democracy indicates a desire to deepen democratic governance to improve the quality of life in the region. This view is bolstered by the fact that ECOWAS practitioners did not view the protocols and the treaty of ECOWAS as merely “words on paper”—ECOWAS practitioners believe that the protocols they sign and implement were meant to have deepening effects and foster cooperation. For example, an Ecocrat in the Political Affairs and Peace and Security Commission tells it:

“ECOWAS is set up to drive cooperation between member states, that is a given. However, it is not to just have agreement, we are committed to deepening cooperation. From the peace and security perspective, for us it is important to have adequate protocols and mechanisms, and I will tell you that ECOWAS is one of the institutions globally that has outstanding normative frameworks so there is basis there... [I]f you read them [protocols and mechanisms] they are rich. Now, people say 'there is a lot of conflict in West Africa' but I always say there is a lot of 'will' to address [it]. We have seen ECOWAS facilitate the Liberia intervention, and that was the first anywhere in the world. In addition, each time now, we believe we have the responsibility to protect and we have been acting on that responsibility... For me, that is one way to facilitate cooperation, by having democratic institutions that speak to popular representation, even if they are part of electoral processes that are flawed. This is one gift we have given to the region, to the member states and the people, who need democracy.<sup>31</sup>”

The claim often leveraged on ECOWAS and other African regional organizations is that institutional reforms, including changes to treaties, are merely just changes “on paper” that are not subject to possible implementation. However, in ECOWAS, there is an underlying logic and an instance of institutional learning,

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<sup>31</sup> Onyinye Onwuka, Interview ECOWAS Secretariat October 15, 2016

evidenced not only by the changing of the organizational structure of ECOWAS, but also the belief and commitment of those who work in ECOWAS to uphold the normative standards and frameworks created during the organizations formative stages.

Another shortcoming in ECOWAS' first transformation is the lack of a clear division of labor in the organization to make these new frameworks operational. For example, while the Mechanism set the parameters for modes of intervention by ECOWAS into civil conflicts, there was no organizational structure in place to oversee the implementation on the ground. As a result, The Authority Heads of State would convene in May 2005 to begin discussions on reshaping the organizational structure of ECOWAS again in order to develop the capacity for the organization to implement their mandate.

### **Second Transformation of ECOWAS: The ECOWAS Commission (2007-Present)**

During an annual summit meeting in May of 2005, the Authority Heads of State began the discussions on changing the ECOWAS Secretariat to the ECOWAS Commission. According to summit meeting discussions, the desire to change the ECOWAS Secretariat to the ECOWAS Commission was to create an organizational structure with an empowered administrative apparatus charged with overseeing capacity building and implementation of ECOWAS' protocols and decisions.<sup>32</sup> More importantly, the ECOWAS Authority wanted to develop an administrative apparatus

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<sup>32</sup> ECOWAS Archives, Abuja Nigeria: Vol 49, May 2005. Accessed October 18, 2016.



that would both embody the diversity of the community and eliminate socio-cultural and linguistic barriers to full integration. As such, there would be a series of meetings on the restructuring of ECOWAS over the course of the next two years. These meetings would include foreign ministers of member states, ECOWAS practitioners that occupied the administrative roles at the time.

The meetings to create the ECOWAS Commission were for the most part amicable, with members intently focused on how to make ECOWAS more efficient. There were two major pre-occupations in the process of creating the Commission. First, the deliberation on the creation of the Commission was the first time outside of the humanitarian/human rights dimension of civil war, that ECOWAS spoke explicitly on creating an ECOWAS policy apparatus set up for the good of the citizens. Second, was the collective will to move ECOWAS beyond being a state-driven project. The prevailing thought on a people focused approach to ECOWAS was that changing the organizational structure would provide an opportunity to get more citizens and regional practitioners involved in the organization. However, the biggest concern was developing ECOWAS into an organization that would not be “impeded by size and contribution disparities.<sup>33</sup>” This meant that in restructuring, ECOWAS would have to deal with the perceived “Nigeria problem.” In reality, there was never really a Nigeria problem according to two ECOWAS practitioners who were part of the late stages of the restructuring process:

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<sup>33</sup> ECOWAS Archives, Abuja Nigeria: Vol 41 Jun/July 2007

“During one of our final meetings, there was a proposal to have 15 commissioners of ECOWAS, one representative for each country and the member states would be responsible for paying their own commissioners. This was a time for Nigeria to step up and assert its leadership as the hegemonic power in West Africa. It is in Nigeria’s interest to have this structure. But what happens? Nigerian representatives present at the meeting did not say a word. They did not want to be active and this is why we have the current structure [seven commissioners, paid for by ECOWAS].”

“Until recently, this past year, Nigeria has not sat up in ECOWAS. [Nigeria] makes its contributions and leaves everything to the commission. [Nigeria] is very passive”<sup>34</sup>

The perceived “Nigeria problem”—or more broadly construed as the large state influence in regionalism, and the passiveness therein, refutes claims that ECOWAS is beholden by the strategic interests of regime leaders and that regionalism is a tool used by self-interested actors to advance their interests. The restructuring of ECOWAS was an overt attempt by the organization to delimit the spread of self-interest by building an institutional structure that did not privilege one country and its capabilities over another, for the sake of harmonization. The result is the passage of Regulation C/REG.706/07, Approving the Organizational Structure of the Commission of ECOWAS.

As it relates to the realm of peace and security, ECOWAS’ second transformation is important for three reasons. First, the restructuring of the organization created an institutional apparatus and a significant amount of resources for peace and security issues. One of the seven commissions created was the Political Affairs, Peace

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<sup>34</sup> Interview at ECOWAS Commission, Anonymous, October 20, 2016.

and Security, consisting of sub-divisions of Peacekeeping and Regional Security, Early Warning, and Political Affairs. According to ECOWAS strategic planning documents and budget reports from 2007-2013 as well as 2013-2016, the Political Affairs Commission receives the largest percentage of ECOWAS funding. For example, in 2011-2015, 22% of the entire ECOWAS Commission budget (\$28,797,393) was allocated towards “good governance” programs alone. These programs included the facilitation of the ECOWAS Conflict Prevention Framework, capacity building for peace and security programs, establishment and support for national conflict prevention frameworks, and electoral observations. In addition, during 2011-2015, 26% of the entire Commission budget (\$33,278,914) went towards the implementation of existing policies and protocols. Peace and security related resource allocation demonstrates institutional convergence around the importance of Peace and Security to the region-building process.

Second, ECOWAS’ second transformation is important because the realization of the missteps of the civil wars of the 1990s in West Africa. While ECOWAS was indeed innovative in creating mechanisms to respond to civil conflict in the region, many consider their efforts to be reactionary and thus, ineffective. The transformation to the ECOWAS Commission indicated that ECOWAS stakeholders were committed to building and sustaining peace in the region, and saw ECOWAS as the most important tool to achieve peace. The consciousness of the Heads of State and ECOWAS stakeholders, gives credence to the idea that institutional learning was and is occurring in ECOWAS.

Third, by creating a space for a more autonomous unit to occupy and make decisions within the ECOWAS structure, individual state interest would likely subside, which is good for member states in terms of trust ECOWAS to be impartial and effective in their engagements with member states and also with regional stakeholders that are not member states. Put differently, with the creation of the ECOWAS Commission, there are new sets of actors to engage with and these actors may be viewed as less elite than the foreign ministers and the Authority Heads of State who used to represent ECOWAS. In essence, there is a symbolic effect associated with this new ECOWAS structure that helped change the perception of the organization—in that ECOWAS practitioners, or Ecocrats are working to benefit the region first.

#### The ECOWAS Conflict Prevention Framework (ECPF)

The ECOWAS Conflict Prevention Framework (ECPF) is a regulatory framework established January 16, 2008, which represents the standard setting document that combines the mandate of the Mechanism and the newly established Peace and Security organs of the second transformation. The main component of the ECPF is to implement preventative action on peace and security, strengthen internal coordination and better utilize the deployment of peace and security instruments. Under the direction of the

Mohamed Ibn Chambas, the first ECOWAS Commission President, the organization set to create a strategic agenda that would create a more defined and integral role for civil society in the maintenance of peace and security. The ECPF would be the document that would enable ECOWAS to move in practice from and ECOWAS of States to an ECOWAS of Peoples. The ECPF, in practice, would “resolve tensions

between sovereignty and supra-nationality, and between regime security and human security” and these tensions would be resolved “in favor of supra-nationality and human security respectively” (ECOWAS 2008). The purpose of the ECPF is to create more “effective and durable cooperative interventions to prevent violent conflicts within and between states” and to establish “conditions to eliminate the pervasive threats to people’s and individual rights; the protection of human and democratic rights, and the promotion of human development to ensure freedom from fear and freedom from want (ECOWAS 2008).

The evolution of ECOWAS’ peace and security mandate also demonstrates a shift in the discursive context of conflict in West Africa. Conflict prevention encompassed more than just aggressive acts by dissident groups with the state. ECOWAS focused its efforts on non-violent conflict transformation and considered prevention to include the activities by actors designed to defuse tensions and prevent the outbreak, escalation, spread, and recurrence of violence. The focus of the ECPF is operational and structural—indicating a shift from talking about how to respond to conflicts to talking about how to prevent conflicts and create the environment in the region where conflict can be reduced. This discursive shift also took place during the Commission committee meetings on the ECPF. Dr. Cyriaque Agnekethom, the Director of Peacekeeping in the PAPS Commission, argued during the drafting of the ECPF:

“ECOWAS is at a comparative advantage in Africa. We have the resources here to affect the livelihood of West Africans, but we must make sure that this framework builds the capacity for the people to protect themselves against conflict and for the people to take ownership

of their issues. It should be our role to help provide the structure and mechanisms that create an environment for peace and stability” (ECOWAS 2007).<sup>35</sup>

The ECPF draws its mandate from the numerous protocols and decisions on peace and security, however aside from the lack of internal coordination to make the protocols and decisions operational, the previous peace and security protocols did not have an explicit link to the welfare of peoples. Put differently, the previous protocols did not have explicit provisions on human security and overt humanitarian mandates. Further, the protocols passed during the first transformation did not indicate how ECOWAS could implement such policies and be inclusive of regional stakeholders such as civil society and the African Union. The content of the ECPF would call for a much more active involvement for regional stakeholders in the peace process in West Africa.

The ECPF is important to regional convergence in two major ways. First, the document was created by a mix of ECOWAS practitioners who were hold overs from the previous ECOWAS administrative configuration, but also by newly appointed Ecocrats who had spent years in the region working on the ground and able to bring their expertise to the drafting of the document. This allows us to probe the causal role of Ecocrats in charting the trajectory of convergence and harmonizing the region. For instance, the ECPF explicitly mentions the desire to build more durable structures to induce more durable modes of interaction and cooperation in the region, which was also a common theme throughout the negotiations. Drafters of the ECPF argued often of

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<sup>35</sup> ECPF Committee minutes; ECOWAS Archives, accessed October 21, 2016

“long-lasting effects” and “learning from the past” to build more “reliable structures of prevention” (ECOWAS 2007). Second, ECPF mandates member states to forge cooperation through means of socio-cultural development and empowerment. For example, ECOWAS under the ECPF (86) established a Youth and Sports Development Center in Ouagadougou, Burkina Faso to target young people in the region. Another example is the establishment of the Women, Peace and Security Component of the ECPF, which outlines a twenty-point plan for the realization of UN Security Council Resolution 1325, aimed to “propel and consolidate the women’s role and contribution in the design, elaboration, and implementation of peace and security in ECOWAS. This plan created a Gender Development Center that would work in conjunction with women organizations across West Africa, tasked with creating an evaluation structure focused on studying the impact of violent conflicts on women along with a center for negotiation and dispute resolution. The plan also included a mainstreamed regional strategy to combat female genital mutilation, forced marriages, pay differentials, strengthening the legislative and judiciary measures on Gender-Based Violence in ECOWAS states.

The creation of the ECPF, particularly in the context of ECOWAS’ second transformation, indicates that ECOWAS as an organization sees its value as an organization that can bring the region together through regional cooperation that is people-based. The realities of the second transformation also demonstrate ECOWAS’ new commitment to a more inclusive region building approach and an understanding that the answers to regional integration did not lie solely on the promise of expedient economic integration, more intra-regional trade, or a shared monetary union. Rather,

regional integration benefits from convergence in the shared livelihood of people, the de-escalation of violent conflict in the region, and a more local, bottom up approach to regional interactions that build trust among and between the citizens of West Africa. This is a task that ECOWAS also realized that it could not do alone and as a result, Ecocrats became the activists that would bring other regional stakeholders into the fold for regional integration.

### **Regional Convergence in Peace and Security**

Regional convergence in peace and security in ECOWAS can be traced back to the original peace and security protocols in ECOWAS in the late 1970s and early 1980s. Convergence in peace and security has transformed from a project that was state driven, to a project that instilled democratic governance as the normative standard in the region, and has now involved including civil society in form, preventative mechanisms in substance, and a deepening of a normative understanding of democracy and good governance among peoples and member states. The key to convergence is the role of Ecocrats in the PAPS Commission in facilitating the deepening of these processes of convergence. In this section, I highlight how ECOWAS facilitates the convergence process in two examples. First, I examine how the West African Network of Peacebuilding (WANEP) has been integrated into the ECOWAS Early Warning Directorate (ECOWARN) as an example of ECOWAS' attempt at inducing bottom-up convergence. Second, I examine how the ECOWAS Standby Force, mandated by the ECPF also serves as a mixed example of convergence.



## Composition of Peace and Security Ecocrats

The Ecocrats of peace and security are practitioners that work within the PAPS Commission. The current PAPS Commissioner is Mrs. Halima Ahmed, a lawyer from Nigeria who has worked in ECOWAS since 1990. During her time in ECOWAS, Mrs. Ahmed served in various capacities such as, Principal Program Officer, Deputy Director, Legal Adviser with the Legal Affairs Department of the then ECOWAS Secretariat between 1990 and 2002; pioneer Secretary-General (Clerk) of the ECOWAS Parliament from 2002 to 2007; Director, General Administration ECOWAS Commission from 2007 to 2013 and; Senior Legal Adviser to the president of ECOWAS Commission, 2013 to 2015. Ahmed was also one of the drafters of the Mechanism, the adoption of the West African Health Organization, and a Moratorium on the Importation, Exportation and Manufacture of Small Arms and Light Weapons, Ammunitions and other related materials (2005). Prior to joining ECOWAS, Ahmed was a legal adviser to the Attorney-General of Nigeria for 13 years and helped spearhead the creation of the Federal Ministry of Women Affairs in Nigeria.

Ahmed is responsible for the oversight of three sub-divisions of PAPS: the Department of Peacekeeping, ECOWARN, and Political Affairs. Each of these sub-divisions is headed by a director, who acquires the position through a call for applications. In each of the sub-divisions, there are also Ecocrats that are responsible for the day to day operation and the number of Ecocrats varies based on the sub-division—though the numbers of Ecocrats that head operate under the directors of the sub-divisions range from seven in ECOWARN to twenty-five in political affairs and forty in

peacekeeping. PAPS are considered to be the most staffed and integrated Commission of ECOWAS, given their large mandate and tasks for implementation.

#### ECOWARN and WANEP: Peace and Security from the bottom-up

As mentioned elsewhere in this chapter, one of the principle objectives of ECOWAS' second transformation is a move towards prevention is the integration of civil society actors into the operating structure of ECOWAS as a means of incorporating local approaches to governance to regional response mechanisms. As such, ECOWAS established a relationship with the West African Network for Peacebuilding (WANEP) to implement the operationalization of ECOWARN and other aspects of the ECPF.<sup>36</sup> ECOWAS and WANEP established a relationship as early as 2004, through a Memorandum of Understanding (MOU), which has been renewed annually. The MOU between ECOWAS and WANEP early on resulted in symmetry with other operational areas such as Gender, Humanitarian and Environmental departments of ECOWAS. In 2014, the ECOWAS and WANEP MOU were renewed to champion the implementation of ECOWAS' decentralized early warning network. In

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<sup>36</sup> WANEP was created in 1998 by a couple of West Africans who were studying in the US and conceived the idea. They came back to WA and conducted research in seven countries and came up with the structure of WANEP based on the spillover effects of civil war, they decided that the best approach was to have a regional approach, where actors have an opportunity to engage on cross border issues and work with all member states to prevent violence and the escalation of conflict. The regional office is based in Accra, and WANEP established national offices in all of the member states who are also registered as legal entities so they can access funding and work. In each country, WANEP as a network, brings civil society organizations together to form the national offices in each country.

order to understand the process in which ECOWARN and WANEP interact, a context on the actors and the activism of the actors must be provided.

The discussion to have WANEP formally integrated into ECOWARN was spearheaded by Ecocrat, Mrs. Onyinye Onwuka, Head of Analysis in ECOWARN. Prior to joining ECOWAS, Mrs. Onyinye worked for the Initiative for Peace and Conflict Resolution, as part of the Ministry of Foreign Affairs in Nigeria, where she was a senior research officer. After leaving this position in 2009, Mrs. Oyinye came to ECOWAS to work as a program officer in the Early Warning directorate, in charge of monitoring in Nigeria, Burkina Faso, and Niger and became head of analysis in 2014. Early Warning has three divisions: Analysis, Systems Analysis, and Communication and each division have a director. The Director of Analysis is responsible for generating early warning reports, forecasting, and management of early warning analysts on the ground. Mrs. Onyinye describes her role as such:

“I assure that analysts are clustered into countries for effective monitoring and I have also expanded the scope beyond country based monitoring. We are now working on thematic based monitoring as well, so each analyst has a thematic area of focus; one of them takes care of democracy and good governance, another does women, gender; another does health and humanitarian issues and is responsible for crisis response, another does proliferation of small arms. I also took one [thematic area] myself, my passion, violent extremism and terrorism. So under the analysis division, we work with WANEP--our civil society implementing partner. We have a liaison officer in house; who is attached to the analysis division and assists with the civil society component of analysis. We also have 77 field monitors among our member states. Each country has five [field monitors] and WANEP also has its own contingent of field monitors. But in Nigeria, because of the size, we have 7. So cumulatively, we have 77 field monitors throughout

member states who provide support for monitoring and dissemination of early warning through our ECOWARN platform.<sup>37</sup>”

Mrs. Onyinye joined early warning because in her view, though early warning is a core prevention strategy, she found through her research and engagement as a monitor, that early warning had not been institutionalized in a systematic way. As such, she took it upon herself to move beyond country-based monitoring, to an emphasis on thematic monitoring and establishing a system of collecting data, processing, and disseminating early warning data throughout the region. Onyinye’s directorship is a prime example of the role of Ecocrats in driving the direction and substance of regional convergence. In her focus on thematic areas, she is able to develop a more fluid early warning system and provide answers as to what the drivers of conflict are in the region:

“I also discovered that the challenge of early warning has to do with the response...how do you measure response? How do you assure that your analysis leads to response? Because many times response is political, it's driven by other factors, other than the narrative. But I also discovered that within early warning, you have thematic areas, that's why I began to emphasize on the need for us to look not just at countries, but to look for emerging trends. And so, we decided to have these thematic areas. And they are not exhaustive, we tend to review it often based on the dynamics of evolving security situations.

For me, terrorism is so important because it underlies many of the challenges we face... for example, violent extremism is there and we are looking at behavior that drives political instability. I am interested in understanding drivers. I am also interested in not just looking at labeling why we have terrorism, but how are counter narratives produced to de-construct very strict ideologies; how do you get people within

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<sup>37</sup> Onyinye interview, ECOWAS Commission, Abuja, Nigeria October 21, 2016

communities who are vulnerable to being recruited, or brainwashed into joining terror groups. Also now, West Africa is one of the presenters of terrorism, and I am a Nigerian for crying out loud and terrorism is staring us in our face. So, I want to make my contribution to the discussions and conversations around terrorism and want stakeholders to engage with me so they can understand from the ECOWAS perspective, our regional output”<sup>38</sup>

From the standpoint of ECOWARN and PAPS more broadly, early warning is a substantive feature of regional convergence, as its main function is to gather information from the most local levels of governance to indicate potential outbreaks of conflict. Ecocrats involved in early warning are quite cognizant of the importance of early warning and often relate back to ECOWAS’ formative era to discuss the value and utility of early warning and more importantly, to justify the involvement of civil society in harmonizing the region.

