

REVIEW ARTICLE

## CONFLICT MANAGEMENT IN POST-ELECTION CRISIS AND ECOWAS PROTOCOL ON DEMOCRACY AND GOOD GOVERNANCE IN GAMBIA

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**Abstract:** Democracy and its consolidation seem to be a big challenge in the West African sub-region of which Gambia is part. To address this challenge, ECOWAS implemented its protocol on Democracy and Good Governance in Gambia through military intervention in the 2016 post-presidential election crisis. Although the protocol achieved some successes following the 2016 presidential election crisis in Gambia, yet, the Gambian political terrain remained volatile as the post-election crisis continued. Existing literature focused more on ECOWAS role in conflict management in West Africa; while the issue of the application of the protocol on democracy and good governance has not received much-needed scholarly attention, in respect to the Gambian political impasse. The study appropriates the documentary method by generating data through secondary sources. Using the descriptive method of data analysis, the study recommends that ECOWAS leadership should adopt a more comprehensive and collaborative measures among member-states that ensure a strict entrenchment of democratic practices and good governance in both Gambia and among member-states.

**Keywords:** ECOWAS, Election, Democracy, Conflict Management, Gambia.

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### INTRODUCTION

Elections are one of the cornerstones of democracy. It is so important that a society cannot be considered democratic if elections are not held regularly. A democracy differs from a dictatorship in that it has periodic elections. However, elections in poor nations are frequently manipulated for the personal benefit of manipulators, making it impossible to hold free and fair elections.

Indeed, one of the most serious issues confronting developing democracies is the difficulty of holding free, fair, and legitimate elections. The faulty character of elections in West African countries since independence has hampered democratic consolidation in the sub-region. Regrettably, the competition for political power has taken violent forms, as evidenced by 1993 races in the Republic of

Congo, which led to civil war, and in Cote d'Ivoire between 2010 and mid-2011, which sparked a struggle that killed approximately 3,000 people and displaced nearly a million (Bekoe, 2012).

Electoral violence has an impact on campaigns and voter turnout during elections. The use of coercive power to frighten people during elections has also been shown to reduce voter turnout (Bratton 2008; Burchard, 2015). Elections held following momentous events such as civil wars can also reignite dormant societal cleavages, potentially leading to violence (Flores & Nooruddin, 2012; 2016). Violence can weaken the democratic process by acting as a cog in the wheel of democratic sustainability. While most countries throughout the world now use

elections to exchange leadership and give legitimacy to those in power, conflict continues to occur in several electoral races (Birch and Muchlinski, 2017). As a result, electoral strife can have far-reaching consequences for both safety and democracy; it can even lead to a change of administration, as it did in Tunisia and Egypt between 2011 and 2012, and in Ukraine in 2004 (Birch & Muchlinski, 2017). No wonder numerous academics have claimed that the primary causes of conflict in West Africa include corruption, social, political, religious, economic, climate, and environmental difficulties (Egbo 2002; Cilliers & Schuenemann 2013; Mekonnen Mengistu 2015; Brown & Stewart 2015).

To justify the above assertion under discourse, Gambia remains one of the practical examples of countries in West Africa with a high record of electoral violence according to (HRW, 2016). Gambia under President Yahya Jammeh witnessed the greatest form of violence in her history of post-colonial existence. President Yahya Jammeh's government in the Gambia routinely violated human rights after seizing power in a coup in 1994. These abuses included arbitrary incarceration, forced disappearances, and torture of anyone who expressed disapproval of the government. Before the 2016 presidential election, the Gambia had a state of terror due to repression and violations, which drew more attention from abroad (HRW, 2016).

The paramilitary organization known as the Jungulers, the Gambian Police Force, and members of the National Intelligence Agency (NIA) were the state security forces most often accused in infractions. Targets included political rivals, journalists, and LGBT (lesbian, gay, bisexual, and transgender) individuals, many of whom left the Gambia for safety. Some of the greatest abuses occurred in the aftermath of a failed coup attempt on December 30, 2014.

In the days that followed, hundreds of the suspected plotters' family members and associates were arrested and held incommunicado, some for months. Three accused coup plotters died in strange circumstances after being apprehended (HRW, 2016). Six soldiers were convicted of treason-related acts in February 2014 by a

secret court martial, which violated their due process rights. On March 30, the court sentenced three of them to death and the remaining three to life in prison. Despite many allegations of major abuses committed by security personnel over the last two decades, no members of state security or paramilitary groups are known to have been convicted or otherwise held accountable for torture, killings, or other serious violations (HRW, 2016).

To elucidate this scenario, Gambia's international collaborators, particularly the European Union, the United Nations, the United States, and the Economic Community of West African States (ECOWAS), exhibited an increasing propensity to condemn or undertake measures to ameliorate the human rights situation, which included the issuance of public declarations and the conditioning of aid. Conversely, the Economic Community of West African States (ECOWAS) executed a military intervention in accordance with its protocol on democracy and good governance during the Gambia constitutional crisis, prompted by President Yahya Jammeh's obstinate refusal to relinquish power following his defeat in the December 2016 presidential election (Military wiki, 2017).

In an effort to fortify the 1999 Conflict Mechanism, which has evolved into the principal regional security framework for ECOWAS, the leaders of ECOWAS ratified the Protocol on Democracy and Good Governance in December 2001 as an adjunct to the Protocol Establishing the Mechanism for Conflict Prevention, Management, Resolution, Peacekeeping, and Security.

The principal objective of the protocol was to elucidate the interconnections between internal conflicts, democratic governance, and effective governance (Lar, 2009). Beyond addressing disputes as delineated in the 1999 Mechanism, the supplementary 2001 protocol acknowledges the imperative of tackling the underlying political determinants of conflict and instability within member states. The ECOWAS Protocol on Democracy and Good Governance mandates member states to establish institutions and institutional processes that foster democracy, promote good governance, safeguard human rights, and uphold the rule of law.

It obligates member states to enshrine democracy not merely as a legal and policy concern, but as an entrenched process of decision-making and societal evolution, rather than simply as a normative framework for governance (Barnes, 2001, cited in Levitt, 2010). The extant literature indicates that the implementation of the protocol afforded ECOWAS the ethical rationale for military intervention in Gambia, to redress the constitutional crisis besetting the nation.

In the aftermath of The Gambia's contentious presidential elections in December 2016, ECOWAS invoked the threat of force to reinstate democratic governance within the country. Both the African Union and the United Nations Security Council endorsed ECOWAS's actions, thereby conferring legitimacy upon what was fundamentally an ECOWAS initiative, and consequently an African solution to African challenges. It was only when the prospect of military intervention became conceivable that the Gambian administration conceded defeat (Hartmann, 2017).

Moreover, the apprehension regarding the potential spillover of regional conflicts, along with the profound interconnectedness of its populace, elucidated the rationale behind ECOWAS's engagement in governance matters. The consolidation of democracy, alongside various ethnic conflicts, has posed significant challenges in the West African sub-region, of which Gambia is an integral part.

These challenges have manifested as substantial impediments and have significantly influenced the political trajectory of The Gambia over the years. To confront these issues, ECOWAS adopted the protocol on Democracy and Good Governance as a strategic response.

However, it is noteworthy that even though ECOWAS member states are signatories to the protocol, some have not adhered to its stipulations. A prominent deficiency has been ECOWAS's reluctance to confront the tendency of leaders within member states to manipulate national constitutions to extend their term limits, notwithstanding the growing discourse surrounding term-limit amendments within the organization.

For instance, a proposal aimed at prohibiting third terms was deliberated in 2015 but ultimately discarded following critique from leaders who maintained their offices by augmenting term limits (Terwase, Abdul-Talib, & Zengeni, 2015). Notwithstanding this significant limitation in the implementation of the protocol by ECOWAS, the organization's initiatives in addressing conflicts among member states cannot be dismissed. Scholars argue, based on available evidence, that despite the extensive measures instituted by ECOWAS for conflict management in Gambia, the outcomes of these efforts appear to be minimal.