To integrate civil society into the early warning process, ECOWAS created a position for a WANEP official to become the in-house WANEP liaison to ECOWAS. This person would be based in Abuja at the ECOWAS Commission, oversee the integration of civil society into early warning, contribute to the analysis, and forecasting of Early Warning. In conjunction with ECOWARN, WANEP would also help spearhead the decentralization of early warning in ECOWAS member states. The current WANEP liaison officer to ECOWARN is Allimou Diallo. Diallo has fifteen years of experience in peacebuilding and joined WANEP as the country coordinator for Guinea in 2006. Diallo entered the work of peace and security via five years of work

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<sup>38</sup> Onyinye interview, ECOWAS Commission, Abuja, Nigeria October 21, 2016

experience in a refugee camp providing humanitarian support for refugees from the Liberian and Sierra Leonean civil wars:

“I saw firsthand what war can do to people. It rips them of their dignity and even within the refugee camp; refugees were so vulnerable that the camp management, security management, were not able to protect most of them. So since then, my work was to respond to people that have been affected by war and conflict. So I thought maybe the best way would be to change my career to focus on how to prevent conflict in the first place, instead of providing humanitarian services to victims of war and violence.<sup>39</sup>”

Diallo also mentioned that his work in Guinea as member of WANEP was to help strengthen its democratic governance, in the face of two long term dictators. His role was to mobilize citizens through civic education and building the capacity for them to participate effectively in the election, to offset the risk of potential electoral violence. Diallo believes that WANEP is the proper mechanism to integrate and deepen the role of civil society in creating modes of democratic governance in West Africa.

In coming together, ECOWARN and WANEP decided that in order to maximize the impact of early warning and to best incorporate local capacity building into the regional structure and plan for early warning, early warning needed to be decentralized. Mrs. Onyinye justified this approach by highlighting a gap between “alert” and “response.” ECOWARN and WANEP are both concerned with these dynamics and the impact of potential spillover impeding the peace-building process.

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<sup>39</sup> Allimou Diallo, Interview ECOWAS Commission, October 30, 2016

“There's a gap in member states, a gap of alert and response and many times we have to deal with the issue of sovereignty of member states and the supranational structure that ECOWAS is supposed to enjoy. So you have issues like the Niger Delta, [ECOWAS] wants to touch it, but Nigeria says 'no no no', northern Ghana, and yet if you look at it, they all have some form of spillover to other member states. The Niger Delta for instance, sits in the gulf of guinea, in terms of maritime zone. All around it is Ghana Togo; there is piracy and the issue is that it affects the member states. So what we did in early warning after we did our evaluation, we found there was some violations and we determined [Nigeria] could not maintain its dominance.

So we asked ourselves, ‘why don't we decentralize early warning to member states?’ For me, that is one way we are moving from ECOWAS of the state to ECOWAS of the people; this is our new orientation, fill in the gap of ECOWAS response to the local communities. So now with the support of the maritime stakeholders, we are moving in [the Gulf of Guinea] and we have indeed moved to start the establishment of national early warning response mechanisms. We received funding to start in 5 pilot states: Liberia, Mali, Guinea-Bissau, Burkina Faso, and Cote d'Ivoire, and we got quite a good response. Many [member states] are very enthusiastic-- and we chose these five countries because we have special representative offices there and we wanted to leverage that presence to help facilitate the process. And we moved very fast, and now most of the member states have a decree of establishing national early warning systems.”

“Now we have a prototype to use to start advocating in the other member states. the idea is that we have a national center for the implementation of early warning and response and we know that in many member states. We are looking for coordination among these member states because we hope it feeds into the regional early warning system. This is how we bypass the sovereignty issue and have member states feed us information and we're able to at the level of early warning to respond. It's not going to be an all government affair. In the national center, we have civil society. That's the architecture that we have designed... to oversee what's happening and to ensure that it is not being controlled by governments.”

The creation of the national centers of early warning exemplifies regional convergence from the bottom-up in two ways. First, by creating an early warning system that is not only based at the commission, but on the ground in member states, it increases the awareness of the early warning process to citizens on the ground. ECOWAS is also more equipped to get targeted and local information related to conflicts in the region. Second, by working with civil society and WANEP in particular, ECOWAS can use the centers to foster local-driven responses to conflicts. An example of local-driven responses to conflict is the desire for all national centers of early warning to incorporate indigenous conflict resolution mechanisms into their structures. An example of an indigenous mechanism is found in Liberia, with the use of the former “palava huts” in Liberia that have now turned into “peace huts”, which are pivotal in creating stability within member states.

Palava huts, as explained by a WANEP field officer, are small hamlets that are built in the middle of a village. The people in the village agree that whenever there is a problem, the Palava is the place where people should come and talk about it. These huts are important in promoting dialogue and mediation and represent a shared way of people taking ownership. It would be the task of the national centers and the field officers from WANEP and ECOWAS to ensure that these “peace huts” are plentiful in both urban and rural areas in member states. One WANEP field officer describes the “peace hut” in practice:

“So now, instead of using a negative term, they call it a peace hut. When you come with your conflict, before you leave, there will be peace. The idea and concept are being revived. I've personally visited some of the



villages and towns and have seen how they function. They have registers. Any case that is brought to them, they register it [with the peace hut], then they follow up. Some of the cases that have a criminal component, they themselves make the complaints to the police, and follow up--like rape cases. There are other cases like communal conflicts, that the police or judicial units are involved in, [the peace hut register] will say 'ok, hand over this case to us, this is not a criminal case. It is within our power to sit down with these people and solve it.' So police will say 'ok' and sign a document and hand it over and the register will give a guarantee that if they are not able to solve it, we will bring it back to you and if we are able to solve it, we will report it.

Peace huts are organized by rural women and they even transformed it because of the levels of underdevelopment in these rural communities, they also decided to say that it is not just coming to talk about conflict, but decided to use these centers as income-generating activities, to keep the centers busy when we do not have many cases to deal with. So they are also doing tie-dye, soap-making... they use it as a capacity-building for income generation, which is also very important because the level of poverty and underdevelopment is appalling and unacceptable. But once they decided to do this, when they get support from donors and are able to work, you realize it's a way of even strengthening their capacity as individuals to live their own dignified life, which is also one way of reducing conflict. So these are concepts that originated in the local communities. But we are investing in them and support them.<sup>40</sup>

The peace hut is an example of the process of deepening modes of behavior to induce convergence. By ECOWAS establishing and driving the relationship with WANEP, they are able to implement preventative measures to conflict resolution at the most local level and instill within communities the appropriate modes of conflict resolution. The peace huts also satisfy ECOWAS' desire to have a more people centric orientation by embracing local and indigenous modes of conflict resolution that also aid

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<sup>40</sup> Anonymous Interview, WANEP field office, Abuja, Nigeria, October 25, 2016

the mandate of the ECPF. It is the belief that conflict resolution on the most local level will help stabilize communities and abstract to the national and regional levels.

ECOWAS and WANEP have also worked to incorporate indigenous practices to the country and regional level, as exemplified in the creation of the National Peace Council (NPC) in Ghana. The NPC is inclusive of traditional leaders and religious leaders in Ghana and started out as an informal structure used during elections to advocate for peace. WANEP, under a mandate from ECOWAS worked with the Ghanaian government to formalize the NPC. WANEP played a significant role in drafting the concept note that went to the interior ministry and eventually turned into Act 818 to establish the NPC. Though the NPC is a formal state institution, its operational mechanism makes it neutral from government interference and the NPC board, has significant advantage to intervene particularly during elections, which it did in 2012:

“One of the political parties went to court to tell the electoral commission not to announce the results until some of the claims they were making about electoral fraud were investigated. But the National Peace Council issued a press statement telling the electoral commission not to release the results. The National peace council also issued a statement to say that nobody has a right to tell the electoral commission not to fulfill its constitutional role. So if they should allow the electoral commission to do its work, they agreed they should go to court. That wasn't enough, so they have to convene a meeting, which was facilitated by WANEP...they brought the political parties and the electoral commission together and they agreed that the EC should go ahead [and announce the results]. It wasn't just to make a statement in the public, but also to engage with them to make sure that they agree on the way forward. The results were in favor of the ruling party and the other party went to court. It dragged the country into 8 months of legal battle. So this started from the informal way but we realized the role they played in previous elections. This is becoming the new fad. So many organizations

are now supporting this, the UNDP, most countries are trying to do the same.<sup>41</sup>”

In terms of networking the region through promoting the use of indigenous practices, the results have been varied based on the uneven role of civil society and indigenous and religious leaders. For instance, Ecocrats often compared the differences of religiosity between countries like Ghana and Cote d’Ivoire to judge the potential effectiveness of civil society in the respective member states. ECOWARN field officers mentioned the numerous consultative meetings held with WANEP with representatives in Cote d’Ivoire where the idea of a NPC, much in the same structure as Ghana, was proposed to traditional leaders. The common gripe against traditional leaders and religious leaders in Cote d’Ivoire was that people are not religious, traditional leaders are not neutral, and civil society is polarized. In addition, political actors in Cote d’Ivoire suggested that in order for a NPC type of structure to work in the country, political parties must be a part of it. This is problematic in the sense that an NPC would become another forum for political parties to push their agendas. Thus, the role of early warning and the partnership between ECOWAS and WANEP is to find a formula that can be replicated throughout the region and the start of that process is the promotion of convergence on a local, micro-level to determine what represents the nation, something that almost everyone in the population can rely on and identify with.

The ECOWARN and WANEP mandate, aside from its practical component of establishing national centers of early warning, bring the region together

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<sup>41</sup> Allimou Diallo, Interview, ECOWAS Commission, October 30, 2016

by articulating normative standards for engagement between civil society, member states, and their constitutive populations. WANEP forms its network by establishing hard and fast guidelines on the adherence to its constitution. Once a civil society organization becomes part of WANEP, it becomes beholden to the standards of the WANEP constitution and its structure. It has a strict formula for entrance and in countries where the network is not strong or does not adhere to WANEP's constitution, they are expelled from the organization and civil society organizations must start over again based on the policies of WANEP:

“We have developed a mechanism to look at five dimensions: Institutional viability, legal environment, advocacy, financial means, and network capacity to deliver. We have indicators that we use to monitor. So for each national center we have evaluators and we grade them from A-E. All those in A and B categories, we give them autonomy to function because they have the structure to do so. Those from C-E, they have to consult and get approval from the regional secretariat. We invest in an evidenced based approach. It's not the role of civil society to just condemn and argue, but we use research and produce policy studies and policy briefs that have empirical arguments to engage policy makers so that the policy makers themselves will see the benefits in adopting the policy options that we are providing. The challenge is there. ECOWAS was wise enough to provide the ideal platform from where civil society is coordinated, capacitate, and well organized, but of course there are cultural issues that inhibit the effectiveness of civil society because in some countries, the way civil society is structured is not to provide a third voice, it's just to say that this is an enterprise, we just need to survive. So the governance culture of any country, and the region, is largely reflected in the way civil society is effective. If you look at Ghana, civil society is very vibrant. It is a reflection of the nation state itself.<sup>42</sup>”

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<sup>42</sup> Ibid

The advantage of looking to forge convergence from the bottom-up is the ability Ecocrats have to develop a niche in many areas. Focusing on a small number of programs or thematic areas increases the capacity for implementation and increases the chances for more successes in conflict prevention and resolution. In addition, at the regional level both ECOWAS and WANEP develop more credibility in the eyes of donors and in the communities they serve. The approach that ECOWAS and WANEP take in regional engagement on peace and security is one that fosters capacity. There is a real emphasis on people being empowered to take ownership of their conflicts. ECOWARN field officers discussed an example of citizens taking ownership of their conflicts during their intervention in the communal clash between the Mamprussi and Kusasi in Northern Ghana. This communal clash prompted the Ghanaian government to deploy the military to the region in 2008 and place the town of Bawku under curfew for two years. The Ghanaian government helped facilitate a brokerage of peace and called WANEP and ECOWARN field officers and mediators.

“What we did was organize a series of dialogue sessions for them, brought them to Kumasi, out of the conflict zone. We were able to get a peace agreement signed and they went back to implement the peace agreement. And 6 months after that, we came and did an evaluation. This was in 2010 and since then, even when I was in Ghana, Mamprusi and Kusasi people will call my phone and tell me ‘you people are telling us not to fight, ooo!, this is what is happening!’ In fact, there was a festival that was coming up, and one party wanted to organize a festival, but the other party needed to agree to it, which they didn't initially. One guy wrote very insulting statements on the wall. So when he called, he said ‘you people said we should not fight, so I wrote on the wall to express myself...instead of fighting this is what we are doing now’ So we have to educate them and say this is also not the way of dealing with. This is to say that we have engaged in many communal conflicts and we are able to successfully resolve it. Up to now, they continue calling if there is any issue they will call WANEP. What we did was to set up a committee

comprising all ethnic groups, including two parties that are in conflict. The two parties appointed a chief, who is a leader in that committee. So if there is anything they hear, the committee will meet first and take a decision before there is action. Initially, there was no mechanism for engagement so when something happens, people just go and retaliate. Whether it is a rumor or a real thing. Since there is this inter-ethnic committee, now they are managing their own lives. Since 2010 in Northern Ghana, the killing has diminished. There are tensions, but they are managing to live with it. And that's the idea of empowering communities, for them to see the dividends. They were campaigning for us to help lift the curfew and the riding of motorbikes. All of that was banned, We told them if they continue like this in the next year, we will intervene and talk to the government. When we are doing this, we do it with the involvement of parliamentarians from that region.<sup>43</sup>”

Since ECOWAS created a peace and security architecture, based on the experiences of the civil wars of the 1990s, there has been improvement on the capacity of ECOWAS to engage the region to deal with crisis. ECOWAS’ increased capacity to respond and to respond on local levels has reduced the number of open conflicts in the region. The efforts to learn and improve upon the mistakes of the 1990s are driven by Ecocrats in peace and security, which are able to gather and disseminate information and resources to help quell conflicts. Why have Ecocrats taken the mantle to drive regional peace and security convergence on their own accord? The answer lies in the ability for Ecocrats to prioritize harmonization above institutional inertia and ineptness. Mrs. Onyinye mentions that her biggest challenge as program officer and monitor, as well as Head of Analysis, is getting the Authority Heads of State to acknowledge and act on the alerts by ECOWARN. For example, in 2009, ECOWARN forecasts and analysis all suggested that then-President Tandja of Niger would look to reform the

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<sup>43</sup> Ibid

constitution six months before elections, and the Heads of State ignored the reports. In ignoring the reports, Niger suffered a constitutional crisis and coup. Onyinye describes the trouble of overcoming the heads of state through an example of a report done on former President of Burkina Faso, Blaise Compaoré:

“We were writing a report on the President of Burkina. Then the president of the Commission [Kadré Désiré Ouédraogo] was from Burkina. So we write this report and I was very brutal on him. But how can we send that kind of report to the President? So I sent it to my then director, and she looks at it and says 'hmm very nice but we cannot take it up to him because that guy is not going to sit down there and Blaise hears that he was sitting in and took that kind of decision. So what we now do, is we nuanced it and say he should continue to do his good work and consider leaving office. But what kind of good job was he doing? That's why we work with WANEP. The things we cannot say, they will say. We have the challenge of getting the type of response that we desire. But the other challenges we have, we're working to close them with the national early warning centers, such as getting information at the grassroots and working with other actors at the local level.”

Along with the challenges above, ECOWAS and WANEP face the challenge of dealing with a fluid security environment. A common belief among Ecocrats is that violent extremism is the next biggest threat to regional stability and even though ECOWAS is able to handle any tasks in the region, violent extremism has the ability to dilute any progress made on convergence. Even with these challenges, early warning still serves as an example where the convergence in the normative and substantive form occurs across the region.

## Turning motivation into practice: Regional Convergence and the ECOWAS Standby Force (ESF)

Part of the ECPF mandate is the realization of a standing army in ECOWAS, in the form of the ECOWAS Standby Force (ESF). ECOWAS has been trying to implement the ESF since the Mutual Assistance protocol in 1981 and more concretely through the Mechanism in 1999. The hurdle in creating the ESF has been the lack of availability of troops from member states, which was also because member states were not compensating their troops adequately to be a part of the ESF. Another hurdle was the lack of harmonization when it came to training. Individual member states were responsible for training their own contingents and when ECOWAS troops were deployed into the civil conflicts of the 1990s, the differences and experiences in combat were alarming, thus rendering many ECOWAS contingents, useless in resolving conflicts. To amend these shortcomings, Ecocrats in drafting the ECPF and later through Mediation Committee meetings advocated hard for regional military education and exercises, with the inclusion of the military and policing units within member states. These trainings and military exercises would take place throughout the region to provide ESF troops an experience with different terrains and encourage ESF troops and police officers to learn more about their peers and to conjure up a sense of regional purpose in their participation with ESF. However, regional convergence can also have some unintended consequences.

In December 2015, Ecocrats in PAPS reached out to the International Red Cross about collaborating and holding a week-long workshop on integrating international humanitarian law into the ESF as a way to hold joint military exercises and harmonize training. The training had a mix of military captains and lieutenants in all



fifteen member states, along with police officers from seven member states. The workshop was highly reminiscent of a college classroom: ESF troops were parked in a hotel conference room for much of the education portion of the week. Each ESF troop member and civilian police officer had at least a tablet or laptop computer, which seemed to occupy the attention of many of the troops. The presenters from the International Red Cross, one a Human Rights lawyer from Australia and the other a program officer from Geneva, also seemed professorial in one regard, yet parental in another. During the educational trainings, the presenters often seemed perturbed by the ESF troops and their lack of expedience and participation in the workshop, to the point that they resulted to condescension. The presenters also used a lot of jargon, which seemed to confuse ESF troops as well.

The point of the workshop was to train ESF troops on the proper humanitarian classifications and rules of engagement with the onset of conflict throughout the region. The training provided, which was part of an ECOWAS/AU/UN collaborative curriculum on incorporating humanitarian law into the regional standby force, focused on definitional issues, such as defining who civilians were, rules of targeting and distinction, and highlighting standard operation on detention. More broadly, the incorporation of humanitarian law into the practices of the ESF also exemplified institutional learning and an evolution from the shortcomings of the ECOMOG days. ESF troops were trained specifically on the value of humane treatment, prohibition of torture, rape, slave labor, and enforced disappearance, all of which occurred in ECOMOG controlled areas in Liberia and Sierra Leone in the 1990s. However, while ESF troops participated in the training, they were also skeptical of its

intended effects. An ESF troop from Gambia asked, if the training and military practices are meant to protect civilians, then “why were countries being sanctioned,” while another police officer from Burkina Faso suggested that this training was “another product of the West.” These claims and questions present an interesting paradox. On one hand, by the troops agreeing to participate in the training, they are agreeing that improvements are needed at the regional level to make an effective standby force. On the other, their relative apathy and lack of knowledge of seemingly rudimentary humanitarian and military knowledge, also indicates that the method of convergence might not extend to the individual logics of the ESF. Thus, the process of convergence is represented well by the motivations of Ecocrats, yet the realization of their motivations is at best uneven. Yet the outcome of workshops such as the one mentioned here, while important, does not capture the essence of regional convergence. That Ecocrats thought to bring external actors to improve the practices of the ESF, coupled with the physical coming together of troops from member states to harmonize around their rules of engagement and participate in military exercises, indicates a shift in institutional logic and practice that was not present in the previous iterations of the organization.

## **Conclusion**

Peace and Security has been a bedrock of ECOWAS since its founding, however the articulation and interpretation of its importance has been met with successes and failures. This chapter highlights how ECOWAS, through institutional evolution and the motivation of Ecocrats in peace and security, have worked to create a

normative and practical environment in West Africa that induces political stability, frees the region of open conflict, and networks the region through the inclusion of civil society and local/indigenous mechanisms for peace. By exploring the evolution of ECOWAS through two transformations, I illuminated the how the founding conditions of the organization gave way for an interpretation of noninterference that is particular to the context of West Africa and counters conventional perspectives of regionalism in West Africa that posit ECOWAS had a strict normative adherence to non-intervention and the interventions of ECOWAS were violations of regional and global norms of sovereignty. I argued, that looking at the process and periodization of ECOWAS, its protocols and the substance therein, we can glean a perspective of regional convergence that emphasizes on how targeted motivations by Ecocrats actually help push the peace and security agenda beyond legal protocols and into preventative action and process-driven implementation. The examples of the partnerships between ECOWARN and WANEP, as well as the networking between the ESF and the International Red Cross, demonstrate how Ecocrats in peace and security have shaped the agenda through their respective issue linkages to put an ECOWAS of people into practice, while strengthening the capacity and discursive value of its normative frameworks.

The role of Ecocrats in peace and security is vital to understanding how modes of behavior become embedded and normalized into ECOWAS and how these modes of behavior are a qualitatively different realization of regionalism in African than normally depicted. While conventional approaches to regionalism in Africa often stress the illiberal character and weakness of states, coupled with rampant political instability, driven by self-interested elites (Herbst 2007), the perspective provided here stresses the

importance of analyzing regionalism in West Africa through the scope and complexities of all interactions, rather than a purely statist analysis. Admittedly, one may argue that by looking solely at how Ecocrats craft their own responses to region-building, the analysis misses the significant impacts of meso-level governance and the interactions with other informal sources of political and social life. However, I would argue that it is the role of Ecocrats and their process of reaching local communities to facilitate convergence, that they become engaged with meso-level actors. The national early warning centers, for example, would be a way that Ecocrats not only generate information, but their use as sites for conflict prevention for all members of a community, can shed light onto informal actors that might not have been readily known if early warning was not decentralized.