In light of this context, a multitude of studies has been conducted to explore the empirical correlation between conflict management in West Africa and the role of ECOWAS in conflict resolution; however, the subject of the protocol on democracy and good governance has yet to attract the scholarly focus it warrants concerning the political stalemate in Gambia. It is not surprising that scholars such as Daffeh (2018) have raised inquiries regarding the inability of numerous African nations to achieve democratic consolidation.

He posits that many governance scholars advocate for socio-economic and cultural prerequisites that are essential for the entrenchment of democracy. For example, scholars like Adejumbi (2000) assert that elements such as the rule of law, transparency, accountability, and the presence of vigorous democratic institutions are vital for democratic consolidation. His assertions reinforce the prevailing academic discourse surrounding democratic governance. This supports the proposition that institutional reforms are crucial for the consolidation of democracy.

This indicates that governments that comply with the rule of law are more inclined to fortify their democratic frameworks. While the notion of democracy encompasses various interpretations and implications across Africa, it is evident that democracy as a governance model may foster social unity and ensure sustained prosperity in the continent. Scholars such as Ndulu and Tennamwenge (2014) contend that consolidated democracies possess the potential to achieve enduring national development and alleviate poverty.

Conversely, other scholars argue that nations necessitate specific preconditions to effectively implement democratic systems. For instance, Shenhav (2006) argues that governments can facilitate democracy by promoting the rule of law alongside robust institutional frameworks. His assertions are predicated on the belief that the rule of law and strong institutions promote democratic consolidation, rather than any alternative factors.

Laitin (2003) underscores that the rule of law serves as the cornerstone of democratic consolidation. While other scholars have highlighted the importance of democratic consolidation, linking its endurance to resilient institutions and the rule of law. Although scholars often attribute the challenges faced by many African nations in achieving democratic consolidation to a deficiency in strong institutions and the rule of law.

Scholars such as O'Donnell *et. al.* (1968) have advocated that African nations should prioritize the establishment of the rule of law as a means to consolidate their democratic frameworks. In response to this adverse situation, ECOWAS, within its operational framework, recognized these challenges and consequently mandated that all member states adopt the protocol on Good Governance and Democracy as well as the protocol on Conflict Management, Security, and Resolution, which indeed is the rationale behind the directive for ECOWAS leaders to pursue resolutions regarding the post-election crisis in Gambia.

However, notwithstanding the substantial contributions made by numerous scholars aimed at elucidating the Gambian post-election crisis, there persists a pronounced deficiency in their evaluations. For instance, Daffeh (2018) concentrated his examination on the socio-economic and cultural conditions necessary for the consolidation of democracy within the sub-region.

Adejumobi (2000) articulated that adherence to the rule of law, transparency, accountability, and the establishment of resilient democratic institutions are imperative for the consolidation of democracy. Ndulu and Tendamwenge (2014) reinforced their assertions regarding the eradication of

poverty. Shenhav (2006) directed his investigation towards the rule of law and the establishment of strong institutions. Laitin (2003) accentuated that the rule of law serves as the cornerstone of democratic consolidation. Meanwhile, other scholars posited that the preservation of robust institutions and adherence to the rule of law constitute essential prerequisites for the consolidation of democracy. Despite the concerted efforts of scholars to tackle the issue, they neglected to recognize or establish an empirical correlation between the collaboration of ECOWAS member states and the entrenchment of democratic practices and good governance in The Gambia. Consequently, this study endeavors to address this oversight by examining conflict management in the context of the post-election crisis and the ECOWAS protocol on democracy and good governance in The Gambia.

### Conceptual Framework

This segment aims to elucidate the concept of conflict. To comprehend what constitutes this notion, Zartman (2007) perceives conflict as an 'exercise in which parties act according to their preferences, provided that the cost-benefit ratio remains beneath a specific threshold'. He further characterizes it as a straightforward contest among parties, each endeavoring to impose a unilateral resolution to the issue at hand. He contended that:

... a conscious rival, opponent, or enemy that entails the defense of what one does not possess, and the act of acquisition may necessitate the appropriation of that which another party desires (Zartman, 2007:27).