The lesson of peace and security in ECOWAS can also serve as an example of process-driven regional convergence in other sub-regions in Africa. Scholars of the East African Community (EAC) and the Southern African Development Community (SADC) for example, might look to understanding how the evolution and transformation of the respective organizations remade themselves to improve upon the technical capacity of peace and security. Process-driven regional convergence in peace and security also eschews analyses that posit regional differences between heads of states to be the primary hurdles to regional convergence, rather, it focuses the attention on how the organization works to overcome such hurdles while simultaneously connecting and stabilizing the region through engagement with citizens and communities. With events such as Brexit potentially signaling a diffusion of disenfranchisement within societies, focusing on how modes of democratic governance

as a normative and substantive preference, are embedded in the region, can provide a blueprint for other regions in Africa to develop policies or enable their practitioners to bridge the link between ordinary citizens and regional responses to governance.

## **Chapter 4**

### **REGIONAL CONVERGENCE IN PUBLIC HEALTH**

On August 8, 2014, the World Health Organization (WHO) declared the Ebola outbreak in West Africa a “public health emergency of international concern,” a designation bestowed upon only three other health crises<sup>1</sup> (Swine Flu, 2009; Polio, 2014; Zika Virus, 2016). The Ebola outbreak, which began in December 2013 in Guinea, West Africa, was originally difficult to identify by health officials and its rapid spread throughout Guinea and into neighboring countries such as Liberia and Sierra Leone, eventually reaching Nigeria, Senegal and Mali. The responses to the Ebola crisis from the international community and affected governments were varied. WHO was slow to coordinate intervention efforts among its designated response mechanisms (notably, WHO’s Regional Office for Africa (AFRO)) and other international NGOs such as Doctors without Borders (MSF). The governments of the affected West African countries were also confronted with the realization that their national health infrastructures were ill-equipped to respond to the Ebola outbreak and its rapid rate of contagion. The United States Government, the United Nations, as well as thousands of other Public Health NGOs deployed into West Africa to contain Ebola and “protect” the citizens of the afflicted West African nations.

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<sup>1</sup> Public health as defined by the United States Center for Disease Control and the World Health Organization is “the science of protecting and improving the health of families and communities through promotion of healthy lifestyles, research for disease and injury prevention and detection and control of infectious diseases. Overall, public health is concerned with protecting the health of entire populations. These populations can be as small as a local neighborhood, or as big as an entire country or region of the world.”

Absent from many stories and coverage from the Ebola outbreak is the role and responses of regional organizations and the context for understanding how and why West African countries were ill-equipped to deal with the scale of the Ebola outbreak, beyond the functions of institutional failures, cultural practices, or individual behaviors (Benton and Dionne 2015). The presence of ECOWAS is left out of the narratives on how the international community and West Africans themselves battled to overcome Ebola. The performance of West Africa's health system is constrained by governance issues, low supplies of medical products, and poor cross-border cooperation to contain epidemics. As such, the Ebola crisis serves as an example of why the region and regional organizations are vital to improving the livelihood of West African countries.

Examining the regional level of interaction in health provides a lens that helps reconcile the disconnect between the global and local scales of governance. In the context of global health governance, the interplay between global and local responses to health crises, is mediated by the interactions between the global (ex. WHO), local (ex. Governments), and non-state actors (ex. MSF) (Dodgson and Lee 2002). The importance and emergence of regional cooperation is elusive in the global health governance. More importantly, it is important to understand how regional health governance is networked throughout the West Africa to identify the drivers or the delimiters of regional health convergence. In locating and highlighting the importance of the region in health, particular and significant cultural and social characteristics of the drivers of convergence become more salient and prevalent when identifying strategies and tactics of response

In this chapter, I examine the concept of regional convergence, defined as the process in which regional political and social practices are harmonized and become more constant over time. Regional convergence occurs through the formation and creation of social and political networks within and between ECOWAS and regional stakeholders in West Africa. I argue that the networks formed through the process of regional convergence build acceptable, durable and dependable modes of behavior and in public health in West Africa. Understanding regionalism in West Africa as a process-driven project, facilitated by autonomous Ecocrats, actors within the ECOWAS bureaucracy who work on the day to day operations of ECOWAS in a specialized capacity. I argue regional convergence has been weak in public health due to the lack of cooperation between Health-related civil society organizations, the lack of universal health practices across the region and the perception of the issue of public health by Ecocrats across ECOWAS, notably by the lack of institutional coordination between the two entities associated with driving ECOWAS' health policies: West African Health Organization and ECOWAS' Social and Gender Development Division.

In this chapter, I address two broad concerns. First, I am concerned with how ECOWAS facilitates the convergence of regional health practices in West Africa and identifying the driving actors of convergence in the region. Second, by examining networked regional governance in West Africa, I move away from a conception of regionalism as a regime boosting phenomenon and regionalization as engaging in shadow activities and bring to bear the how the drivers of convergence work to determine what relationships and practices become embedded and made important



within West Africa. The scope of this chapter is to understand the ways Ecocrats have worked to network the region in public health, while highlighting how the perceptions of public health become part of the strategy and normalized practices and policies of ECOWAS.

Why is this important? Regional convergence in public health provides a glimpse into the modes and methods of building health infrastructure in West Africa which I define as building frameworks to deal with not only emergencies like Ebola, but sustainable health services to deal with NCDs and HIV/AIDS.<sup>3</sup> Public health issues across the continent in Africa are growing in scale. For instance, according to World Bank data in 2014, non-communicable diseases are the second leading cause of death in Africa. Africa also has the highest regionally concentrated diabetes mortality rate in the world. Ebola and HIV/AIDS in West Africa also offer an opportunity to assess regional responses and assess the steps taken by actors on a regional scale, and to address proactive v. reactive planning.

The chapter proceeds in four parts. First, I will situate the relevance of public health and regionalism, addressing the extent to which health is integrated into

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<sup>3</sup> Throughout the chapter, I refer to “health infrastructure” using a combination of the United States Department of Health and World Health Organization’s definition of Public Health infrastructure which is “the capacity to prevent disease, promote health, and prepare for and respond to both acute (emergency) threats and chronic (ongoing) challenges to health.” Health infrastructure comprises of the institutions, capacity, knowledge and commodities that support public health. For more see John Powles and Flavio Comim “Public Health Infrastructure and Knowledge” WHO: [http://www.who.int/trade/distance\\_learning/gpgh/gpgh6/en/](http://www.who.int/trade/distance_learning/gpgh/gpgh6/en/)

regionalization schemes, with a focus on the lack of bottom-up approaches to public health regionalism. Second, I briefly provide a context for public health in West Africa, highlighting the pervasiveness of communicable diseases, providing a basis for understanding the perceptions of public health in ECOWAS. Third, I explain the process of regional convergence in ECOWAS, by tracing the Bamako Initiative in 1987, where the World Health Organization (WHO) and UNICEF, in conjunction with African Ministers of Health agreed to develop comprehensive strategies to increase access to primary health care by creating minimum health care packages that met community health needs. From this vantage point, I will highlight how convergence of health practices has developed in response to a rejection of the Bamako Initiative. I provide evidence that emphasizes how the perceptions of public health in ECOWAS are manifested through the substance of Memorandum of Understanding (MOUs), the creation of ECOWAS-driven public health networks, integration of civil society organizations into ECOWAS' health infrastructure, and Ecocrats within WAHO and ECOWAS Humanitarian and Social Affairs Division. Finally, I offer implications regarding the need for increased institutional coordination in regional public health, particularly incorporating local knowledge and existing convergence practices into the realm of public health into other pertinent areas of ECOWAS.

### **Regionalism and Public Health**

Scholars of global health governance have indicated the importance of the region in facilitating health governance. As the 2014 Ebola pandemic in West Africa

demonstrated, health crises could ravish the livelihood of people rapidly. The region becomes more important when considering the increased interconnectedness of people via the free movement of people and the proliferation of trans-border issues that span and can transform the nature of governance. In the context of West Africa, the history of civil and ethnic conflict, post-electoral violence, play an important role in the ability for states and other actors to respond, prevent, and deliver health services to civilians. In acknowledging the inherent complexities of global health governance, articulating the role of the region is necessary for a number of reasons. First, using the region as the focal point brings to bear the scope and scale of health crises that span beyond the state. State centric approaches to health governance focuses on responses and prevention measures contained within state borders. Because of the scale and potential of spill over, responses to pandemics necessitate coordination beyond state borders. Second, the region, especially in the context of West Africa presents a form of ‘locality’—meaning that the actors best suited to understanding the logistical and cultural contexts during pandemics and/or emergency crises, comes from West African states, rather than external health NGOs and CSOs. Finally, the region becomes important for geography reasons. West Africa’s most populous cities are on the coast and are subject to transience. As ECOWAS continues to move the region towards free movement of goods and people, the chances of exposure to diseases and sickness increases. A regional approach to health becomes more important in that it creates standardized methods of treatment and medical practices for citizens throughout the region. The ideal of a regional health infrastructure is that as West Africans have the ability to travel from Ghana to Cabo Verde, they should be able to receive the same type of health care/treatment that they would receive from their country of origin.

Health governance, according to Dodger et al (2002, 7) refers to the rules, actions, and means in which society organizes itself in the promotion and protection of health in its population. As such, the issue of public health has become a priority for regional organizations, particularly in the Global South. Organizations such as ECOWAS and SADC in southern Africa, have realized that diseases such as diabetes and HIV/AIDS are inextricably linked to political and economic development. Health infrastructure, I argue, is a component piece to the building of regional health governance in West Africa. I examine regional convergence in the context of building regional health infrastructure, as I measure convergence in capacity building, knowledge formation, and response mechanisms. In measuring convergence, I am interested in identifying the ways Ecocrats within ECOWAS build regional health infrastructure networks and deciphering the importance of regional health based on the perceptions of Ecocrats and their institutional commitment to building regional health infrastructure. The role of Ecocrats in building regional health infrastructure is important for two reasons. First, understanding the perceptions of Ecocrats in the realm of public health helps discern their role as drivers of region-building in West Africa. Second, understanding the value Ecocrats place on building regional health infrastructure, evidenced through network formation and deep institutionalization of health practices, provides a perspective on health governance that is focused on the activism of regional actors and situates ECOWAS as an active contributor to health governance in West Africa, rather than a passive actor susceptible to the whims of ineffective governments and incapable international organizations.

Beyond the issues of capacity building, efficacy of health systems, and knowledge formation, regionalism and health are linked for other reasons. In conflict-

prone societies, health facilities are meant to be protected under international humanitarian law (Benton and Atshan 2016). West Africa's history of civil war, particularly in Liberia and Sierra Leone, has left health facilities vulnerable to attack and populations ravished with poor health systems. As improvements in the area of peace and security increase, the attention to public health should also increase. The remnants of war and famine provide increased opportunities for exposure to airborne diseases in the short/immediate term, and malnutrition can lead to short and long term health deficiencies. The Ebola Virus crisis of 2014-5 saw most of its cases linked to intimate interpersonal contact—primarily handling dead bodies and preparing bodies for burial (Benton 2014). Similarly, the United States and Doctors Without Borders called for military troops on the ground to intervene in the Ebola crisis (Benton 2014; Rock and Focus 2014). The process of regional building advances a greater understanding as to how and why actors external to the region would deem it necessary to militarize health crises. The dynamics between the regionalization of health infrastructure and other facets of region building such as peace and security also highlights how global south regionalisms are engaging in their own agentic political and social epistemic and power processes that respond to the imposition of external actors.<sup>4</sup>

The merits of regionalizing health governance provide greater “ease and pace” in agreeing on common social policy and provide a greater chance for regionally

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<sup>4</sup> This is a sentiment shared by Riggirozzi and Yeats (2015), who also argue that the area of health provides a sector-specific lens to examine how Southern regional formations engage in power constellations, institutions, and ideological positions affecting health at different levels of governance.

defined social standards (Riggirozzi and Yeates 2015)The drivers of regional health governance identify the “ease” and determine the “pace” of regional health infrastructure building. Conventional literature on the regionalization of global health focus on the capacity of regional organizations to work as blocs to adhere to policies of highly centralized global health international multilateral institutions (Riggirozzi and Yeates 2015, 220-1). Regional health infrastructure building in ECOWAS differs from this approach as Ecocrats create networks with West African based civil society organizations as well as multilateral institutions to garner support for its own agenda on facilitating regional health infrastructure building. Put differently, Ecocrats, through their autonomous position, contrive regional health policy and strategies, and use their self-cultivated networks to create regional health standards, response and prevention capacity, and knowledge formation. The creation of their own networks and knowledge formation are important to discern the intersubjective meanings of socialization around health. The rest of the chapter will provide the context as to how ECOWAS helped build a networked response to top-down prescriptions of health governance.

### **The Bamako Initiative: Founding Conditions of Public Health Convergence**

The Bamako Initiative (BI) was a joint effort in between the World Health Organization (WHO) and the United Nations Children’s Fund (UNICEF) in 1987 aimed at improving the standards of health practices and access to health across Africa. In particular, the Bamako Initiative had eight core principles:

- Establish national commitment to universal health care

- Create essential drug policies compatible with and complementary to rational development of primary health care
- Decentralization of health policy to the district level of health ministry
- Decentralized management of community resources and funds—control at the community level
- Community financing of health services
- Increased government support for primary health care
- Established measures to ensure affordable health care to the poorest people through fee exemptions
- Clearly defined indicators on how to measure adequate health care (WHO 1987)

At its core, the Bamako Initiative was a move to create a structure for poverty stricken populations in the global south that allowed communities to take ownership of their own health care systems. The Bamako Initiative, as intended by WHO and UNICEF, classified health care as a means to reduce regional poverty. The idea of BI was to put health back into the hands of the community while also embracing local traditions and approaches to health care. The Bamako Initiative in theory suggested that when money from donor countries ran low or ran out, community managed health care would create financial autonomy, relieving dependency on foreign sources of health care finance. National governments at this time believed in BI, as it allowed leaders to avoid questions of responsibility, particularly the role of the state. As one former deputy in the Nigerian Ministry of Health (now working in the West African Health Organization) intimated:

“Of course [Nigeria] wanted Bamako. This was the era of IBB (former military President of Nigeria, Ibrahim Babaginda) where deregulation

was the norm. Everything that could be left to localities, were. We were doing SAP (structural adjustment programs) with the IMF and World Bank and while our economy grew, no money was spent on public sector programs, particularly education and health”<sup>5</sup>

That the head of the Nigerian government perceived structural adjustment and deregulation of public health sector funding to be simultaneously advantageous to a community-based health program such as BI, demonstrated the disconnect between how health ministers and their heads of state perceived the value and utility of health care reform in Africa, as well as the difficulty of packaging BI as both an economic and social benefit to African nations from WHO and UNICEF.

Aside from the decreasing operational role in health care by governments, the Bamako Initiative was also to benefit the enduring role of international organizations and their management of health care. There was the desire from WHO and UNICEF to generalize the micro experiences of community health. For example, WHO officials when drafting BI, argued that community based distribution of drugs, particularly by management committees, could have a positive effect on the control and distribution of illicit drugs on the local level (Ridde 2011).

It was the role of the Bamako Initiative to in essence, become a “bottom-up” program—a program that left financing and health governance to the community level within states. However, in practice and operation, this did not occur. One of the biggest hurdles to implementation was the assurance that the poorest of poor would have access to health care through the abolishment of user fees. Communities were tasked to improve equitable access to essential drugs, especially by creating community financing structures that made health care free for those who truly could not afford it while those

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<sup>5</sup> Anonymous, Interview, October 14, 2016, Abuja Nigeria)



within the rest of society would participate in cost-sharing programs (WHO/UNICEF 1987). Operationally, communities were to implement the Bamako Initiative by national governments and/or external aid donors provide drugs to local health institutions and communities were to sell drugs at a small profit margin. The proceeds from drug sales were meant to replenish drug stocks and the profits were to be used to improve the services of the health institution (ex. Clinics, hospitals, etc.) (Chukwuani, Olugboji, and Ugbene 2006).

The Bamako Initiative had varied success within Africa, however as many health officials and researchers would note, many West African countries would experience problems with implementation. Some believe the problems of implementation came from a lack of policy coordination (Chukwuani, Olugboji, and Ugbene 2006; Nyonator et al. 2005). Target areas for the Bamako Initiative were mostly rural areas and relied primarily on volunteer services by village health workers, rather than certified health care professionals. Health ministries in the early implementing stages of BI struggled to coordinate policies on how and which health workers would be available to distribute basic health services, leading to confusion by clients as to who and when health services would be provided to them (Nyonator et al 2005). A health official from Burkina Faso explained the dynamics of community-based health “unreliable” and qualms:

“Unless you were in Ouaga (dougou) or even Bobo (Diassalou), it could take up to five days to know when and where clinics would be open. If you lived on the Togo-Benin Republic border, you would see lots of trafficking of prescription drugs because of this uncertainty”<sup>6</sup>

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<sup>6</sup> Anonymous, Interview, October 13, 2016, ECOWAS Secretariat Annex, Abuja Nigeria

This sentiment from the health worker is substantiated by research on the effect of community-based health insurance and the utilization of health care services in Burkina Faso, which finds low numbers of Burkinabe citizens who report and seek health care, regardless of whether or not they have insurance. Further, the research found that socio-economic means such as per capita expenditure and head of household education also correlated with a household's decision to enroll and participate in community-based insurance (Gnawali et al. 2009). In highlighting this dynamic in Burkina Faso, it shows that the Bamako Initiative, though meant to be a “bottom-up” policy in theory, in practice, present some of the inconsistencies and unintended consequences of policies made to aid the Global South. It is also clear that it is the perception of health officials in West Africa that Bamako was a “product of the West” and there is an inherent of disdain and distrust of policies such as the Bamako Initiative primarily because it came from WHO. As such, BI did suffer from issues of policy implementation, a lack of understanding of how rural communities would develop the capacity and the national support for community based health initiatives, but also a lack of an inherent understanding as to how West African communities would respond and accept community based health services as a practice.<sup>7</sup>

The analysis of the ineffectiveness of the Bamako Initiatives in many ways generalizes its effects across West Africa. There have been examples of successful

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<sup>7</sup> This is an important point in understanding the fundamental problems with the Bamako Initiative—particularly when it came to abolishing user fees. According to WAHO officials, people had difficulty determining if they were eligible for certain services because it was not made clear to them by programs in their community. Also, scarcity and the lack of trust also led to community apathy. Most people would refuse to use services or report illnesses, relying on home remedies to cure their ailments.

implementations of BI, notably in Ghana and its establishment of the Community Health Planning and Services Initiative (CHPS; Nyongato et al 2005). However, in highlighting problems of implementation with the Bamako Initiative, I want to emphasize the void and the shortcomings of a global health practice that a particular region seemed to reject in substance and in principle. More specifically, West African Health officials and the heads of state in ECOWAS decided to create their own regional health organization just one month after the signing of the Bamako Initiative. What arises out of this organization is a collective will to embed issues of public health, particularly the dissemination of knowledge about public health, into regional integration strategies. The creation of the West African Health Organization directly after the adoption of BI begs the question of the role of the region in articulating the preferences of national governments when it comes to health and questions how the drivers of regional convergence articulate practices of region-building in health in West Africa.

### **Regional Convergence of Public Health in West Africa**

On June 9, 1987, the Authority Heads of States in ECOWAS signed Protocol A/P2/7/87 establishing the West African Health Organization (WAHO), which was designated as a specialized institution of ECOWAS. WAHO's objective is to ensure "the attainment of the highest possible standard and protection of health of the peoples in the sub-region through the harmonization of the policies of the Member States, pooling of resources, and cooperation with one another and with others for a collective and strategic combat against the health problems of the sub-region" (WAHO 1987, Article III). WAHO was a product that was three years in the making, as noted in the ECOWAS Community Decision C/DEC.1/1184 that called for the integration of both

the Anglophone regional health group, West African Health Community and the Francophone group, the Organisation de Coordination et de Cooperation pour la Lutte Contre les Grandes Endemies (OCCGE) into one specialized institution in ECOWAS. WAHO was tasked, among many other things, to serve as a forum for collecting and disseminating technical and epidemiological research (Article III (c)), to train health care professionals, especially postgraduates and undergraduate (Article III (b)), eradicating the use and dependence on drugs and drug abuse (Article III (f)), and to promote and harmonize the establishment and production of vaccines, the manufacture of drugs, and the quality control of laboratories in West Africa (Article III (e)).