According to Yabi (2010, p. 311), conflict is conceptualized as a social factual scenario wherein at least two parties (individuals, groups, states) are engaged, striving for objectives that can be attained solely by one party, or desiring to utilize incompatible means to achieve a specific aim. This indicates a contestation over values or claims to status, power, and limited resources, in which the aspirations of the involved groups or individuals extend beyond merely securing the desired values to encompass the neutralization, injury, or elimination of adversaries.

The terms crisis and conflict, as previously mentioned, are perceived as 'foreign entities' within human society or interpersonal relationships. Both phenomena represent disruptions to peaceful coexistence within human society, thereby undermining harmonious relationships both internally and externally within a group.

### **Conflict Resolution**

Conflict resolution necessitates the acknowledgment by the opposing parties of each other's interests, requirements, viewpoints, and ongoing existence. The most efficacious approaches discern the fundamental origins of the conflict and tackle them through solutions that are mutually acceptable, self-sustaining, and enduring. The practice of conflict resolution may also encompass a diverse range of emphases, including but not limited to collaboration, avoidance of confrontation, non-competition, and a positive-sum perspective.

Significant obstacles arise when parties occasionally prefer, for various motivations, the perpetuation of conflict rather than its resolution. In such situations, the involvement of external entities can be pivotal in establishing a balance of power, implementing sanctions or incentives, or functioning as neutral mediators or invested facilitators. Not all conflicts are amenable to conflict resolution methodologies (Miller, 2005, p. 25).

### **Concept of Regional Integration**

The notion of regional integration is intricately linked to international relations and political dynamics, particularly within contemporary global frameworks. Regional integration may be construed as a mechanism for achieving a balance of power or for reinforcing the capabilities of less powerful nations. This interpretation arises primarily from the collaboration of states that seek to gain insights from those possessing relatively greater power. States form alliances to secure the advantage of protection from potential aggressors or to benefit from the safeguarding offered by their more powerful counterparts.

From an economic perspective, states pursue integration to attain economic advantages and to establish a common ground that facilitates the development of the "most favoured nation" status (Deutsch *et. al.*, 1957;

Haas, 1971). This understanding of regional integration pertains to the eradication of tariffs and border impediments, as well as the promotion of the free movement of goods and individuals within the borders of the integrating nations.

Regional integration, as a manifestation of international integration, is defined by Dauda (2010) as a voluntary association of a permanent nature, comprising several sovereign states situated in a specific geographical area, which, due to their proximity, shared interests, or cultural, linguistic, historical, or spiritual affinities, collectively assume responsibility for the peaceful resolution of disputes that may arise among them.

One of the foundational scholars of integration (Holthaus, 2018) articulated the concept as the collective governance and material interdependence among states. Mitrany posited that states could integrate within confined functional, technical, or economic domains. Consequently, this implies that international agencies would address human needs, bolstered by knowledge and expertise; which, in turn, would foster the loyalty of the populace, stimulate their engagement, and broaden the scope of integration (Holthaus, 2018).