The establishment of WAHO came at a time where ECOWAS as an organization was receiving criticism for being an almost dormant organization. Progress on economic integration had stalled, civil conflict in Sierra Leone and Liberia were brewing, and Nigeria had recently experienced a military coup. ECOWAS had also been questioned by Francophone member states as to its relevance, as Francophone West African states were very much tied to its own monetary union, UEMOA. With regional leaders, desiring to make ECOWAS a more expansive entity, health as part of the ECOWAS agenda can be traced to a series of meetings by West African Health ministers referenced in ordinary meetings of the Authority Heads of State in 1983. Public health was deemed a “vital component to poverty reduction and stable economic growth” in West Africa. The decision to engage in public health and create a specialized agency of health in West Africa also came at the same time ECOWAS was aiming to increase its cultural relevance in the region. Most of the commentary at the ordinary meetings of ECOWAS in 1985 and 1986 was focused on enhancing ECOWAS’ desire to define itself not only as an economic organization, but also as an organization that

had a common culture. Hence, alongside the creation of the West African Health Organization, came Protocol A/P1/7/87 establishing the Cultural Framework Agreement in ECOWAS. The principles of this agreement were to promote the cultural identity of respective people and for ECOWAS to understand cultural identity as a “dynamic process of continuity and creativity, which is different in each population (ECOWAS 1987). Articles 5 and 6 of the Cultural Framework Protocol apply the principles of the cultural framework to areas of “socio-cultural development” such as education, child development, literacy, and health. In particular, Article 6(7) calls for the training of rural professionals and to link the

The linkage between the Protocols establishing an ECOWAS Cultural Framework and WAHO is representative of the rhetoric between heads of state in West Africa and the desire by regional leaders to vest decisions on health issues into the hands of those most equipped to deal with regional health issues. For example, during the 1986 Ordinary Meeting of the Authority Heads of State, Carlos Corriea of Guinea-Bissau argued on behalf of moving forward with the merger of the two health organizations, citing the need for “cultural commonalities” and “cooperation across linguistic lines” to make health apart of [economic] integration (ECOWAS 1986). Alhaji Mahama Iddrisu, Minister of Defense of Ghana at the time, also echoed these sentiments, stating “if ECOWAS ever wants to realize its political, economic, and social potential, it is the view of Ghana that any joint efforts between Anglophone and Francophone countries be respective of the unique cultures among us” (ECOWAS 1986).

More importantly, ECOWAS’ desire to create a regional health organization based in the embrace of a dynamic West African culture and based on generating

technical, West African expertise and health practices is a signal that the Ministers of Health in West Africa did not believe that whatever would come out of the Bamako Initiative would be representative or enough to deal with the full scale of health issues within West Africa. The emergence of WAHO alongside the Bamako Initiative represents a form of West African agency that can explain: the seemingly ineffective practices and embrace of the Bamako Initiative as well as the basis of regional convergence in the area of health.

Understanding ECOWAS' focus on regional health within the first ten years of its existence as mainly a formative embrace of cultural diversity and organizational expansion beyond economic integration sheds light on the emergent practices of regional convergence in the area of public health. Regional convergence, understood as the process in which political and social behaviors become constant, began with the institutional change of merging the Francophone and Anglophone health organizations, but also with the creation of the Assembly of Health Ministers as the decision-making and coordinating body of WAHO in 1987. WAHO represented the first instance within ECOWAS where full decision-making authority was not vested only with the Authority Heads of State.<sup>8</sup> This was significant, as it gave the Assembly of Health Ministers autonomy in deciding how to coordinate and harmonize the region when it came to health. The Assembly of Health Ministers would also provide specialized and technical expertise of the health dynamics in their respective member states in order to develop best practices and the training of health professionals in West Africa.

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<sup>8</sup> It should also be of note, that there was no codified mode of decision-making in ECOWAS prior to the 1993 Revised Treaty. Decisions were often made by simple majority and/or consensus among the Authority Heads of State.

## Civil War and the emergence of a porous, transnational health crisis in West Africa

The progress of the regional integration process in West Africa would receive its first real test in 1989, with the onset of the Liberian Civil War and Sierra Leone, shortly after. The devastation of these civil wars left in its wake fragile and broken societies faced with crumbling infrastructure and residual effects from the wars, such as internal displacement and the destruction of hospitals, homes, and the inflow of illicit drugs into the region. The most notable confluence of these unfortunate dynamics comes from the use of child soldiers in both Liberia and Sierra Leone. Former child soldiers often recollect on their reliance on drugs to help them fight and feel “fearless.” Former female child soldiers also willingly and unwillingly partook in the civil war used drugs and sometimes were sexually assaulted and raped. The acts and aftermath of war brought to bear a new reality in West Africa and an increased justification for a multi-faceted approach to health in the region.

At a time where West Africa was embroiled in civil war throughout the 1990’s the region also came into prominence as a hub for illicit drug trafficking, from South America, through West Africa, to Europe. Alongside the emergence of drug, trafficking in West Africa was the rise of drug consumption. The increase of drug consumption was symptomatic of the lack of surveillance of the flow of drugs and the need for rural communities, particularly on the borders to have access to not only illicit drugs, but also prescription drugs. <sup>9</sup>With the poorly regulated distribution of drugs in the region came

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<sup>9</sup> The African Development Bank in 2011 examined the lack of surveillance on West African borders, examining drug corridors between Abidjan-Bamako; Bamako-

an increase of drug abuse in the region. The presence of war in West Africa also contributes to the porous health dynamic in the region. For instance, in examining HIV prevalence during the civil war in Guinea-Bissau, infectious disease researchers found HIV prevalence to be higher during times of civil war. The reasons for increased HIV prevalence, the authors argue is that civil conflicts have in some cases been shown to increase the transmission of HIV in societies by mechanisms such as population movements, increase in commercial sexual activities, sexual abuse, transitory sexual relations as well as the collapse of health structures leading to unsafe injections and blood transfusion routines. Medical centers and health clinics are also vulnerable during times of civil war.<sup>11</sup> Intra-state conflicts challenge neutrality norms and our ability to recognize the dangers of health care delivery in times of conflict.

The enormity and emergence of drug abuse, coupled with the residual effects of civil war have contributed to a series of transnational health crises in West Africa. The infectious disease and the increase in noncommunicable diseases have contributed to a “disease burden” in the region, with the causes attributed to poor oversight, lifestyle changes, and improper or negligible diagnosis (WHO 2014). From this vantage point, regional stakeholders have worked together to discern a coordinated response to transnational health issues.

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Ouagadogu; Ouagadogu; Bamako-Dakar; Bamako-Lome. The AfDB found that these corridors were riddled with gureilla militarized controls and high levels of bribery, which serve as hurdles for the formal transfer of goods.

<sup>11</sup> There are human rights debates that question whether there are times where norms of medical neutrality apply to times of war. For more see: Medical Neutrality Protection Act 2013



## WAHO and the ECOWAS Commission: A new mandate

In examining the institutional development of ECOWAS, that is, how ECOWAS over time has responded to the fluid dynamics of West African society, we can consider two “great” transformations. First, is the Revised Treaty of 1993 and the second is the birth of the ECOWAS Commission in 2007.<sup>13</sup> Regional convergence in public health gets its shot in the arm during ECOWAS’ second transformation. In the period of the first transformation from 1993-2007, the Assembly Ministers of Health continued to meet regularly (bi-annually) and WAHO as a specialized institution of ECOWAS still operated as an aside to the organization, rather than an integrated unit. The lack of integration of WAHO into the strategic vision of ECOWAS during its first transformation is evidenced by its exclusion from any strategic plan of the then ECOWAS Secretariat. Health gets a passive mention as a priority in the post-civil war context in the strategic plans of ECOWAS in 2002-3, but the strategic plan does not include WAHO in a collaborative manner.

In 2007, the ECOWAS Secretariat became the ECOWAS Commission, changing the organization and institutional structure of ECOWAS and its component pieces.<sup>14</sup> The ECOWAS Commission is divided into seven units and of the seven, Human Development and Gender and Agriculture, Environment, and Water Resources have been tasked with dealing with the area of public health. With the institutional

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<sup>13</sup> The first transformation is explained in greater detail in Chapter 3. For the sake of brevity, the first transformation of ECOWAS explicitly expanded the organization beyond its mandate for economic integration and articulated its political and social mandate.

<sup>14</sup> For more on the organizational transformation into the ECOWAS Commission, see chapter 3.

change came a new mandate for WAHO. Ahead of the shift to the ECOWAS Commission, the Assembly Ministers of Health came together to augment the original protocol establishing the West African Health Organization and its purpose within ECOWAS at the forty-ninth and fiftieth ordinary meetings. Recognizing the impending shift of ECOWAS to the Commission, the Assembly Ministers of Health resolved to the following changes to the original mandate of WAHO:

- More decision-making power vested into the Director-General, notably the ability to appoint all staff and officials of WAHO (formerly the duty of Assembly Ministers of Health)
- The creation of four specialized technical divisions embedded in the General Directorate of WAHO: Division of Human Resource Development; Division of Research and Health Management Information Systems; Division of Primary Health Care and Disease Control; Division of Planning and Technical Assistance
- A WAHO specific-budget, approved by the Administrative and Finance Commission of ECOWAS (ECOWAS 2006<sup>15</sup>).

WAHO's new mandate represented a new dedication to health in West Africa. The Assembly Ministers of Health, by advocating for a more direct role for the Director-General and getting an operational budget that came directly from the ECOWAS Commission, sought to incorporate WAHO into the strategic plan of ECOWAS in a more direct way. In allowing more power to be vested in the Director-General and by increasing the technical capacity of WAHO, the Assembly Ministers of Health created a space for actors within the Commission to negotiate a more direct and

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<sup>15</sup> Supplementary Protocol Establishing WAHO

important role for health in ECOWAS, while enhancing WAHO's autonomy as a specialized institution of ECOWAS.

In ECOWAS' second transformation, the Commissions for Human Development and Gender and the Agriculture, Environment, and Water Resources oversee issues relating to regional health infrastructure. Specifically, the Humanitarian and Social Affairs Division and Gender Development/Civil Society/Drug Control Division of the Human Development and Gender are tasked to deal with health issues within ECOWAS. WAHO was not subsumed under any of ECOWAS' seven commission units, maintaining its status as its own specialized institution of ECOWAS. The activities of WAHO are born out of recommendations and consultations by the Humanitarian and Social Affairs division and the Human Development and Gender Commission writ large.

#### Composition of Ecocrats of Public Health and Collaboration with WAHO

While the Humanitarian and Social Affairs Division within the ECOWAS Commission deal with issues of regional health, health is not the sole issue area of the division. There is a diverse make-up of the Ecocrats in the Humanitarian and Social Affairs Division. As of October 2016, there are fourteen individuals who work solely under the purview of the Humanitarian and Social Affairs Division and of the fourteen,

five work on issues of public health.<sup>16</sup> The Ecocrats of Public Health are having spent at least ten years working in some capacity on regional issues within or on behalf of ECOWAS. Prior to joining the ECOWAS Commission, they have consulted on matters within ECOWAS as members of the World Bank, UNDP, or a West African-based Civil Society Organization. Three of the five Ecocrats of Public Health are trained lawyers and International Development professionals. Also, embedded within the Humanitarian and Social Affairs Division is the ECOWAS Emergency Response Team, whose mandate is to develop a joint civilian and professional emergency response mechanism that would deploy during peace operations and/or health crises throughout the region.<sup>17</sup> The EERT is run by three Ecocrats charged with defining the capacity and targeting recruitment for the EERT. What is the motivation for Ecocrats to work on within ECOWAS? As Abimbola Oyehunnu, Coordinator of the Humanitarian and Social Affairs Division states:

“I worked with the UN for 4 years and I realized there that our work was not people oriented and needs-based. most of the time, what we were doing was what we were directed by the powers that be. But here [in ECOWAS], you can see that our needs are our priority. They are fact! You can see them. So it is based on the awareness that this is a fragile region with a lot of potential and I had to come back to contribute to the passion I have which is to develop the region. Of course, in as much as we say that the region is fragile, there is still, a lot has been done that needs to be conserved. So we are not starting from zero-level. There's a lot of work going on but because the resources might be inadequate,

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<sup>16</sup> It should be emphasized here that the Humanitarian and Social Affairs Division is a sub-division of the Human Development and Gender Commission, who has its own commissioner and staff.

<sup>17</sup> For more information on the EERT and its role in peace operations, see chapter 4

political will might not be too strong, there's need for people to come and push, so that things can move forward<sup>18</sup>.”

Ecocrats are driven by their own desire to enhance and develop the region. There is an acute awareness from Ecocrats that ECOWAS ought to be a regional organization that advocates and serves the people directly. Dr. Xavier Crespin in his opening remarks at the 16th Ordinary Meeting of the ECOWAS Council of Ministers argued that an essential pillar of socio-economic development in West Africa is a “healthy population” and suggested that regional health actors take ownership of developing a regional health strategy that is motivated by a desire to impact local communities and build the capacity of member states to manage health crises in their domain (ECOWAS 2015).

For the scale of its importance, the size of the Humanitarian and Social Affairs Division is relatively small compared to the size of other commission sub-Divisions. As such, the Ecocrats of Public Health are often over tasked with mandates by the Human Development and Gender Commissioner that make it hard to prioritize attention to specific issues.

To complement the Ecocrats within the ECOWAS Commission, the staff and officials within the sub divisions of the General Directorate of WAHO also make the Ecocrats of Public Health. While their role is highly technical, the Ecocrats that work exclusively in WAHO are also drivers of building regional health infrastructure. Taken together, the Humanitarian and Social Affairs Division and the four specialized

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<sup>18</sup> Abimbola Oyehunnu, Interview, October 26, 2016, Abuja, Nigeria

divisions of the General Directorate in WAHO, constitute the Ecocrats of Public Health in West Africa.

Ecocrats, as drivers of regional health convergence, harmonize member states and build standards of behaviors and practices that translate from the local level to the national level and permeate throughout the region. In an effort to root regional health governance in a cultural frame unique to the dynamics on the ground, Ecocrats of public health engage in two related strategies to network the region. First, is the use of Memorandum's of Understanding (MOUs) as tools to articulate and formalize their relationships with regional stakeholders. Second, Ecocrats utilize the term “capacity-building” as a strategy to build region networks and forge bottom up relations with communities as well as with other regional health stakeholders. In considering the logic of practice and habit, Ecocrats are able to engage in this sort of autonomous network formation because of the institutional space created by ECOWAS in formulating WAHO and the Commission. Further, Ecocrats are able to eschew resource issues by using these strategic techniques to build financial networks to enhance regional health governance.

### The Struggle of Harmonization

Ecocrats of public health have had a strategic focus on policy coordination and harmonization as it relates to the dissemination of health information, health research, the promotion of good health practices, and the development of resources for health medicines, vaccines, and health financing (ECOWAS 2007-8). Ecocrats of public health sought specifically to promote the harmonization of regional health policies and

standards, while building up the institutional capacity of WAHO and health capacities of member states. Ecocrats, since the reorganization of WAHO and ECOWAS' second transformation, have argued that regional health infrastructure has struggled due to issues of governance, inadequate funding, poor coordination between member states in controlling and containing cross-border epidemics, and a short supply of qualified health professionals and medical products (ECOWAS 2015). Ecocrats in response to these constraints have advocated for policies that enhance the free movement of health resources, implementing increased health budgets, harmonization of disease control, improved flow of health information and more involvement with private sector health actors. The strategy of regional health also accounts for the context of the Millennium Development Goals as well as the Sustainable Development Goals, which calls for African countries to increase government expenditure in the area of public health.

In response to the regional health dynamics, the strategic plan of ECOWAS/WAHO in building regional health infrastructure has been focused on three strategic goals to be accomplished from 2007-2020:

- Promotion of priority of health policies in the region
- Strengthening strategic partnerships for health
- Building the institutional capacity of WAHO.

In promoting the priority of health policies, WAHO aims to increase the amount of quality health information, increase preparedness response strategies, and integrate health interventions into the development policies of the region and member states. In doing so, the prevalence of communicable and non-communicable diseases would be

reduced, traditional medicine would be introduced into national health systems, and there would be increased coordination in regional policies and health legislation in West Africa. Understanding the strategic goals of WAHO is important to the process of regional integration for three reasons. First, it highlights the strategic and purposeful nature of the networking process in West Africa. Second, it allows ECOWAS/WAHO to identify and specify regional health stakeholders and creates a linkage between ECOWAS, the stakeholders, and a tangible outcome related to public health. Third, the strategic goals over time provide a road map that helps trace the process and progress of regional health practices in West Africa, providing the ability to assess the effectiveness of regional health infrastructure and governance over time.

A part of the harmonization process by ECOWAS/WAHO in health is to develop and incorporate standards that span across the region. For instance, in following the initiative to increase more health professional training and to increase the availability of health professionals in rural societies, Health Ecocrats advocated for a standardization of health certificates and diplomas across the region, to ensure that health professional training would be consistent throughout West Africa. This proposed harmonization plan would also consider the creation of medicine registration concentration on a regional scale, creating a larger regional pharmaceutical marketplace for member states and their citizens. However, the realization of such plans faces a hurdle, a lack of consensus in the perceptions of health Ecocrats.

There are two counter perspectives of harmonization in health among Ecocrats. First is the perspective that harmonization is indeed necessary, however it should occur in the context of other social development programs of ECOWAS and not be



exclusively a technical project by health officials. Aloize Amechi, head of the ECOWAS Emergency Response Team argued,

“the health and well-being of the citizens of West Africa is tied to the humanitarian situation in the region. I do believe that there needs to be greater coordination between [WAHO] and the other arms of the commission to make sure health becomes an important feature of the humanitarian and political policy of ECOWAS”<sup>19</sup>.

As such, Ecocrats included an ode to this sentiment in their strategic plan, asserting as one of its goals: “Cohesion and political participation through Theme 4 relating to human rights and the rights of minorities, an integral part of human rights recognized by the constitutions of the different ECOWAS Member States. (ECOWAS 2016).”

The second counter perspective related to the cultural composition of the region and is attributed to the Anglophone/Francophone divide. A coordinator in the Humanitarian and Social Affairs Division, who chose to remain anonymous, suggested that the prospect of harmonization is hindered by a superiority complex by Anglophone people. The coordinator, who is Nigerian, asserted the following in reference to whether or not there was a common political will for harmonization, based on a unified idea of West Africa:

“I don't think it exists. Even amongst us here [in ECOWAS], the divide is noticeable. You hear it said at times ‘These people (the francophone), they are the ones responsible for the way things are going in the organization. There is this...bias that the francophone are not as educated as [Nigerian/Anglophone] are. There's this feeling that they are not as competent as we are, there are more in terms of numbers, but not in qualitative contribution, we don't see them as being that good. Broadly speaking, even because of the strength Nigeria has or had in the region, we also see them as being parasites. It seems as if we are just pulling

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<sup>19</sup> Aloize Amechi, Interview October 27, 2016, Abuja, Nigeria.

empty baggage along (laughs). There have been some projects that we're in currently, harmonization of health and labor laws in the region. We're responsible for that in this division. The essence of that project is to see how we can harmonize labor codes and health standards so that we can make sure a Burkinabe can work in Nigeria without hindrance. Just to ensure the equivalence of a certificate is the same. But you see, our own certificates are higher than theirs. So that divide is there, it's very very obvious. So to some extent, some people see us as strange bedfellows. When Nigeria sneezes, West Africa gets a cold because of the kind of influence [Nigeria] has. And the truth is Nigeria for one, in terms of population, we constitute more than half of West Africa. So like I said, there's that clear divide. And then there is of course the Lusophones who are a meager fraction and so quiet. Almost non-existent. When we call meetings, those from Guinea-Bissau and Cape Verde, they do not come or they hardly come and contribute to what is going on. As you can see, they are not on par."

The sentiments of the coordinator may be rooted in love for country, however, in a deliberation regarding the establishment of a Regional Center for Disease Prevention and Control in West Africa, Francophone representatives challenged the idea and argued against the center, stressing the potential financial burden, lack of capacity to contribute resources to the center, and the redundancy as it pertained to the prospective creation of an African Union-back CDC (ECOWAS 2015). As such, the variation of perspectives by Ecocrats in determining the feasibility and relevance of the health strategic plan demonstrates a need for an alternative strategy to alleviate the concerns within ECOWAS/WHO.

The process of adopting harmonization strategies in health begins with the creation of three to five person teams of Ecocrats that are responsible for constructing a strategy of harmonization that matches up with the strategic goals of WHO, identifying regional stakeholders, and engaging member states through national or local level interactions.