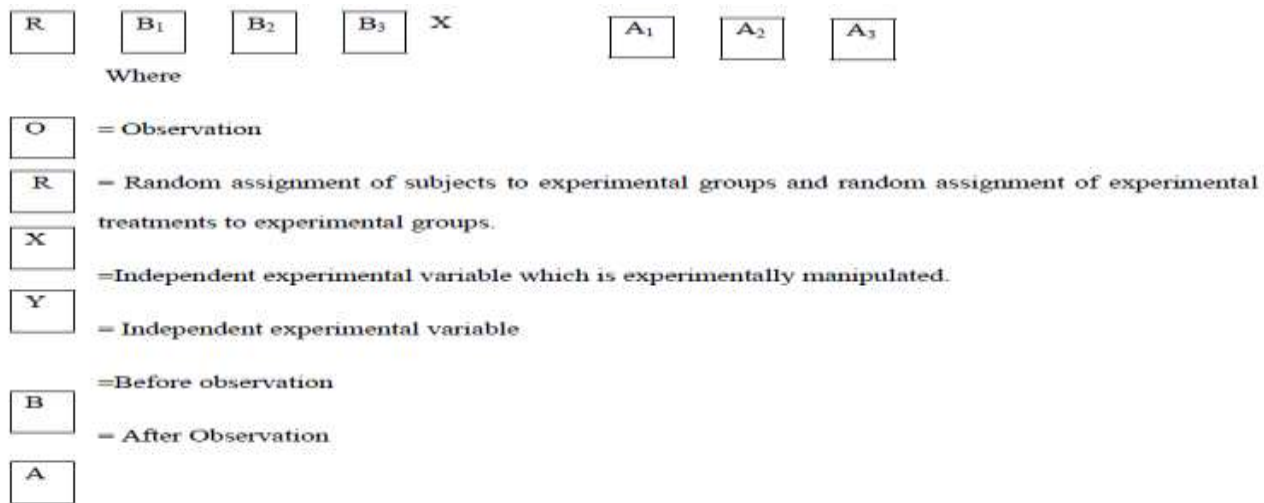
However, sub-regional integration within the context of ECOWAS can be analyzed as the association of states based on their geographical location in West Africa, aimed at promoting convergence and overarching integration among the fifteen member states of the sub-region, underpinned by treaties or other cooperative arrangements. The fundamental objective is to enhance the quality of life for the citizens of the member states.

## **METHODOLOGY**

This study adopted the single case ex-post facto design. Kerlinger (1977) defined ex-post facto research design as a form of descriptive research in which an independent variable has occurred and an investigator starts with the observation of a dependent variable. Similarly, Cohen and Manon (in Ezeibe, 2012) noted that ex-post facto design investigates possible causes and effects relationship by observing an existing condition, look for plausible causal agents.

Indeed, ex-post facto design is used when experimental research is not possible, such as when people have self-selected levels of an independent variable or when a treatment is naturally occurring and the researcher could not control the degree of its use. In this design, an existing case is observed for some time in order to study or evaluate it.

This justifies our decision to adopt the ex-post facto design which Asika (2006) also referred to as single case design. Again, this design has series of before observations, one case and a series of after observations. The single case design otherwise called the ex-post facto research design is diagrammatically represented as follows:



Source: (Asika, in Ezeibe, 2012).

Ex-post facto analysis of the independent variable (X) and the dependent variable (Y) is based on concomitant variation. Hence (X) occurs there is likelihood that (Y) will follow at some point later. Applying the ex-post facto design to our study, the test of the hypothesis I, involves observing the X (ECOWAS collaboration among member states) and Y (democratic practices and good governance in Gambia); hypothesis II, involves observing X (ECOWAS military intervention in Gambia) and Y (transparency and accountability in the management of public affairs in Gambia). In all the cases, the observation was made at the same time because the effects of the former on the latter had already taken place before this inquiry.

### DATA COLLECTION AND ANALYSIS

The research employed the documentary method for data collection to amass sufficient evidence for the validation and assessment of our hypotheses. The documentary method is defined as an investigative approach utilizing official or personal documents as the primary sources of information; thus, the study depended on secondary data sources comprising a collection of resources including books, academic journals, online platforms, and various hard and soft articles. Additionally, the research extensively

incorporated materials accessible via the internet that provided pertinent information related to the subject matter under scrutiny. The decision to utilize the documentary method of data collection is justified by the considerable advantages associated with its implementation, which primarily mitigates "the research effect," guarantees the availability of requisite materials for the study, offers affordability and reliability of data that might not be obtainable through other means, conserves time, and ensures the cost-effectiveness of the data collection process.

Moreover, our selection of this method of data collection is based on the premise that it is implausible for any individual to articulate expertise on a subject without integrating the perspectives of others. Consequently, the application of the documentary method of data collection is particularly advantageous due to the interface it provides between data accessibility and the substantial temporal constraints it alleviates, thereby enabling us to compile all essential data for the analysis of the research while also delivering a comprehensive description of existing phenomena. Therefore, the benefits associated with this method of data collection were pivotal in informing our choice.