"All of our frameworks are chosen and developed in consultation with partners. International partners, local authorities, everybody who is

considered a stakeholder is carried along. And once there is an agreement as to what goes into the framework, according to our own practice in ECOWAS it has to be adopted by member states”<sup>20</sup>

The role of the small team of Ecocrats is vital to the process of regional convergence. This team is responsible for developing the linkage of health practices from the bottom-up and also determining what actors are relevant and purposeful in producing regional health policies. These small teams are responsible for consultation, monitoring and evaluation, and program creation and implementation. Ecocrats go “on the ground” to assess the viability of their organizational goals, while also looking to engage local health stakeholders within member states. Overall, the work of these teams of Ecocrats has led to the creation of specialized relationships between ECOWAS/WAHO, international organizations, and health NGOs. These relationships are largely due to the technical and organizational expertise of Ecocrats, as well as their privileging the importance of engagement from member state societies.

#### ECOWAS and the West African Commission on Drugs: A multi-faceted partnership

In October 2011, ECOWAS Commission President Kadre Desire Ouedraogo solicited members of the Human Development and Gender Commission, the Director General and Deputy General of WAHO-Dr Placido Cardoso and Dr Jeanetta Johnson, with special consultation from former Nigerian President, Olusegun Obasanjo to meet and discuss the possibility of ECOWAS constructing a solution to the growing drug problem in West Africa. The reason for the meeting was to discuss an actionable plan

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<sup>20</sup> Abimbola Oyehunnu, Interview, October 26, 2016, Abuja Nigeria

from ECOWAS, with the cooperation of experts throughout the region, to develop a coordinated response to drugs in the region in the same way the region came together to combat small arms in the late 1990's and early 2000's.<sup>21</sup> Sintiki Ugbe, a member of the Humanitarian and Social Division in ECOWAS says of the initial meeting:

“[Ouedraogo, was pretty passive about what he wanted, which is why he brought in Obasanjo. [Obasanjo] is a powerful voice in West Africa, so it was our job to come up with a proposal that dealt with this issue. Drugs came to West Africa because of war. As we move away from war, we had to focus on freeing West Africa from drugs. When we came together, we thought it best to include all stakeholders, rather than include only heads of state. That is why we decided to create WACD.”<sup>22</sup>

As a result of this initial meeting, members of the ECOWAS Human Development and Gender Commission as well as President Obasanjo began to recruit health experts and experts on human and drug trafficking and eventually convened the West African Commission on Drugs in January of 2013. ECOWAS, the Kofi Annan Foundation, the African Union (AU) and the UN Office on Drugs and Crime were identified as the key organizational partners in the commission. However, through the suggestions of the ECOWAS Commission and President Obasanjo, the West African Commission on drugs was made up heavily of regional experts and civil society NGOs

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<sup>21</sup> The reference to small arms harmonization refers to two protocols that delimit the spread of small arms in West Africa. The first is the Declaration of a Moratorium on Importation, Exportation and Manufacture of Light Weapons in West Africa in 1998. The second is the ECOWAS Convention on Light Arms, Small Weapons, and their Materials (also known as “The Convention”) in 2006.

<sup>22</sup> Sintiki Ugbe, Interview, October 23, 2016, Abuja, Nigeria.

who provided background knowledge of the drug problem in West Africa. Yande Diop, also an Ecocrat of Health that worked with WACD stated “we at ECOWAS want to use [WACD] in conjunction with our institutional mandates. The information we gathered from WACD we can use as part of a strategy for ECOWAS”<sup>23</sup> As such, the make of WACD ended up being quite diverse. A ten-person group of representatives from nine of the fifteen ECOWAS member states and one representative from Mauritania constituted the heads of the commission:

- Dr. Idrissa Ba, Child psychiatrist and addictologist, Senegal
- Justice Bankole Thompson, Former judge on the Special Court of Sierra Leone
- Dr. Mary Chinery Hesse, member of the African Union Panel of the Wise, Ghana
- Dr. Alpha Abdoulaye Diallo, National Coordinator of Réseau Afrique Jeunesse, an NGO focused on Youth engagement and empowerment, Guinea
- Christine Kafando, Founder of Association Espoir pour Demain (AED), a civil society organization aimed at improving the quality of life for women and children, particularly those affected by HIV/AIDS, Burkina Faso
- Edem Kodjo, Former Prime Minister of Togo
- Pedro Pires, Former President of Cabo Verde
- Adeolu Ogunrombi, Project Coordinator for YouthRISE, Nigeria
- Dr. Mohammed Mahmoud Ould Mohamedou, Professor, Graduate Institute of Geneva, Mauritania

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<sup>23</sup> Yande Diop, interview, October 23, 2016, Abuja, Nigeria

- Oumou Sangare, Singer/Songwriter, Mali

During the first commission meeting in Accra Ghana in January 2013, representatives from the UNODC, the European Union delegation to Ghana, the AU, ECOWAS, USAID, Inter-Governmental Action Group against Money Laundering in West Africa (GIABA), the National Drug Law Enforcement Agency of Nigeria, Drug Control Tanzania, and the Global Commission on Drugs worked with members of WACD to help define the vision of the commission and the scope of its regional activities. One of the priorities pushed by ECOWAS was developing a consensus in defining drug use as a public health concern of West Africa and pushing for the decriminalization of drug use. WACD in their inaugural commission report in 2014 declare:

“Cocaine, heroin and ATS have become increasingly available in the region, leading to greater use and dependence, especially among young people. The absence of effective treatment and harm reduction services for people with drug use disorders poses important public health risks, aggravating existing health challenges, including HIV and hepatitis C. The criminalization of all minor drug-related offenses not only places users at greater risk, but also fuels corruption and places an unnecessary burden on already overwhelmed criminal justice systems, and removes the focus from those high-level targets whose activities should be the real target of law enforcement.”

Ecorcrats, linked the implications of the criminalization of drug use to the increases in human rights violations and imprisonment in member states, urging the UNODC to temper its language linking drug use to terrorism and corruption<sup>24</sup>. WACD decided to intentionally include rhetoric from the Director of the UNODC in justifying

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<sup>24</sup> Sinitiki Ugbe, interview, October 23, 2016, Abuja Nigeria

classifying drug use as a matter of public health, including in its inaugural report words from Yuri Fedorov, director of UNODC in 2013

“It is important to reaffirm the original spirit of the conventions, focusing on health. The conventions are not about waging a ‘war on drugs’ but about protecting the ‘health and welfare of mankind’<sup>25</sup>.

At the same time Ecocrats worked to have international organizations frame drug use as a public health problem, they also used the commission and its members to gather information on the health dynamics in member states to craft a regional strategy, through WAHO, to increase health promotion within the region. Citing low levels of inclusion on the social determinants of health in determining the effectiveness of health programs, Ecocrats from the Humanitarian and Social Affairs Division of the ECOWAS Commission believed it was important to incorporate discussions of the implications of drug use with discussions of how to strengthen member state’s capacity for integrating health promotion into development policies. The efforts of Ecocrats to incorporate drug use into health and development strategy in WAHO, manifests itself as a strategic goal in WAHO, starting from 2013 up through the strategic vision of WAHO in 2020. A primary objective of the strategic goal of incorporating social determinants of health in increasing the promotion and effectiveness of health programs in West Africa is to change the behavior of citizens—meaning WAHO programs and interventions were to

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<sup>25</sup> Contribution of the Executive Director of the United Nations Office on Drugs and Crime to the high-level review of the implementation of the Political Declaration and Plan of Action on International Cooperation towards an Integrated and Balanced Strategy to Counter the World Drug Problem, to be conducted by the Commission on Narcotic Drugs in 2014

change the perceptions West Africans as a whole had on access to health programs, the role of traditional medicine, and to move past self-medication as a treatment. A shift in behavior also meant that local and national development policies were to be inclusive of explicit mentions of drug use as a public health problem.

While the codified strategic plans, intentions, and initiatives of WAHO and WACD provide a necessary contextualizing of the link between public health, drug use, and the effects on development, the role of Ecocrats in constructing strategies and messaging on the global and local levels simultaneously is important in the context of convergence for two reasons. First, understanding convergence as a process of shaping modes of behavior, Ecocrats quite explicitly develop a strategy that directly aims to change the modes of behavior on multiple scales of governance. Second, the capacity for Ecocrats to network the region through WACD, minimizes the perception that one actor is responsible for changing governance in West Africa. More importantly, the manner in which Ecocrats incorporate multiple actors and stakeholders to create and sustain WACD, indicates a cognizance that regional health infrastructure ought to (in a normative sense) be inclusive of all members and actors of in society, delimiting the idea that regional governance, particularly in the realm of health, is a state-dependent project.

#### WAHO and CORDS: Convergence through MOUs

The Ebola Virus Outbreak in 2014, which directly affected six West African states (Sierra Leone, Liberia, Guinea, Nigeria, Senegal and Mali) highlighted the lack of



emergency preparedness on all scales of governance—from local to international. There was a variation of response to Ebola within the region as well, as Nigeria and Senegal were first to be declared “Ebola-free” in ninety-three days. Conversely, it took over a year for Sierra Leone, Liberia, and Guinea to be declared “Ebola-free.”

ECOWAS/WHO was heavily criticized for its response to Ebola, as the United States and the African Union were considered to be more active in quelling Ebola. The Ebola Crisis of 2014-2016 was significant primarily because it was the first time Ebola had spread to an urban area. The response to Ebola came primarily from the African Union, the United States, financial support from the European Union, health workers from the affected countries.<sup>44</sup>

ECOWAS was noticeably absent from any coordinated effort to quell Ebola at its onset and at the height of the outbreak. However, ECOWAS convened an extraordinary session in October 2014 to develop a strategy of how to engage the organization in the fight against Ebola. It was at this session, amongst the Authority Heads of State where the Human Development and Gender, Dr. Fatimata Dia Sow argued that ECOWAS and WHO would need to create a mechanism for response to health crises and improve the capacity of the EERT to also be expanded into the realm of health. The ECOWAS Commission and WHO advocated and received \$2.6 Million USD to provide surveillance and health supplies to member states to manage the

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<sup>44</sup> Interview former US Ambassador to the African Union, Reuben Brigety, George Washington University, September 19, 2015.

outbreak. Guinea, Liberia, and Sierra Leone received the bulk of the financial support from WAHO.

Understanding the need for a preventative approach to future emergency health outbreaks, in September 2015, Dr. Sow tasked the Humanitarian and Social Affairs Division and the ECOWAS Gender Development Division coordinators to work with WAHO to establish partnerships around the region aimed at improving the EERT and partnerships that would develop a capacity for member states to better survey the prospects of communicable diseases ravishing the region. Three gender development officials and one official from Humanitarian and Social Affairs made up the delegation that worked with WAHO officials in the Division of Research and Health Management Information Systems. The combined group of ECOWAS and WAHO officials decided that any partnership would aid in the development of a regional center for disease control and surveillance and the establishment of a Network for Epidemiological Surveillance and Communicable Disease Control as approved by the Assembly Ministers of Health in 2013. Part of the strategy of ECOWAS/WAHO on finding partners was to rely upon existing structures within and outside the region, rather than creating the parameters for a regional disease control mechanism from the ground up. ECOWAS/WAHO also focused specifically on expertise, knowledge production, and capacity building as pillars for the prospective partnership, rather than financial, as the goal of the group was to develop an actionable mechanism for outbreak prevention.

ECOWAS/WAHO sought the expertise and partnership of Connecting Organizations for Regional Disease Surveillance (CORDS) in late October 2015.

CORDS is an organization focused on facilitating disease information exchange and communication exchange amongst various networks in South East Asia, East Africa, South East Europe, Southern Africa, The Mekong Basin and The Middle East. Through the facilitation of information, CORDS is able to make “vital contributions to national emergency response planning leveraging knowledge of disease outbreaks around the globe.”<sup>26</sup> CORDS already had a footprint on the African Continent, with networks such as Southern African Centre for Infectious Disease Surveillance (SACIDS) and the East African Integrated Disease Network (EAIDSnet). These established networks are mostly responsible for providing research, enhancing health professional training, and improving data sharing.

The Project Director of CORDS, Dr Bakary Sylla and the Project Management Consultant, Ms Emma Orefuwa, suggested a “Champions” meeting, which took place in Dakar, Senegal in November 2015, which brought together ECOWAS/WAHO and CORDS and related stakeholders to discuss the possibilities of creating a regional network for infectious disease surveillance. Representatives from SACIDS and EAIDSnet came to the champions meeting to share their experiences of networking with CORDS and how the relationships between the sub-regions and CORDS have helped improve regional health dynamics. After the Champions meeting, Ecocrats met twice with CORDS in December 2015 and January, officials from SACIDS and EAIDSnet, as well as Emma Orefuwa to begin drafting an MOU with CORDS.

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<sup>26</sup> For more information regarding the work of CORDS, see:  
<http://www.cordsnetwork.org/about-cords/>

Abimbola Oyehunnu of ECOWAS' Humanitarian and Social Affairs Unit describes the drafting of the WAHO/CORDS MOU as a “mutually beneficial and productive” process. In drafting the MOU, the goal of both WAHO and CORDS was to increase the standards and practices of health professionals and improving the spread of information about infectious diseases in West Africa. Ecocrats pushed for sharing data on public health, because to this point, information sharing was not a common practice in the region, though WAHO had identified its desire to share data on infectious diseases in its 2009-2013 strategic agenda. In working with CORDS, Ecocrats pushed for the MOU to justify to member states how data sharing is linked to harmonization. For instance, Ecocrats discussed linking the role of public health and information sharing as a necessary component of achieving the sustainable development goals.<sup>27</sup> Ecocrats pushed for the creation of a variant to a national center of excellence in each member state, which would end up in the MOU as “National Coordination Institutes” which would serve as the information clearing house for a proposed West African Network for Infections Disease Surveillance (WANIDS). WANIDS would then be embedded within the ECOWAS Regional Centre for Surveillance and Disease Control (ECOWAS-RCSDC). CORDS would have autonomy over the operationalization of WANIDS, while ECOWAS/WAHO would provide support to WANIDS by mobilizing efforts in the member states and benefit from an existing information database that would be used in the EERT as well as a prospective infectious disease early warning directorate, which would be a part of ECOWAS-RCSDC. The MOU between WAHO and CORDS came into force on February 10, 2016.

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<sup>27</sup> Abimbola Oyehunnu, interview, October 26, 2016, Abuja Nigeria

On the surface, the MOU between CORDS and WAHO appears to be a mutually beneficial and strategic partnership. The negotiation process resulted in very little contentious argumentation, however understanding the process and substance of argumentation allows for the examination of meaning behind practices of harmonization. For example, we can understand the practice of information sharing as more than a utility for quelling the spread of infectious disease. We can understand the sharing of data as practice that builds trust throughout the region. By creating a standard of information sharing through embedding mechanisms on the national level, Ecocrats and CORDS members alike demonstrate the value in shifting the modes of behavior for health practitioners in West Africa.

While the use of the MOU in some regards is to formalize partnerships, the role of the MOU in shaping the partnerships between ECOWAS and other regional actors is also communicative. That is, ECOWAS in this case uses the MOU to assert the nature of its partnership and its utility, but also uses the MOU as a way to transmit its messages, policies, and normative ideas through informal actors in the region. The MOU between WAHO and CORDS helps solve some of ECOWAS' implementation issues in the development of health information systems, but the MOU is also sending a signal that there are incentives and benefits to harmonization and that the message of harmonization can and should come from other actors who may be more in tune with dynamics embedded in individual member states. In a more direct manner, the MOU between WAHO and CORDS also gives weight to the rhetorical aims of each institution.

## Convergence through Capacity Building

Woven through the numerous policy documents, strategic plans, and memorandums on public health in West Africa, is the persistent claim of the need for regional institutional capacity building and capacity building on the local and national levels in order to fully realize the potential of regional health governance. Ecocrats interpret capacity building to mean “the ability for ECOWAS member states to accomplish their goals by identifying their needs, sources of support, and the ability to have adequate structures to reach their goals”<sup>28</sup> When asked to identify the hurdles to the governance of health in West Africa, Ecocrats overwhelmingly answered weak/poor health systems and a lack of capacity on the member states level.

If one is to interpret the definition of capacity building offered by various Ecocrats, it could be argued and maintained that a notion of capacity building that relies on the functioning of structures, is vulnerable to a functionalist idea of capacity building—that is the idea that regional governance can only survive based on the strong functioning of its institutions. If these structures are inherently weak, then the project of regional health governance is inherently limited. However, a proper understanding of Ecocrats and their desire to include capacity building as a core feature of regional health convergence is indicative of a desire of Ecocrats and West Africans wanting to affect

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<sup>28</sup> I came to this definition as a synthesis of various answers provided to me during my interviews with health Ecocrats as well as Ecocrats in peace and security.

regional change themselves. Thus, by asserting that member states have the ability to accomplish and identify their needs and sources of support, indicates that there is less of an understanding of what capacity building is, but a better, practical understanding of how to build capacity:

“For me, as they say experience is the best teacher. ECOWAS has been for over 40 years now. In addition, I believe that is a reflection of where we are coming from, which is driving the current state. A lot of resources were pumped into maintaining territorial integrity, peace, security, forgetting the people who actually bear the brunt of crisis. So now you can say there is a shift to what taking care of the people. Because you realize it is the people who [inaudible], so I believe that it is the experience that our past leaders had that made them refocus from an ECOWAS of States to an ECOWAS of people. So you will see that most of the laws and policies focus on people now.<sup>29</sup>”

“In regards to capacity building...[A] lot of tools have been developed that can be used to help member states, directly, so now the engagement is deeper and it has moved from the surface to down touching the people directly. You can see again, from the peace and security perspective, there are things that are done to make sure there is some stability. Recovery, for example when there is a humanitarian crisis and those things are centered on livelihood, supporting women and children, to get back on their feet, capacity building for youth entrepreneurship. The vision like I said before is based on the people and the future. The future for this region is dependent upon the capacities of the people who make up the region, community citizens themselves.<sup>30</sup>”

Capacity building manifests itself in the realm of regional health governance in three ways. First, in WAHO, practitioners have created strategies and policies that put

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<sup>29</sup> Abimbola Oyehunnu, Interview, October 26, 2016 Abuja Nigeria

<sup>30</sup> Sinitike Ugbe, Interview, October 26, 2016, Abuja Nigeria

health governance back in the hands of the people. Second, Ecocrats have pushed for health to be considered alongside broader regional harmonization efforts. Third, Ecocrats have pushed for public health to become a part of the human rights agenda for ECOWAS, particularly in building up the EERT's civil deployment provision.

Part of WAHO's attempt at capacity building is to create practices that build the health institutions on the local and national level. For example, the previously mentioned MOU with CORDS creates national centers for the dissemination of health research and health surveillance. In addition to this practice, WAHO has also pushed for health workers within member states to send real time reports to develop a more robust health analysis system. Specifically, WAHO created an epidemic-prone bulletin that would be disseminated to all health divisions of member states, built the health data management capacity in Burkina Faso, Ghana, Guinea-Bissau, Nigeria and Senegal by providing the health ministries in these countries with technology to supplement their existing warehouse structures for data management. WAHO also provided \$100,000 to Niger and Togo for the development and implementation of their strategic health research development plans and provided support to the West African Health Research Network (WAHRNET) that led to the publication of the West African Health Research Journal (ECOWAS/WAHO 2014).

It is also a common sentiment amongst Ecocrats to stress the lack of intra-organizational harmonization efforts. A common argument for capacity building was the insistence that public health be integrated into broader regional frameworks. For example, Ecocrats used ECOWAS' visa-less travel policy and the protocol on the free



movement of people to justify the need for the free movement of health professionals throughout the region. WAHO stressed in its strategic vision the need to build and improve the pharmaceutical industry in West Africa by:

“Deepen reflections on the issue of tariff to be applied to medicines in order to protect the regional pharmaceutical industry within the framework of ECOWAS Common External Tariff. (propose to the Directorate of Customs relative to medicines and raw materials for the manufacturing of medicines that ought to either enjoy tax imposition or waivers within the framework of a single taxation regime in the ECOWAS countries) (WAHO 2014)”

Similarly, WAHO has suggested that there should also be convergence between ECOWAS’ labor policies and public health. The benefits of such practices moves ECOWAS away from practicing and achieving public health outcomes that are dependent solely on state interventions and constraints of not having the best health professionals, technology, or materials at one’s disposal. Ecocrats believe capacity building in this regard can help West Africans obtain the same types and quality of health care no matter where they go in the region.

An apparent method of inciting regional convergence in public health is the issue of defining public health in a manner that it becomes relevant for other actors and regional stakeholders. WAHO in an effort to make public health more Afro-centric and region -specific, used a development frame to regionalize public health. Similarly, Ecocrats believe public health should also become an issue of human rights. Aloize Amechi, head of EERT, argued specifically for public health to become embedded in

the EERT response team and that health workers should play a pivotal role in any response to regional health crises:

In order to build capacity for member states to incorporate public health into the human rights agenda, Amechi in his capacity of Head Humanitarian Officer of the EERT, offers the creation of an emergency civil deployment unit by establishing a Civilian Humanitarian Standby Roster to complement an emergency peace and security standby roster. The goal of the Civilian Humanitarian Standby Roster as it pertains to public health capacity building is to create a database of deployable West African Health experts to assess the livelihood of those who dwell in Refugee/IDP camps, the water and sanitation conditions, child and gender protections, nutritionists, the prospects for epidemics, and psycho-social trauma of civilians during an emergency. These experts will be trained for a year on how to include their best practices in emergency situations (deemed in this case, issues of peace and security). The experts can be deployed during six months after the end of the training. By embedding these experts as part of the emergency response mechanism in ECOWAS, the EERT creates an institutional capacity for public health to be incorporated into more than just the training and building of health information systems and health services. Conceiving public health as also a human rights concern in the region, stratifies the importance of regional health governance and the multifaceted ways health governance matters to the regionalization process.

### **Conclusion**

While ECOWAS is known mainly for its expansive peace and security architecture, regional health governance has emerged over the years as an area of high

importance. Though the Ebola Virus crisis brought health issues to the forefront in ECOWAS, the process of regional convergence in health has been a priority for the organization. Ecocrats of public health engage in various networking techniques, primarily using MOUs, institutional capacity building, and incorporating civil society and multiple regional health stakeholders into the process of convergence.

ECOWAS' strategy of harmonizing regional health governance deviates from conventional modes of decision-making processes in public health. For instance, some responses and approaches to infectious disease issues around the world are highly centralized and rely on the capacities and agendas of state-led and/or hierarchal international organization who prescribe interventions and reproduce power gaps between the global and the local (Riggirozzi and Yates 2015). Additionally, top-down public health frameworks often push particular norms and practical responses to public health crises that lack the proper regional contexts to pursue "best practices." For example, the global response to Ebola in West Africa, for example highlighted the limits of a state-driven and global institution driven health policy and found a lack of understanding about the local contexts that exacerbated the crises.

Understanding regional convergence in public health as a process of harmonizing modes of behavior in West Africa is to understand the process of framing the importance of public health and public health practices and how practices become embedded in the local levels of governance, through the networking and partnerships of social and political actors. Ecocrats in recognizing the importance of creating practices in health that has an immediate impact on the citizens of West Africa, have engaged in networking that connects ECOWAS to other IGOs simultaneously with civil society and local actors. In doing so, ECOWAS is able to act as a unified body and create

regional normative frameworks that structure practices in support of social policies and governance, while also creating opportunities for the allocation of resources within the regional space (Riggirozzi 2015, 416; Riggirozzi and Yates 2015, 222). Through its practices, ECOWAS provides an arena for all regional health stakeholders to not only collaborate, but also enhance the effectiveness of health practices and health systems in the region.

One of the implications of ECOWAS' practices of harmonization in public health is the perception that health is still a specialized, technical area and that public health be relegated only to the area of human development and gender within ECOWAS. While Ecocrats have tried to frame public health as a development and human rights issue, in practice, these frames have only manifested themselves in the health domain. For example, there is hardly a mention of public health development in the Political Affairs or Trade and Customs Commissions of ECOWAS. However, Ecocrats have stressed the importance of creating a broader organizational appeal to public health as an area of importance in ECOWAS.

Ecocrat perceptions of the role of public health in the region prove to be vital to the process of regional health convergence in West Africa. Because of this reality, regional convergence must also account for the cultural contexts of member states and their capacity to build their own viable health systems. ECOWAS has long known the importance of cultural contexts since its inception, which also explains why the discussion and creation of WAHO preceded the Bamako Initiative. Regional convergence as conceived by Ecocrats, derives from a desire for regional actors to create spheres of governance that deepen engagement amongst peers.

As ECOWAS' regional health infrastructure grows, one can point to the networks and strategies created and pursued by Ecocrats to highlight the drivers of regional health governance and trace the development of regional health practices over time. Identifying Ecocrats as the drivers of regional health governance, takes the focus away from the state and/or global structures in measuring the effects of health governance, and emphasizes the processes of health network formation and the framing of regional health governance to measure the emergence of social and political practices related to health. In a broader context, Ecocrats and their process-driven network formation and capacity building strategies offer important insights on the importance of the region in the context of global south regionalisms. The perspective offered here demonstrates the modes of agency and autonomy global south regional organizations can have independent from their constitutive member state governments and stratifies the importance of regional stakeholders and their impact on regional health governance. For example, the ECOWAS-RCDCS would be an imagined idea if not for the partnership between ECOWAS and CORDS. Examining convergence through the activities of Ecocrats (and other global south regional organization bureaucrats), provides a glimpse as to how regional organizations become reflective of their regional dynamics and strategically build networks across scales to affect change in the region.

## **Chapter 5**

### **REGIONAL CONVERGENCE IN FINANCE**

The financial system in West Africa, dominated by the banking sector, is experiencing an emergence of new transnational banking groups and microfinance institutions, resulting in pockets of vulnerability in the public banking sector. The emergence of transnational banking groups and microfinance institutions has a varying effect on financial development and inclusion. On one hand, the emergence of new banking groups and microfinance institutions highlight the shallow nature of the interbank system in the region, increasing exposure of banks to sovereigns.<sup>45</sup> On the other, the capitalized nature of transnational banking groups and microfinance institutions creates the prospect for greater forms of financial inclusion with the reduction of obstacles in to the access to finance, which is important in a highly migratory region such as West Africa.

In the last twenty years, regional banks in West Africa have expanded beyond borders in response to economic reforms and declining opportunities at home (Iheduru 2012, 282; Lewis and Stein 1997; Reinhart and Tokatlidis 2003; Boone 2005). As such, transnational banking groups and microfinance institutions (MFIs) have replaced the role of public sector/central banking supervisory and regulatory authority and have exercised control over branch and subsidiary banks across the region. African markets

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<sup>45</sup> According to the European Systemic Risk Board, sovereign risks arises when a government has higher expenditures than tax revenues, resulting irreversible amounts of debt that makes it difficult for countries to comply with its contractual debt obligations and exposes the country's financial sector to market risks such as interest-rate risk, inflation risk, and exchange rate risks.

are becoming increasingly pan-regional and private equity houses, transnational banking groups and MFIs have played an important role in building compelling strategic logics to regional buyers and entrepreneurs looking to gain a foothold in Africa's markets. Value creation and organic revenue growth in West African financial markets has materialized through the implementation of new procedures and processes by transnational banking groups and private equity houses to improve financial governance. What has emerged is the creation of a financial network between transnational banks, MFIs, and private equity firms that have an overt "region-centered" orientation and a financial regulatory authority that has been ceded to non-state business actors (Iheduru 2012, 277).

In this chapter, I examine the process of regional convergence of financial practices in West Africa, which I define through the practices and interactions at the bureaucratic and functional level by actors within the Economic Community of West African States (ECOWAS) that facilitate, network, and normalize regional activities related to finance. I argue that the move towards transnational banking and private equity as the main methods of accessing capital for business people in West Africa has led to the development of regional convergence in finance that is focused on the interactions between regional actors and private businesses. I argue that examining the interactions between ECOWAS and non-state business actors, provides an important glimpse into the process of how regional financial governance and regulatory authority become institutionalized practices within the region.

In identifying the modes of interaction between ECOWAS and non-state business actors, I highlight how the ECOWAS Bank of Investment and Development (EBID) brokers ties with, EcoBank transnational banking group, Stanbic-IBTC

transnational banking group, and their microfinance subsidiaries to provide and produce a regional environment conducive to financialization. The networked nature of these financial actors creates a regional regulatory authority and facilitates the ease of business in the region. I examine how ECOWAS member states converged on the practice of financial decentralization, thus providing the space for non-state business actors to emerge and network the region. I examine the extent to which non-state business actors develop and articulate “region-centrality” as the centerpiece of their investment decisions and identify how the structures, institutional knowledge, and decisions of Ecocrats in the EBID and Ecobank as drivers of regional convergence persisted and networked the region to create the ECOWAS Business Incubator for African Women Entrepreneurs. Finally, I show how the regional activity of non-state financial firms leads to a form of regulatory regionalism, demonstrated by ECOWAS’ institutionalization of private sector promotion and the institutionalization of the ECOWAS business forum—a network comprised mostly of non-state financial actors.

I argue, that while the contours of corporate governance structures, state-society interactions, colonial vestiges and business-led development might look the same in other regions, decentralization policies in ECOWAS member states and the prevalence of non-state business actors distinguish West Africa from other regions. While studies on the role of finance in Africa focus on the weakness of state institutions, high levels of inequality, and rampant patrimonialism and corruption, the story of regional convergence in West Africa puts the emphasis on a different set of actors, redefines the scope and scale in which financial discourses on Africa take place, and highlight the role identity plays in finance in the region, providing an alternative lens in which to examine the dynamics of cooperation and institutionalization in West Africa. I examine



how ECOWAS has worked to make West Africa more visible for global integration and coordination through the emergence of banking and financial services rather than the sectors traditionally privileged in studies of financial integration.

The aim of this chapter is twofold. First, is to highlight the extent to which brings to bear the fact that regional convergence through the emergence of financialization<sup>46</sup> has connected West Africa and made the regional environment conducive to private investment. Examining the effects of financialization on regional convergence offers an alternative to traditionally considered mechanisms to access capital. The second aim of this chapter is to demonstrate how the interactions of private sector actors and ECOWAS produces deeper forms of institutionalization within ECOWAS while simultaneously producing a conception of regional regulatory authority that brings together the region and distinguishes the nature of financial governance in West Africa. Traditional approaches to regional integration and cooperation through regional organizations focus on the amounts and intensity of trade and indicators of economic performance and some would also consider regional integration to be a deregulatory project with the goal of protecting national interests and creating a set of common rules that promote “public interest” and resolve the “coordination dilemma” (Moravcsik 1998; Pollack 1997, 2003; Mattli 1999; Hix 2013). In the case of ECOWAS, the manner in which regional convergence occurs, through the coordinated practices of ECOWAS bureaucrats and functional actors (in this instance

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<sup>46</sup> This follows the idea of financialization as the dominance of profit making through financial channels (Krippner 2005).

the EBID), the eschews the collective action problem by involving private and commercial actors in the creation of the common rules and allowing the interaction between all of these actors to mold the complexion of regulatory regionalism. Put differently, national interest does not drive the financialization in West Africa, the interaction between ECOWAS and its non-state business actors drive the move towards financialization and produce practices that are not merely legal or enforced structures, but practices that become “disciplining norms and social conventions” of West Africa.<sup>47</sup> Highlighting the networked nature of regional convergence in finance is important in understanding the shift in West Africa from a financial sector based on hierarchy and markets to networks that develop social logics of institutional norms that become prevalent and institutionalized over time.

Regional convergence in finance in West Africa emphasizes less of a state centric approach and explicates the roles identity and networking play in bringing the region together. For example, Ecobank markets itself as “The pan-African bank” that “contributes to the integration and socio-economic development of [West Africa]” with strategies focused on “diaspora services” and creating a “pan-African presence.” Stanbic-IBTC, though tied to the Standard Bank (a Western-based commercial banking entity), developed a corporate social investment strategy that specifically focuses on the health, education, and economic empowerment of West African youth and family—

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<sup>47</sup> Ba (2016, 12) highlights the implications of institutionalization understood not in terms of strictly enforced, rule bound structures, but in terms of an expansive view of institutionalization that focuses on the normative and social dimensions of institutionalization, in the context of SE Asia. Ba’s example of institutionalization offers a useful parallel to the effects of social practices on deeper organizational institutionalization in West Africa.

evidenced by its recent contributions of N1.5 million in educational trust funds and prostheses for a family with children born without limbs in Western Nigeria.<sup>48</sup> African Capital Alliance, a private equity firm also markets itself as a “leading pan-African investment firm” with an international structure and local expertise, an appeal to both global and regional actors.

A key to understanding the conceptual and theoretical approaches of regional convergence is to separate it from the traditional dynamics that do not capture the African context. The emphasis on decentralization demonstrates how institutions in ECOWAS are able to advance financialization throughout the region. I am explaining the phenomenon of financialization; that is the growing importance of the financial sector to West Africa and less so on measures of financialization.

I organize the chapter into three parts. First, I identify traditional conceptual approaches to regional convergence on finance, namely hierarchal capitalism and the Varieties of Capitalism (VoC) literature and explain how the West African context diverges from these perspectives of regional convergence in finance. I use hierarchal capitalism and VoC as my points of departure mainly to highlight the mechanisms used to assess the drivers of convergence; diversified business groups, multinational corporations, atomistic labor relations. I also explain the labor market conditions (a feature of hierarchal capitalism and VoC) in ECOWAS to emphasize that contrary to other global south regions, access to capital in West Africa is not predicated on the strength of the labor market and also to provide a context that foreshadows the domestic

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<sup>48</sup> This information came from an interview with the head of Public Sector affairs with Stanbic IBTC, Adekunle Fatokun, June 2, 2016.

conditions that lead to financial decentralization as a strategy for ECOWAS member states.<sup>49</sup> Third, I highlight the spread of financial decentralization as a mechanism for regional convergence in West Africa and tether it to the rise of financialization within the region, resulting in a new form of regulatory regionalism, as part of the process of convergence. I also examine how Ecocrats viewed decentralization and financialization as an opening to facilitate regional convergence in member states through the creation of ECOWAS BIAWE. Fourth, I lay out conclusions and implications of financialization and regionalism in West Africa.

### **Hierarchal Capitalism**

Ben Ross Schneider (2009; 2014) popularized the terms “Hierarchical Capitalism” and “Hierarchical Market Economies (HME)” when referring to the characteristics, organization, and building of firms in Latin America. Schneider makes the claim that in practice, market oriented reforms were in Latin America during the 1980s and 1990s was a business-led development, not a state-led or market-led development (Schneider 2009, 555). For this reason, Schneider believes that the VoC emphasis on a “firm’s eye view” provides a more accurate depiction of the capitalist dynamics in Latin America.<sup>50</sup> The core features of HMEs in Latin America are diversified business groups, multinational corporations, atomistic labor relations, and

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<sup>49</sup> See Ayyagary et al 2014 on the role of labor markets on regional convergence in developing countries.

<sup>50</sup> For more on the “firm’s eye view” perspective, see Hall and Soskice 2001, Chapter 1

low skills. Family owned and controlled diversified business groups were typically part of the large domestic firm structure. Schneider's stresses HMEs are distinct because of the levels of interaction that constitute and develop hierarchical relations between the economies in the region. Schneider characterizes capitalism in Latin America as a region filled with weak and missing institutions but questions how firms respond to weak or absent institutions. Hierarchy or hierarchical relations, according to Schneider, characterize how "people power" is significantly weak. For instance in Latin America, unions have little influence of hierarchies within a firm because so few workers are able to unionize, file grievances, or have a voice because workers rotate quickly through firms (Schneider 2014, 7).

Schneider's concept of HMEs is one of the few systematic attempts at examining the nature of capitalism in developing countries. In order for one to understand capitalism in this specific context, one needs to understand what facilitates the allocation of resources and specific institutional complementarities that generate a competitive advantage. For Schneider, the power of business in relation to power of labor is reinforced by the fact that business groups in the region are structured hierarchically and are family owned and run. Multinational corporations take advantage of low skilled labor in the manufacturing and tradable sectors, which incentivize business groups to demand low skilled labor, decreasing the incentive for business groups to invest in high technology reinforce this dynamic. The consequence is that foreign direct investment produces a crowding out effect to national businesses, relegating national and local businesses to low-technology sectors and there is very little demand for Research and Development/high skill labor in the region.

Schneider's hierarchical capitalism argument is relevant to the case of ECOWAS in that it emphasizes the importance of societal interactions that create incentive structures to facilitate the ease of business. Schneider also examines what I term non-state business actors as the conduits of investment decisions and shapers of regional business governance. Although Schneider's approach does provide a unique perspective on how capitalism works in a developing (or as he would have us understand, a consolidated type of capitalism) region, Schneider interprets the low skill trap as an endemic feature of developing countries, but fails to link this feature with the social and political nature of the countries in Latin America. In essence, the approach used by Schneider does not allow one to examine the regional dynamics, particularly the ways in which the Latin American way of doing business becomes rooted into the fabrics of society. This is a clear distinction from the West African context, I argue, as the act of decentralization within ECOWAS member states represents an internal political dynamic, which results in a regionalized, institutional approach to fiscal governance. A second point that Schneider eludes in his approach is the role of international and regional institution building in putting pressure on states, businesses, and multinational corporations in trying to break the low skill trap. Schneider does not feature the dynamic of how integration efforts in the region provide a political space for consensus building and for solutions to the low-skill trap problem, a dynamic that is present in West Africa.

### **Financial decentralization in ECOWAS member states**

Financial decentralization as a policy strategy and the spread of West African-created non-state business actors highlight the ways that companies have opted to use

and take advantage of an institutional environment that does not resemble the fiscal landscape of other regions, which resemble varying degrees of formal hierarchies and internal sanctioning/compliance measures. Thus, we see policy convergence and adaption instead of a weakening of institutions, as some VoC approaches suggest in the presence of compliance measures (Natrass 2009, 58). Financial decentralization in theory is meant to destabilize the region and produce coordination problems and decreased governing capacity in West Africa. The experiences and practices of ECOWAS have proved to have the opposite effect. Fiscal decentralization removed hierarchy from the fiscal sector in West Africa and overtime, decentralization has led to more competition in the financial system between transnational commercial banks, openness throughout the region and increased the presence of internationalization in West Africa. However, a key to understanding why decentralization and financialization are important to the everyday lives of West Africans is found in the context of the labor market. In theory, the labor market is where businesses make their investment decisions and develop an understanding of the contexts in which ECOWAS and non-state business actors deem it necessary to engage in financialization given the conditions of the labor market.

#### Labor market conditions in West Africa

There are low rates of urbanization and underdevelopment in West Africa as most cities represent a small percentage of their countries population. For example, in Niger, six percent of the population resides in the capital of Niamey, seven percent in Ouagadougou, Burkina Faso, and twenty-two percent in Dakar, Senegal. The median age for the work force in West African cities is 18 years old. According to Roubaud and

Torelli (2014), only forty-one percent (41%) of the potential working population do not have or are not looking for a job. Students and homemakers are the largest group of inactive people and account for twenty percent of the West African workforce. Less than four percent of West Africans retire, as there is a need to continue working after sixty years old and an insufficient supply of pensions. According to the International Labor Organization (ILO) in 2015, the average unemployment rate in West Africa is 10.9%.

The rationale as to why there are disparities in the labor market in West Africa stem from the expectations of the work force. According to recent data from Afrobarometer, most youth in West Africa believe they are too young to work (even if they are of age), believe they are too educated or that they do not have the sufficient amount of education, and job seekers believe that they should be making the equivalent of \$182 USD per week, which is twice the actual average earnings of an employed worker.<sup>51</sup>

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<sup>51</sup> I used the online data retrieval tool on [afrobarometer.org](http://afrobarometer.org) to compile this labor data.



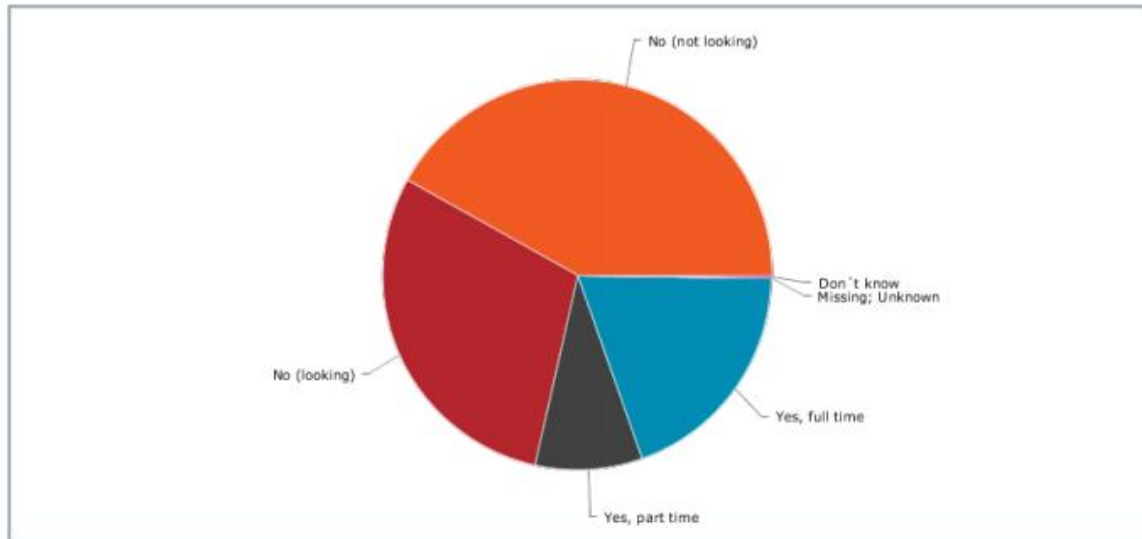


Figure 5 Percentage of Youth seeking-jobs. Data source, Afrobarometer

There is also the real and perceived problem of underemployment in West Africa. According to data from the ILO, in ECOWAS, 26% of the work force wants to work in the public sector and 48% want to work in the informal sector. In reality, most jobs are created in the informal sector, as 81% of jobs in West Africa are in the informal sector. This indicates that there is a disconnect between what the work force wants and expects out of a successful career and that there is little to no equitable distribution of jobs between sectors, giving those in the work force few options for employment. There is also the other problem in that informal sector jobs do not provide security coverage and have poor working conditions. Because of these poor conditions and the absence of benefits, job seekers often attempt to gather capital to make their own informal business, which then blurs the line of what is considered work and non-work. This also highlights how there are little to no mechanisms available to coordinate on wage bargaining.