In addition, the descriptive method was employed in the analysis of the data obtained from secondary sources in this investigation. This method essentially encompasses any technique aimed at delineating a phenomenon, specifically how a particular subject is perceived. It endeavors to scrutinize situations in order to articulate the normative standards (Waliman, 2011, P.10). A notable characteristic of descriptive research is its neutrality, objectivity, and positive disposition.

The rationale behind selecting this method for data analysis is that it empowers the researcher to delineate existing conditions and seeks to establish a foundation for the discovery of new insights. Descriptive analysis is predicated upon the examination and elucidation of available data and general information to ascertain facts and derive conclusions from inferences. Thus, our analysis will be grounded in the interpretation of information acquired from textbooks, journals, newspapers, and internet sources within the context of this study.

## ISSUES OF LITERATURE

The appraisal of the existing literature, as illustrated above, reveals that a substantial volume of scholarly work exists wherein researchers endeavor to propose sustainable solutions to the escalation of conflicts in West Africa. Despite the sophistication and distinctiveness of their writings in the context of the previously reviewed literature, none have successfully established an empirical connection between the collaborative efforts of ECOWAS member states and the reinforcement of democratic practices and good governance in The Gambia. For instance, scholars such as Daffeh (2018) concentrated their analyses on the socio-economic and cultural conditions deemed necessary for the consolidation of democracy within the sub-region.

Adejumobi (2000) articulated that the principles of the rule of law, transparency, and accountability, in conjunction with resilient democratic institutions, are essential prerequisites for the process of democratic consolidation. Ndulu and Tennamwenge (2014) reinforced their assertions concerning the imperative of poverty alleviation. Shenhav (2006) focused his examination on the significance of the

rule of law and the establishment of robust institutions. Laitin (2003) asserted that the rule of law constitutes the fundamental basis for democratic consolidation. Other academics contend that the preservation of resilient institutions alongside the rule of law represents a crucial condition for democratic consolidation.

Notably, despite the scholarly efforts to engage with the subject matter, there exists a failure to recognize or empirically substantiate the correlation between ECOWAS collaboration among its member states and the entrenchment of democratic practices and good governance within Gambia. Consequently, it is upon this premise that the present study endeavors to address the existing lacuna in the literature.

## DISCUSSION

Since the inception of ECOWAS in 1975, The Gambia has been an integral member of the organization. Originally established to foster economic collaboration and integration within West Africa, ECOWAS transitioned to a more politically oriented role in the 1990s, propelled by a surge of political reforms and an increasing incidence of prolonged domestic violent conflicts in the region. The amended ECOWAS treaty (1993), particularly the Protocol on the Mechanism for Conflict Prevention (1999) and the Protocol on Democracy and Good Governance (2001), formally codified the organization's commitment to the promotion of democracy and good governance, as well as the adoption of what would later be termed the Responsibility to Protect (R2P).

Electoral observation has constituted an element of the ECOWAS mandate since the revised treaty of 1993; however, the responsibilities were further delineated with the 2001 protocol. The establishment of the Electoral Assistance Unit by the ECOWAS Commission in 2005 marked a pivotal moment when ECOWAS commenced systematic observation of all national elections within member countries (Hartmann, 2013: 42).

The implementation of the protocol became evident in the aftermath of the contentious presidential elections in Gambia in December 2016. ECOWAS succeeded in "restoring

democracy" within the nation by leveraging the threat of force, albeit without the deployment of direct physical violence. The backing of both the African Union and the United Nations Security Council conferred legitimacy upon ECOWAS, thereby reinforcing what was fundamentally an ECOWAS policy, and indeed an African approach to resolving African challenges.