The labor market conditions in West Africa stand in stark contrast to the labor market conditions where there tends to be more trade union coverage, lower levels of labor market inequality, and rigorous regulatory environments. However, it is not enough to say that capitalism in West Africa is distinctive primarily because it does not resemble typical labor market conditions. The labor market, as presently constituted in West Africa, does not engage in high levels of research and development, and traditionally, there has been barely any coordination between institutions, managers, and workers.

The labor market situation in West Africa also brings to bear the fact that there is a lack of institutional complementarity within the region. While some may view the idea that once a specific coordination mode has emerged in one area, that it pushes for complementary institutions in other spheres (Bohle and Greskovits 2009, 360) as a negative aspect for doing business in the region, I argue the absence of complementary institutions underscores the notion that there is policy and institutional space that firms can use to determine what kinds of actors are best suited for the region, filled by ECOWAS and its nodes of non-state business actor networks. This is not to say that system coordination is not possible or does not exist in the West African context, rather, it is to say that there may be other political, social, and economic processes at play that give way to system coordination in a different form.

When accounting for the process of regional convergence in finance. A focus on coordination through national-level analysis makes it difficult to discern the driving logics and forces of the system. Despite all of the hurdles and shortcomings of the West African labor market, it begs to question the rise of financialization in West Africa.

ECOWAS and its stakeholders, as well as non-state business actors see the flawed labor market as an opportunity for making West Africa attractive for businesses.

Carl Manlan, Chief Operating Officer of the Ecobank Foundation, points to the need to create more high-quality jobs, creating avenues for increased technical skills for young people, and to eliminate boundaries for entry-level employment. Manlan highlights ECOWAS and Ecobank's coordination in providing capacity building workshops on entrepreneurship and enterprise development, skills acquisition, and training to mobilize the labor market. With a youth-driven, mobilized labor market, West Africa becomes a place where businesses can be comfortable with their investments.<sup>52</sup>

ECOWAS has also taken the limits of the labor market and has advocated for the facilitation on the ease of business through financialization by creating networks such as the Business Incubator for African Women Entrepreneurs (BIAWE). The objective of ECOWAS BIAWE is to strengthen and engage the capacity of rural women and provide support services to women entrepreneurs. ECOWAS BIAWE serves as an avenue for women in business to share knowledge on conformity in business standards and to create employment through small business development and acceleration of growth (ECOWAS 2015). Stanbic IBTC has worked closely with ECOWAS BIAWE to provide capital and resources to West African women-led startups, while private equity firm African Capital Alliance has invested in businesses created through ECOWAS BIAWE.<sup>53</sup> The labor market in West Africa, typically conceived as a hurdle to the ease

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<sup>52</sup> Author phone interview with Carl Manlan, June 2016.

<sup>53</sup> Author interview with Adekunle Fatokun, June 2016

of business, is re-appropriated by regional actors to create business networks with the aim of mobilizing the West African work force and providing avenues that circumvent central governments and their control of the workforce. Non-state business actors such as Ecobank firmly believe that as people have more access and accumulate jobs, there will be more use for their commercial banking services. Representatives from Ecobank and African Capital Alliance point to the transitory nature of West Africa and believe that the future of business and finance in West Africa are not tied to the successes and failures of undiversified country economies, citing that West Africans want to “mobile” and “dynamic” businesses that span the region. The coordination of strategies by ECOWAS and non-state business actors to combat the realities of the labor market provide some context as to how financialization becomes a strategy and method of regional convergence.

### **ECOWAS Evolution and Convergence in Finance**

I argue that a founding condition for regional convergence in West Africa was to engage in financial sector reform by engaging in financial deregulation within each member state, leading to regional regulatory governance in the financial sector. In this section, I will briefly explain the political history of ECOWAS, particularly its evolution from an organization that primarily pursued economic integration to an organization that engages in economic, political, and social activities. Next, I explain

how financial deregulation<sup>54</sup> became a part of ECOWAS' regionalization strategy. I close this section by providing evidence of financialization in ECOWAS.

The idea of ECOWAS or regional integration was not new in West Africa. There were many failed attempts at integration prior to 1970. From an economic perspective, prior attempts failed due to "inward looking" or protectionist policies, meaning that the countries of West Africa did not want to develop plans of industry with the prospect of other countries benefiting. West African countries did not view integration as a viable basis for growth and industrialization. Ideologically and politically, ideas of pan-Africanism originated in the late 1800's. The height of pan-Africanism coincided with states becoming independent and the nascent stages of nation building that made pan-African ideals less attractive.

Nigeria took the lead in institutionalizing pan-Africanism, however, in the 1960's opposed a political union of West African states due to the belief that the region should solidify an economic arrangement that leads to a common market. Nigeria held the idea that states, after independence, have a shared conception of how and why they need each other (Asante 1985). Nigeria faced hurdles in the form of its rivalry with Ghana and its rivalry with francophone states. While Nigeria faced intra-regional challenges, it also faced challenges of convincing extra-Africa entities, mainly the EEC

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<sup>54</sup> Fiscal deregulation is defined by the World Bank as: "a) self-financing or cost recovery through user charges, b) co-financing or co-production arrangements through which the users participate in providing services and infrastructure through monetary or labor contributions; c) expansion of local revenues through property or sales taxes, or indirect charges; d) intergovernmental transfers that shift general revenues from taxes collected by the central government to local governments for general or specific uses; and e) authorization of municipal borrowing and the mobilization of either national or local government resources through loan guarantees."

that it was a viable trading entity in the Commonwealth. Nigeria's market was still too small to become the industrial giant it hoped to be. These challenges eventually led to Nigeria's inability to establish a pre-1970 economic community. Nigeria's challenges magnified with the onset of the Biafra War in 1966-7.<sup>55</sup> Nigerian attempts at a pre-1970 community failed officially when all West African states decided to ignore the Guinea-Nigeria proposal for a West African Economic community. The ignorance of the Guinea-Nigeria pact became clear when Ivory Coast recognized Biafra as a state in 1968.

Between Nigeria and Ghana, there was persistent posturing between the two in regards for what was better for West Africa. Ojo (1979) opines that Nkrumah opted to leave the West African Currency Board and West African Airways on the grounds that it could not associate with "dependencies in common institutions". Nkrumah cited Nigeria frequently in its reluctance to economic integration, as it feared Nigerian dominance and Nigerian relations with Britain and the Commonwealth (Wayas 1979).

On the surface, the creation of ECOWAS in May 1975 signified the culmination of over fifteen years of achieving "Pan-African" ideals with the realization of economic integration among West African countries. Soon after the creation of ECOWAS, it became apparent that a hurdle to economic integration in West Africa would come in the form of political instability, extra-African influence, and the potential of large state dominance in the region. Considering these variables, scholars of the dynamics of politics in West Africa and ECOWAS posit that the organization as an economic entity was an immature entity with great responsibilities (Asante 1986; Nwokedi 1980). This

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aids in the belief by scholars of West African integration that ECOWAS has shifted from a purely economic organization to a political organization, evidenced by its unprecedented intervention in the Liberian Civil War in 1989.<sup>56</sup>

ECOWAS at its founding did not reflect an organization that was committed to regional commitment. A key indicator that ECOWAS wanted to maintain the centrality of the state is through the delegation of institutional power. At its founding, ECOWAS stated that the decision-making power would lie with the Authority Heads of State, which are the actual Heads of State of the member countries. One could correctly assume (under the auspices of the doctrine of pure sovereignty over interdependence) that the maintenance of member state sovereignty and having Heads of States as the decision making body of a nascent organization would pose challenges to the efficacy and legitimacy of ECOWAS. In this case, one can question the extent in which some countries have a higher degree of autonomy than others could and how central ECOWAS would become to the individual foreign policies of member states.

We begin to see a shift in ECOWAS' policy beginning in 1989 during the Liberian Civil War. While this may seem unrelated to ECOWAS' regionalization efforts, we consider the Liberian Civil War to be a turning point in ECOWAS because it was the first time the ECOWAS as an area engaged in something other than economics. From 1989, ECOWAS had a number of political and economic reforms, such as the Protocol for Political Principles in 1991, the Revised Treaty of 1993, and the Protocol Relating to the Mechanism for Conflict Prevention in 1999. These institutional changes and the driving forces behind them indicated that ECOWAS would engage in

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<sup>56</sup> See Adebajo (2002); Adebajo and Rashid (2004); Kabia (2009)

regionalization that would result in policies that were much more than trade agreements. ECOWAS was interested in transforming the organization into an entity with an identity and a penchant for collectively constructing a notion of West Africa that benefited the well-being of the people. During the 1980s, ECOWAS member states started to experiment with financial deregulation, but it was not until the Revised Treaty in 1993 that there is a push from ECOWAS for member states to start adopting harmonization policies (Ribot 2002, 19). By calling for states to develop policies that were integrative and conducive to the mission of ECOWAS, such as decentralization, member states would relinquish control of economic policy to the local level, all in the name of regional state building.

The first phase of financial sector decentralization in ECOWAS member states saw the withdrawal of monetary authorities within member states from interfering in the determination of lending rates of interest, giving commercial banks the freedom to set rates based on market conditions of supply and demand for credit (Jalloh 2011, Soyibo 1997). Many of the ECOWAS member states in the late 1980's removed credit ceilings, interest rate ceilings, and liberalized entries of financial institutions. The move toward financial sector reform was motivated by two ideas. First, ECOWAS countries stressed the need to improve their monetary control systems. This was a focal point of an ECOWAS Extraordinary Summit meeting in Lomé in May 1985, where finance ministers argued that monetary instruments in West Africa were inadequate replacing existing systems of direct control with indirect control (Journal of ECOWAS 1985, 212). Second, ECOWAS wanted financial sector reform to improve the mobilization and allocation of domestic savings and with that, an improvement on the banking



system and structure of rates in the region. Senegal in the late 1980's pushed a policy to reduce interest rates subsidies and reduced bad debt. Gambia and Sierra Leone liberalized interest rates and introduced prime rates to the country, while Nigeria pursued a holistic financial sector overhaul that centered on diversifying its financial system (Villanueva 1998; El-Nil 1990).

The Abuja Treaty of 1991 of ECOWAS (not to be confused with the treaty by the same name creating the African Economic Community) aimed to create an inclusive West African market through trade liberalization and the creation of a single economic community. It established six stages to achieve this process, which includes conceptions of ambiguous tariff stabilization and the creation of a West African monetary union and the call for member state governments to alter their domestic operations and engage in the privatization of publicly owned banks and to make the process of granting licenses to private individuals to register financial institutions easier (Jalloh 2011, 3).

In ECOWAS' formative years, member states had fluctuating economies that were susceptible to uncertainty. External economies typically did not invest in these economies, rather, FDI in ECOWAS economies mostly came from bi-lateral agreements. The Abuja Treaty and the Revised ECOWAS treaty created the space for ECOWAS to develop mechanisms that would make West Africa more attractive to foreign direct investment. As such, ECOWAS, under Article 53 of the Revised Treaty, created a Capital Issues committee that would focus on ensuring "the unimpeded flow of capital within the community" through removing controls on the transfer of capital, encouraging regional stock exchanges, and interlocking capital markets and stock exchanges. The goal of the Capital Issues Committee create institutions within ECOWAS that would facilitate the ease of business in West Africa, promote

diversification in West African markets, and improve trade information networks to induce transparency (ECOWAS 1993; Adebayo 2002). In doing so, the West African Monetary Association (WAMA) created in 1996 and institutionalized as the financial organ of ECOWAS proved to be a key cog in making ECOWAS a bank-centered region.

It was the belief of the Capital Issues committee and WAMA that a single currency in the region would be a key to moving ECOWAS towards a bank-centric region and a place where private banking and business could enjoy success. Following an extraordinary summit meeting in January 2001, ECOWAS officials finally made due on their promise to set plans in motion to create a Single Currency for West Africa called the Eco. The Eco would first be extended to non-Francophone West African states (who are on the CFA Franc) with the hopes that non-Francophone states would adopt the currency by 2020. ECOWAS created the West African Monetary Institute (WAMI), which would be responsible for overseeing the feasibility of developing the Eco. WAMI's goal is to minimize the effects of asymmetric economic shocks by developing convergence criteria and over time, the facilitation of real trade integration, financial sector integration, and systemic regional harmonization. WAMI consists of ECOWAS' Authority Heads of State, a convergence council, a technical committee, a central bank, a research institute, Secretariat, stabilization and cooperation fund and a supervisory authority. While deep institutionalization has occurred, the launch date for the currency has been postponed five times: January 2003, July 2005, December 2005, and December 2009 and January 2015.

WAMI focuses on ten criteria for convergence-- four primary criteria and six secondary criteria, in order to ensure that the Eco can be created without significant repercussion. The four primary criteria are:

- Single digit inflation rate at the end of each year
- Fiscal deficit of no more than 4% of the GDP
- A central bank deficit-financing of no more than 10% of the previous year's tax revenue
- Gross external reserves that can give import cover for a minimum of three months

The six secondary criteria are:

- Prohibition of new domestic default payments and liquidation of existing ones
- Tax revenue should equal or greater than twenty percent of GDP
- Wage bill to tax revenue equal or less than thirty five percent
- Public investment to tax revenue equal to or greater than twenty percent
- A stable real exchange rate
- A positive real interest rate
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These convergence criteria undergird the five strategic pillars of instituting the Eco and regional integration more broadly, which are

- Macroeconomic convergence
- Trade and regional integration
- Financial integration

- Payments systems integration
- Institutional and capacity building
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WAMI has made it a point to highlight that there are significant cultural and economic differences between the countries that are prospectively joining the Eco, highlighting differences in governing structures (contrasting Nigeria's federalist system versus Ghana's unitary system) as hurdles to integration and potential limitations to convergence. Although WAMI's strategic plan highlights the areas where convergence is and is not possible, the Eco has failed to launch.

These efforts of WAMI as well as this narrative of the failure of the creation of a common currency are important for a couple of reasons. One reason is that a common currency agenda runs counter to the capital market environment that ECOWAS set out to create. Put simply, a disconnect exists between money markets and capital markets. The tension lies in that by making West Africa "bank-centric," it enables short-term investment and fundraising, lending to the pathologies mentioned in the complexion of the labor market sector. However, by virtue of ECOWAS' desire to increase FDI, it also believes in capital market principles in that capital markets mobilize long-term debt and equity finance for investment in long-term assets (Senbet and Otchere 2005). Another reason is that the creation of a common currency in practice contradicts WAMA's initial call for domestic financial systems to deregulate, which member states abided by. The creation of a West African Capital Markets Integration Council in 2013 and the Bourse Régionale des Valeurs Mobilières (BVRM) in 1998 are evidence that ECOWAS countries are striving to improve capital flows such as FDI by regionalizing the stock exchange. Another key institutional development in ECOWAS has been the creation of a Private Sector department in 2007, charged with developing strategies developing

strategies to mobilize the private sector to promote greater ease of business (Ihederu 2012; 221).

The expansion of the financial institutions in ECOWAS, coupled with ECOWAS' focus on financial sector reform demonstrates ECOWAS' attempts at regional convergence in finance. While the struggle for convergence in currency tell one end of the story, decentralization as a political strategy tells another part of how West Africa as a region has created a space for finance to dwell.

### **Decentralization as a convergence strategy**

A characteristic of ECOWAS member states is that they have large, active rural settings (Schrader 2009; Hayden 2003; Chabal 2009). As a result, rural elites often find themselves trying to leverage their political positions against national elites. Boone (2003, 361) argues that local level elites (chiefs, farmers, merchants, etc.) occupy different positions in social relations and that they present variations on their interests that present challenges to national governments—particularly when it comes to institutional strategies that national governments devise when it comes to governing and taxing the country side. National governments also recognize and legitimate these local rural elites, often giving deference to the communal structures and traditional legacies of local, pre-colonial political structures (Oygui 2000; 16). Rural leaders in this regard are political actors that national governments must engage. In this vein, a deconcentrated state apparatus can provide political infrastructure for either power sharing with local elites, usurpation, or deference to the rural structure. Boone (2003, 365) argues the first two points in discussing the strategies rural elites use to leverage their political power.

In practice and as it pertains to the financial sector in ECOWAS, decentralization does not appear to be structured in ways that would deliver the benefits of decentralization. After colonization, local governments were used as administration units, used to supply health care, education, infrastructure, and taxation (Therkildsen 2000; 82). Decentralization in practice ended up being an extension of central administration. Senegal maintained a system of ruling party control and administrative oversight after independence in 1976, which put a stranglehold on local autonomy (Diallo 1994;1) Nigeria and Ghana in the 1970's and 1980's also gave special functions and protection to local governments, but in practice, none of these governments had meaningful policy making powers (UNCDF 2000;2).

However, by 1994, we begin to see a shift in how ECOWAS countries valued decentralization. At the ECOWAS, sponsored Burkina Faso conference on Decentralization in West Africa in 1994, member states argued various positions on decentralization:

- “• Ivory Coast considers it to be a “pragmatic process leading to the sharing of power between central and local levels”;
- • For Mauritania, it is “an institutional landmark, a tool for democratization and a way of promoting local development”;
- • For Senegal, it is “a fundamental element of a learning process in democracy and people’s participation in development”;
- • For Guinea, “decentralization is a project for society based on natural solidarity, oriented towards development”;
- • Mali sees it as “the best available instrument to use in reorganizing the State”
- • For the Cape Verde Islands, it is “a tool used in achieving national solidarity”

- • For Benin, “decentralization is an instrument to be used in promoting grassroots democracy and local development”
- • Burkina Faso expects that “decentralization should reinforce local democracy, Grassroots democracy and local development” (Mbassi 1995:24).

Member states began to argue that decentralization would also bring macro-economic stability and public sector equity (Mamdani 1996). ECOWAS believed that decentralization would result in a situation where central governments would also engage in redistribution throughout the region (Conyers 2000; 8). There were also thoughts within ECOWAS that decentralization would be able to serve as a bargaining chip and could bring secessionists and other subnational groups to the political table. For instance, during the concurrent civil conflicts in Liberia and Sierra Leone, particularly in the ECOWAS peace plan, the Yamoussoukro Accord (1993) Part II Sections A and B, decentralization was used as a strategy to get the Liberian government and Charles Taylor to agree to a transitional government. It was the view of the ECOWAS monitoring group (ECOMOG) throughout the process of conflict mediation that agreeing to the accords and utilizing decentralization as a way to get all parties equally involved in the transition government in Liberia would aid in state legitimization. All of this is to say that decentralization played a pivotal role in West African political life.

ECOWAS member states provided revenue to local authorities by giving them portions of national tax revenues, empowering local governments to collect land for themselves, and to collect income and commodity taxes locally. The logic behind this form of decentralization was to prop up the private sector to accommodate the rise and proliferation of indigenous cross-border regional banking and financial services.

Decentralization as an all-encompassing political strategy in West Africa contextualizes the importance of high-level activity in the banking and financial sector, as investors and private sector actors in West Africa could all see that they could not rely on bi-lateral or domestic banking and financial services to provide the access to capital needed to run and/or create business.

### **Financialization in West Africa**

Regionalization processes from ECOWAS as an organization and decentralization policies from ECOWAS member states provided the space for us to contextualize how the nature of business, banking, finance, and capitalism have changed throughout the years. As of March 2015, there are 211 commercial banks in ECOWAS.

Table 3      Number of Commercial Banks in West Africa

<b>Countries</b>		<b># of Commercial Banks</b>	
Benin	22	Togo	11
Burkina Faso	13	Cape Verde	23
Guinea-Bissau	2	The Gambia	11
Mali	14	Guinea	8
Niger	9	Liberia	5
Cote d'Ivoire	18	Nigeria	24
Senegal	14	Ghana	24
Sierra Leone	15		



Iheduru (2012, 278-280) provides evidence that highlights the trend of financialization in West Africa. 30 of the top 200 banks in Africa are in ECOWAS and the combined assets of the top 15 West African banks (\$86.9 billion) exceeded the \$70.2 Billion combined GDP of nine ECOWAS member states. \$86.9 billion is also about 45 percent of Nigeria's GDP.<sup>57</sup> Iheduru also points out that West African based financial firms and banks were central in keeping up with the annual 4-5 percent growth during the 2008 financial crisis. Investors in an Attractiveness of Africa survey by Ernst and Young in 2011 found that the changing character of West African finance comes from the growth in intra-African investment into new FDI projects, growing at an annual pace of 21 percent from 2003-2011. By contrast, emerging economies outside of Africa grew their FDI at an annual pace of 9 percent (Ernst and Young 2011, 31).