It was only when the prospect of military intervention became plausible that the Gambian regime acquiesced to its electoral defeat. As articulated by Hartmann (2017), four principal factors elucidate the actions of ECOWAS and its resultant efficacy:

- ECOWAS possessed a definitive legal mandate to invoke the threat of force to safeguard democracy within one of its member states;
- There existed a consensus regarding the capability of ECOWAS forces to effectively contend with the relatively diminutive Gambian military;
- The Gambian president was devoid of supportive allies among his regional counterparts or significant external allies from outside the African continent;
- Regional leaders, notably Nigeria and Senegal, made a credible commitment to the prospect of regional intervention.

While the intervention was predominantly perceived as a triumph for pro-democratic activist regionalism, it is essential to emphasize that the unique socio-political conditions in West Africa render the replication of this model in other regions of Africa improbable.

## CONCLUSION, FINDINGS AND RECOMMENDATIONS

This investigation scrutinized the pivotal role played by ECOWAS in alleviating the post-election crisis in Gambia of 2016, employing the 2001 protocol on democracy and good governance as a foundational instrument.

The analysis asserted that the enactment of the protocol became evident subsequent to Jammeh's reluctance to relinquish power to Adama Barrow after initially conceding defeat in the electoral process. Consequently, it posited that the endorsement of the 2001 supplementary protocol on democracy and

good governance endowed ECOWAS with the requisite political impetus, rationale, and legitimacy to intervene in the Gambian post-election crisis, given its status as one of the member-states. Among the conclusions drawn, the study firmly asserted that although the implementation of the protocol yielded certain favorable outcomes in the Gambian post-election crisis, it did not entirely resolve the situation, as the political landscape in Gambia continues to experience a deviation from democratic norms, albeit without overt violence.

Furthermore, the concerns surrounding transparency and accountability in the administration of public affairs in Gambia persist as an abstraction rather than a practical reality. Based on the findings articulated above, this study proposes the following recommendations:

- The leadership of ECOWAS should embrace a more holistic and cooperative approach among member states that guarantees a stringent entrenchment of democratic principles and good governance in both Gambia and across member-states. The primary findings indicate that despite ECOWAS's collaboration with the African Union (AU), the United Nations (UN), the West African Civil Society Institute (WACSI), and the Council of the Wise (CoW) in mediating the 2016 post-election conflict reconstruction in Gambia, their collective efforts failed to ameliorate enduring challenges such as the disregard for human rights, inadequate adherence to the rule of law, and insufficient access to power through free, fair, and transparent electoral processes in Gambia. It is on this basis that I recommend that ECOWAS ensure the rigorous application of the protocol on democracy and good governance among its member states. This indicates that the absence of effective implementation of the protocol has been a significant contributor to the deficiency of democratic practices and good governance among member states. For instance, a notable inadequacy has been ECOWAS's inability to confront the tendency among member state leaders to amend national constitutions to extend their term limits, with discussions regarding term-limit modifications proliferating within ECOWAS. For example, a proposal to prohibit third terms was



deliberated in 2015 but was subsequently postponed due to resistance from leaders who had themselves maintained their positions by extending term limits. A prominent illustration of this is the Togolese president Faure Gnassingbé, the progeny of Gnassingbé Eyadéma (who had presided over Togo for thirty-eight years), alongside President Jammeh, who governed Gambia prior to the 2016 presidential election. In this regard, ECOWAS should ensure that it translates its rhetoric into action by compelling all member states to adhere to the constitutional stipulations articulated in the protocol.

- ECOWAS leadership should adopt a different military measure that ensures and encourages transparency and accountability in the management of public affairs in both Gambia and among member-states. This could be achieved by strengthening the Mediation and Security Council (MSC). The MSC is the core institution of the protocol and is responsible for decision-making on military interventions in member states. ECOWAS could strengthen the MSC by ensuring that all member states sit in the MSC and decide with unanimity, ways of approaching issues of security concern. This would ensure that all member-states have an equal say in the decision-making process, promoting transparency and accountability. Again, ECOWAS could promote transparency and accountability in the management of public affairs by supporting electoral processes, respecting human rights and the rule of law, and enhancing the judiciary. This gesture could be achieved by providing training and resources to electoral bodies, human rights organizations, and the judiciary in member-states.

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