The rise in commercial banking has had implications on the banking clientele in West Africa. For instance, in francophone states, some countries such as CIV, Senegal, and Gambia have had increased competition from Microfinance firms and new business strategies from foreign investors that have led to diversification in traditional industries such as trade and hospitalities (IMF Country Report, 2012). Cross-regional banking has expanded because private equity groups have been purchasing domestic banks in an effort to expand their markets. For instance, Nigerian-based companies such as Stanbic-IBTC and Ecobank as well as Moroccan financial groups purchase banks within West Africa to expand their markets. A report on the financial depth of ECOWAS in 2013 states that the groups (incorporated as subsidiaries) who purchase domestic banks are funded through local deposits. The domestic orientation of the purchased banks provide

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<sup>57</sup> All data from 2010.

a mutual benefit for the company and the local banking structure, which explains why the direct impact of the global crisis was mild in West Africa (ECOWAS 2013). Stress tests on banking systems in ECOWAS also indicate there are limited interest rate and liquidity risks within the banks of West Africa because of cross-border banking. The stress tests included potential and actual economic shocks, sectoral risks like defaults on loans, and liquidity shocks.

Financialization manifests itself in a couple of ways in ECOWAS. First, functions typically left for central banks in member states to handle, are now outsourced to regional institutions. The ECOWAS-created Ecobank Transnational Incorporation has led this effort. Created by the West African Chamber of Commerce and ECOWAS as a regional investment bank, Ecobank started with \$100 million authorized shared capital and paid \$32 million in capital to individuals and other banking institutions within the region when global banking institutions pulled out of West Africa. Ecobank is the sixth largest banking institution in Africa and is the first African banking institution to expand throughout the continent and have branches outside of the continent (Ecobank 2014). It now manages over \$10 billion worth of assets and capital.

Second, private firms have been given the authority to make up for the lack of common currency in the region by providing payment systems for formal and informal trade, providing remittances for migrant workers, and foreign exchange transactions (Iheduru 2012, 225). Ecobank, for example, has created an ATM system that allows one to travel with one form of payment throughout West Africa, a region with eight different currencies, without consequence. As a result, access to finance has increased substantially in ECOWAS countries.

## **Regional Convergence through ECOWAS BIAWE**

The practice of decentralization and financialization created a space for the business and financial institutions of ECOWAS to collaborate and engage the region through investment on the local level. In June 2012, ECOWAS and NEPAD signed an agreement to create the ECOWAS Business Incubator for African Women Entrepreneurs to West Africa. Though the initiative was funded by the NEPAD Spain Fund, Ecocrats in the Macrofinance directorate of the Finance Commission were instrumental in fostering this agreement.

The purpose of creating ECOWAS BIAWE was to develop rural business entrepreneurs across the region. Francois Ouedraogo, the project manager for ECOWAS BIAWE stressed that the creation of the incubator would ensure capacity building through technical and financial support to enable women to pursue their maximum potential and the main method of this support would come from the support of regional partners and private investment stakeholders. Ouedraogo describe the process of negotiating the creation of ECOWAS BIAWE:

“We were in a meeting on the status of business investment the region, took place in Lomé. We had two very persuasive representatives invited from the ECOWAS Business Forum, a woman from Sierra Leone and another from Burkina. They stressed how important it was to build the capacity of women in their countries, particularly in the agriculture sector. They said the women in their countries had great ideas and they needed the financial backing of regional business to make the ideas into reality. The women were backed by MacDonald S. Goanue, [Director of Research and strategic planning] who also emphasized that in his native Liberia, a project focused on the improvement of lives would be most welcome. So it was from here that we put a proposal together to work

with NEPAD. But it was my job to find other private actors to engage in the building of this initiative.”<sup>58</sup>

During the drafting process of the MOU between ECOWAS and NEPAD, Allieu Sesay, the Finance Commissioner for ECOWAS, and a Sierra Leonean himself, pushed for the feasibility study of the program to start in Sierra Leone and Burkina, stressing the a crisis of the overall economies in these countries and the profound neglect of women and children in said countries (ECOWAS 2013). Sesay’s motivation for improving the quality of the business environment for rural women stemmed from his previous positions as consultant economist for the African Development Bank, the World Bank and the European Union. Among his staff, he is considered to be the expert on how to incorporate business into sectoral policy. As such, during the initial meetings during the drafting of the ECOWAS/NEPAD MOU, Sesay advocated strongly to incorporate EBID and the ECOWAS Business Forum in order to create and develop a reliable structure for women to develop as business people.

In doing so, Ecocrats working for Sesay were aware that the institutional environment was not conducive to creating a sustainable program with ECOWAS’ funding woes. As one practitioner mentions:

“Despite the excitement by Mr. Sesay, we very much though the feasibility of this incubator was not possible. We have member states who still decide not to contribute to the community levy and we are strapped with budget issues, but Mr. Sesay and other believed we could get the external funding to help facilitate the initial study, so we went ahead”<sup>59</sup>

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<sup>58</sup> Francois Ouedraogo, Interview EBID, Lomé, Togo October 25, 2016

<sup>59</sup> Anonymous interview, ECOWAS Finance, Abuja, Nigeria October 2016.

This indicated that one of the strategies for building this program was to rely on external funding to support ECOWAS' activism, through the use of the MOU. This highlights the importance of an MOU to the convergence process, in that MOUs do not serve as merely documents that create an agreement between two parties, but the process of drafting an MOU has strategic implication, particularly for ECOWAS. In the case of BIAWE, there were two strategic plans in place. The first, mentioned above, was to create a narrative stressing the importance of external funding to the creation of the program. The second strategy was to use BIAWE to build stronger partnerships with regional financial stakeholders and to use the financial institutions of ECOWAS to take advantage of business investors in West Africa who stressed a region-centric investment policy.

After the drafting of the MOU between ECOWAS and NEPAD, the first feasibility study for BIAWE launched in July 2014 in Sierra Leone and Burkina Faso. The feasibility study focused on the agriculture sector and looked at land disparities between men and women. For example, in Sierra Leone, women cannot own land and can only participate formally in small scale farming and agricultural activities if they are authorized to work by their husbands. As a result, the implementation phase of BIAWE included provisions to give access to financing for rural women to participate in both the formal and informal agricultural sectors. Investment in BIAWE would also include the improvement of value sharing mechanisms to give women a level playing-field once their businesses become self-sustaining. Ouedraogo stressed the importance of informal business investment by West African firms because of the importance ECOWAS also placed on social development. BIAWE in this regard is an initiative that is focused not only on the betterment of African Women throughout the region, but also

as a way for the interactions between small scale informal business networks to form and socialize local level businesses into a member state's formal economy.

The role of Ecocrats in the creation of ECOWAS BIAWE initially was to provide and deploy a strategy to get the incubator created and funded. As it moves towards implementation across West Africa beyond Sierra Leone and Burkina Faso, Ecocrats in the ECOWAS Business Forum and EBID are working to create networks between BIAWE and other regional finance networks. These networks include the West African Trade and Investment Hub, West African Capital Markets Integration Council, and the Aspen Network of Development Entrepreneurs in West Africa. Hyacenth Okwu, the Vice President in the Finance Directorate of the ECOWAS Commission stated that the building of these networks is a necessity and an active strategy by the practitioners in the finance commission to create a linkage and investment pipeline for business people in the region. Okwu also stressed the importance of training of finance facilitators to help businesses curated in BIAWE develop business plans and facilitate loan applications.<sup>60</sup>

ECOWAS BIAWE and its constitutive networks are an example of regional convergence on the improvement of the West African business environment. The activities of ECOWAS, member states, particularly allowing commercial banks and private investment to play the role it does in the business environment, indicates that Ecocrats have motivations to improve the “ways of doing business” and also interested in a more inclusive business environment. Through decentralization, financialization emerged and with it, a collective desire by Ecocrats in finance to utilize new and

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<sup>60</sup> Interview, Hyacenth Okwu, ECOWAS Commission October 21, 2016.

potential sources for access to capital to build an initiative that would affect the people of the region on a local level and embed practices of business that are uniquely West African. Despite the efforts, ECOWAS still struggles with road harassment and poor infrastructure in its member states, which make cross-border business initiatives difficult.

In looking at ECOWAS BIAWE, the drivers of convergence were the Ecocrats attempting to shape the nature of interactions, while soliciting external help to overcome institutional shortcomings. BIAWE is still in the implementation phase, however as Ecocrats continue to pursue their interests in the initiative, one would expect to see a form of institutionalization occur and BIAWE would be integrated into the ECOWAS Business and Finance infrastructures.

### **Conclusion**

While it is evident that there is a pattern of the regionalization of finance and banking in West Africa, what does it say about financialization as a policy? For instance, if we look at financialization in the vein of Krippner (2005; 2014), the narrative presented gauges the behavior of financial firms and the growth of the financial sector, with no implications on the growth of profits in the financial sector. It is my intent to examine how the organization of economic activity in ECOWAS has implications on capitalism. However examining how regionalization and decentralization as political processes and strategies lead to financialization has broader implications for the study of capitalism in the developing world.

By highlighting the process in which ECOWAS moves towards the practice of financialization, it provides a context where we can examine empirically the substance of accumulation, the implications of financialization on economic growth, and how profit is generated in the region. Krippner (2005, 190) poses the question: “should the practice of contracting out-financial functions once executed [in-house] count as evidence of financialization?” and answers the question by suggesting that although outsourcing tasks is not a new phenomenon, but its sectoral location vis-à-vis shifting firm boundaries—and the prevalence of changing ownership structures (in ECOWAS’ case from the local/domestic/national to the regional) is what is important to financialization. As such, where this particular study can build on Krippner’s questions is to employ a longitudinal time series analysis to measure how outsourcing over time affects income, capital accumulation, development indicators such as GDP growth.

Financialization in ECOWAS also highlights how there is an emerging form of regional governance through private authority. This private authority is interested in protecting investors so that investors may raise capital. A result is the emergence of policy entrepreneurs that advocate for laws and policies within ECOWAS to protect minority shareholders and policies that make it easy for them to become controlling shareholders (Doing Business 2014, 51). The dynamic of policy entrepreneurs also working in conjunction with firms, regional banks, and MNCs has implications on which the important actors are in an examination of the VoC. This particular combination of actors leads one to hypothesize if the role of policy entrepreneurs in ECOWAS might serve as a complementarity of financialization. Future implications for this research, applied more toward testing the compatibility of VoC in West Africa



might view regional convergence and decentralization as complementarities, which would also elicit a broader examination of regionalization and decentralization in other developing areas within and outside of Africa.

## **Chapter 6**

### **CONCLUSION**

The founding conditions of ECOWAS, characterized by ethnic division, a desire to protect sovereignty of newly independent states both politically and economically, and internal instability of democratizing states, led to an understanding of regional integration that was primarily self-interested as it relates to heads of states and skepticism as it relates to credible commitments. Over time, actors within ECOWAS have worked slowly, intentionally and unintentionally to move beyond these founding conditions to create an institutional environment that serves as a vehicle to network a multiplicity of regional actors and serve the quantitative and qualitative rise of regional governance areas in West Africa. As a result of ECOWAS' institutional evolution, evidenced by revised treaties, multiple protocols, and eventually, a complete restructuring of its institutions, ECOWAS has positioned itself as an organization focused on deepening the scope and intensity of interactions of political actors in West Africa.

The aim of this dissertation has been to examine the process of regional convergence. Regional convergence is defined as the formation and creation of social and political networks within ECOWAS and between ECOWAS and regional stakeholders, and the processes that build acceptable, durable, and dependable modes of behavior. I have shown that the process of regional convergence in ECOWAS created deepened practices and modes of behavior in the areas of peace and security. I contributed to the study of regionalism in Africa and comparative regionalism more broadly by conceiving a process and practice driven approach that focused on looking at Ecocrats as the drivers of regional convergence. Ecocrats, were defined as actors within

the ECOWAS Commission that are tasked with determining the day to day operation of ECOWAS and in practice, determine what relationships to make, tell us how important certain relationships between ECOWAS and other stakeholders are, and provide a context and a motivation for issue salience and linkage in the region. Ecocrats are distinctive in that they build institutional culture, reinforce practices and induce institutional learning, through drawing from prior knowledge, and through their autonomy from member state governments.

I used a conceptual framework that links practice, comparative regionalism, and organizational theory to provide a vehicle to look at Ecocrats and institutional change as significant components to regional convergence in Peace and Security, Public Health and Finance. The analysis on the activities of ECOWAS, driven by Ecocrats, emphasized the fact that the complexion of regionalism in Africa is not focused on regime-boosting or shadow regionalism. Convergence by Ecocrats highlights the sovereignty transcendent properties of regionalism, making the region the focal point for connecting the local with the global and the global with the local.

In the area of peace and security, I have argued because of the founding conditions of ECOWAS, member states did not have a unified and coherent understanding of the principle of non-interference. As a result, ECOWAS utilized the practice of military intervention to develop a common understanding on interference. Alongside this development, ECOWAS, through its first and second transformations, engaged in institutionalization that internalized democracy and good governance as normative modes of behavior in West Africa. This was evidenced through the examination of the ECOWAS Political Affairs Peace and Security Commission and their early warning directorate, which established networked relations with the West

African Network for Peacebuilding. I argued that ECOWAS convergence around these issues was due to the activism of Ecocrats and the institutional space created as a result of organizational change.

In public health, I have argued that the creation of the West African Health Organization and its reconfiguration in the second transformation of ECOWAS, indicates an increase awareness and salience on health matters within West Africa. The process of regional convergence in health I argue is facilitated through the strategic use of MOUs, a desire by Ecocrats for institutional capacity building and the incorporating of civil society and non-state actors to the building of a regional health domain filled by ECOWAS. Regional convergence in public health moves towards an approach to convergence that provides a regional perspective on “best practices” and harmonizes the practices, such as the creation of regional health surveillance networks and partnerships to combat the use and abuse of drugs.

By analyzing regional convergence in finance, I found that there were no deep forms of institutionalization, however I trace the process of ECOWAS member states engaging in financial decentralization in member states, leading to convergence around financialization and the allowance for private authority and entities to permeate West Africa. The result of this dynamic was the development of the ECOWAS Business Incubator for African Women Entrepreneurs. This nascent initiative demonstrates a commitment by Ecocrats to fulfill its goal of an ECOWAS of people by creating a regional environment that is inclusive of women, is a good environment to conduct business, and encourages investment by West African private firms who are looking to do business with their regional mates.

This dissertation was also about the utility of institutional change. ECOWAS had and has to adapt to shifting regional and global dynamics. The two transformations of ECOWAS allowed institutionalization to also become a practice and a form of deepening modes of behavior throughout the region. The various iterations of regional convergence took part in three domains. First, convergence in form—that is, how the region is coming together. While the public health chapter provided an example networking the region, the dissertation contributes to a broader understanding of the form of regional convergence. In Burkina Faso and Cote d’Ivoire, Ivorian meat suppliers agreed to buy meat from Burkina Faso through the International Society of Sausages and Cured Meats Cote d’Ivoire and plan to establish a 40 ton/week contract with the Burkina to buy meat for a year. This was facilitated through the ECOWAS Business Forum and the West African Investment and Trade Hub. The physical hurdles to regional integration, such as insufficient regional infrastructure and border/customs taxes, are alleviated when you look at how practitioners within regional institutions converge to make livelihood easier.

Second, there is convergence in substance and issue area. The benefit of examining Ecocrats is that we can measure and identify how salient certain issues are and understand how issues become prioritized within ECOWAS, beyond regional crises. While ECOWAS’ initial foray into peace and security was reactionary, the focus on early warning and resolving the gap between alert and response indicates a priority shift which ECOWAS member states and regional partners converge. Additionally, the desire to incorporate health as a matter of peace and security, also suggests that convergence can occur through engagement and the prioritization of substantive issue areas.

Third, there is normative convergence, or, how practices turn from act, to naught, to ought. Normative convergence is exemplified by the adherence to democracy and good governance in the region. Take for instance the last two coup attempts in West Africa were met by strong resistance and in the case of Burkina Faso in 2015, the coup attempt was thwarted in a mere two days. More recently, ECOWAS' role in ousting Yahaya Jammeh as leader of the Gambia, also showed the power of normative convergence. Thus, this dissertation provided examples of each type of convergence, allowing one to systematically look at dynamics of regional cooperation beyond formal economic relations or relations between states.

In this dissertation, it was my aim to utilize a mechanistic, process based approach to change the scope of analysis on African regionalism. Using Ecocrats as my point of departure, I aimed to move a narrative about African regional organizations and their constitutive parts away from perspectives that focused solely on the weakness, ineffectiveness, and self-interested nature of African leaders as hurdles to regional cooperation. The inclusion of institutionalization and the deepening of modes of behavior as well as the concept of practice receive little attention in conventional literature on African regionalism, making them strong contributions to the field of African regionalism.

While the above demonstrate the contributions of this dissertation, there are also limitations that should be addressed. First, while Ecocrats and institutionalization are the focal points of the study, one criticism could be that there is still a strong presence of the state that underlies the analysis. ECOWAS as it is constituted is made up of states and those states are subject to the protocols and the organizational transformation. As such, one could question the targets of convergence:

individuals? States? Global? Insofar as the study examines the properties and context of regionalism, ECOWAS' status as a regional intergovernmental organization will be subject to statist scrutiny.

Another limitation is the role of subsidiarity. While the evidence provided in this work shows how ECOWAS has evolved as an organization and how it is able to handle political conflict and other regional issues on its own terms, the reality is that the African Union and in some cases the United Nations are heavily involved in West Africa. The African Union institutional design explicitly states that ECOWAS and other Regional Economic Communities are to be “engulfed” into the political and economic structures of the AU. This study does not address with enough detail the impact of subsidiarity on the operationalization and implementation of ECOWAS' mandates. In addition to the issue of subsidiarity, this work would benefit from a deeper analysis on the process and negotiation of more ECOWAS institutions and initiatives. Also, the question regarding ECOWAS fostering a unified West Africa still remains elusive. One potential response to the limitations provided above is perhaps a future expansion of this project that examines the ECOWAS/AU/UN role more intimately. More research is also needed on the role of Ecocrats in typically decentralized zones and issue areas. For instance, how does regional convergence occur in food security or agriculture?

Highlighting the importance and the process of institutionalization in ECOWAS sheds light on the functional and bureaucratic culture of ECOWAS, which are important when considering the motivations for organizational change. Organizations and their constituents can respond to the challenges and complexities of their environment. The process of institutionalization as a mechanism for regional convergence enables a view

of ECOWAS as a dynamic, coalitional organization where complex transactional networks of constituencies develop. In order for ECOWAS to successfully network West Africa and shape and create routinized practices of governance, it needs to satisfy its constituency enough that continued assurance of transactions, beyond codification. Institutionalization as a mechanism for regional convergence defines the focus of ECOWAS, particularly by shaping the types of responses and adaptation to external and internal pressures, how a practice emerges to create common understandings about social logics in the region, and shapes its identities. More importantly, the process of institutionalization informs how ECOWAS as an organization adapts and forms networks when interacting with diverse forms of culture, activism, and preferences from other actors in the region. The cumulative purpose of examining these processes provides an avenue to better judge the process of institutionalization in ECOWAS.



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# Appendix A

## IRB EXEMPT LETTER



RESEARCH OFFICE

210 Halliham Hall  
University of Delaware  
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Ph: 302/831-2136  
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DATE: March 7, 2017

TO: Emmanuel Balogun  
FROM: University of Delaware IRB

STUDY TITLE: [1004338-1] Converging Practices and Governance in West Africa: Examining Regional Convergence in ECOWAS

SUBMISSION TYPE: New Project

ACTION: DETERMINATION OF EXEMPT STATUS  
DECISION DATE: March 7, 2017

REVIEW CATEGORY: Exemption category # (3)

Thank you for your submission of New Project materials for this research study. The University of Delaware IRB has determined this project is EXEMPT FROM IRB REVIEW according to federal regulations.

We will put a copy of this correspondence on file in our office. Please remember to notify us if you make any substantial changes to the project.

If you have any questions, please contact Nicole Farnese-McFarlane at (302) 831-1119 or [nicolefm@udel.edu](mailto:nicolefm@udel.edu). Please include your study title and reference number in all correspondence with this office.



## Appendix B

### ORGANOGRAM OF ECOWAS COMMISSION

