

The Implementation of Norms in ECOWAS

Contextualising the Normative Environment

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Doctor of Philosophy

University of York

Politics and International Relations

December, 2024

Abstract

This thesis aims to investigate the norm-building process within the West African region. The focus is on variations in the outcome of accepted sovereignty-threatening or limiting norms. Notably, this thesis contextualises the region's normative environment in accounting for these variations. In 1999, ECOWAS member states adopted a security mechanism which introduced an interventionist norm within the region. Since then, ECOWAS has activated its intervention mechanism in several instances, including the conflicts between 1997 and 2000 in Sierra Leone, the 1989-2003 war in Liberia, the 1998-2003 conflicts in Guinea-Bissau, and the conflicts in Mali that began in 2012 and 2017 in the Gambia. This region's security mechanism has been regarded as the first of its kind and was initially also considered as usurping the powers of the United Nations. In contrast, implementing accepted norms of democracy and good governance has not achieved similar levels of integration in the region. Instead, as observed recently as 2023, following numerous challenges to the democratic process across member states, the region suffered multiple coup d'états. The investigation of this thesis revealed that the West African region's normative environment exhibits concern over the obsolescence of conquest and variations in member states' sovereignty, which are critical sources of cognitive priors influencing member states' preferences for normative outcomes. When these influences are further analysed within the case studies, the results reveal contributory causal mechanisms that explain the varying outcomes of regional security norm acceptance and the abandonment of democratic and good governance norms. The thesis findings demonstrate that the causal mechanisms for ECOWAS regional security norm link to outcomes include circumstances of preserving regional stability at all costs, deterring external interference and aggression, and serving as norm substitutes. The variation in outcome observed with a similar sovereignty-threatening norm—democracy and good governance—is caused by member states integrating the norm's outcomes and engaging in norm revalidation due to the continuous contestation of the norm.

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Acknowledgement

This thesis's primary supervisor, Professor Tony Heron, is remarkably balanced, experienced and brilliant. Tony deserves my most profound appreciation for his generosity, relentless guidance and feedback throughout this project. Tony's support gave me a much-needed boost to my confidence and work ethic. When I first set out to pursue a PhD, I began by choosing my thesis supervisor mainly due to the familiarity of his reply email. That choice, I found, was an act of providence because, throughout my PhD, I encountered numerous individuals within and outside the walls of York who had testimonials to Tony's unending graciousness. I am only an addition to these voices. Tony has been an incredible mentor, teacher, and supervisor to many others and me.

Similarly, I would like to thank Peg Murray-Evans, my second supervisor, whose guidance significantly influenced the development of this thesis. Peg's work culture and approach to feedback were also traits I emulated, and these additions served me well throughout this journey. My sincere appreciation also goes to Professor Jappe Eckhardt, the TAP member. Jappe's support and encouragement during this thesis progression meeting interactions were invaluable and reassuring. My gratitude also extends to all the staff in the Department of Politics and International Relations. The thesis research extended to the ECOWAS Parliament and the ECOWAS Commission offices in Abuja, Nigeria, between September and December 2023. First, I would like to thank everyone who granted me interviews for this thesis, including those who contributed to other conversations. My gratitude is especially extended to Mr Molokwu Azikiwe, the ECOWAS Commission's Director of Budget and Treasury; Dr Kabeer Mohammed Garba, the ECOWAS Parliament Bureau Manager; and Mrs Eucharia Onwuneme, Librarian/Archivist at the ECOWAS Commission. I am truly indebted to their combined efforts, which facilitated my access to resources, making this thesis fieldwork an overwhelming success.

My PhD was a very lonely endeavour. Therefore, I must thank the incredible and selfless efforts of Miss Joy Eze, who was extremely kind, patient, and generous to me throughout the experience. I also thank Mr Nathaniel Otie for all his support and encouragement, as well as Miss Angela Sands and little Miss Lyla-Mae Lee, who constantly navigated me through several rough waters with adorable and memorable moments.

Specifically, I want to thank my family, Athena Ilamina Okparaolu, Chief (Hon) Wofuru Okparaolu and Mrs Mary Okparaolu, who tethered me to the most important things. Although they rarely understood my experience, they always prayed for me. I know we all feel the relief of the end together.

To God Almighty, may these tears of gratitude soak the helm of your garment. Thank you!

Authors Declaration

I declare that this thesis is a presentation of original work, and I am the sole author. This work has not previously been presented for an award at this, or any other, University. All sources are acknowledged as References.

1. Chapter One: Introduction

1.1. Overview

This thesis focuses on the norm-building process, particularly its implementation within regional organisations. The core aim is to enhance understanding of how, why, and under what conditions ideas and practices take root and endure. More specifically, I investigate the divergent pathways taken by collective security and democracy/good governance norms in the context of West African regionalism: why were regional elites willing to adopt the former while abandoning the latter? Why some norms are accepted and others, even when accepted, are abandoned during implementation? Theoretically, this puzzle also relates to understanding the construction of social identities. This research gap is increasingly important, especially in the West African region, where a spate of coups has highlighted the sustained erosion of democratic norms that have often gone unnoticed. In an interview, UN Deputy Secretary-General Amina Mohammed noted that over the last decade, West Africa had reversed its development gains due to the rise in conflicts. The UN Deputy Secretary-General blamed the increased instability within the region on the resurgence of unconstitutional changes of government. She noted that although the values of democracy and good governance may still exist in the area, recent developments have led to increasing challenges to the norm, owing to concerns that they are deemed unfit for purpose in light of local realities (UN News, 2024). This unease about the future of democratic and good governance norms in the region is also underscored by Ajala (2023), who notes that accounting for the attitudes of political elites is crucial. Ajala explains that the specific reason for the recent coups in Guinea, Burkina Faso and Mali was related to various undemocratic behaviours and governance issues associated with the country's leaders, especially in Niger, where the author suggests that the junta shattered decades of relative political stability due to cultural issues, foreign intervention and the failure of the ECOWAS. In attempting to tackle the challenge of norm building in the West African region, two variations to norm outcomes are associated with democracy and collective security. Although these norms are equally promoted and accepted by their incorporation as protocols¹ within the Economic Community of West African States (ECOWAS), their implementation has taken markedly different courses. These outcomes, I argue, are recognisable throughout West Africa's 49 years of regionalism, irrespective of its saturated environment with multifaceted normative instruments, including agreements, treaties, and protocols targeted at maintaining regional collective security and stability, as well as democracy and good governance. For instance, as observed, the West African region continues to face governance challenges, some culminating in coup d'états, with 54 already recorded, and the most recent successful attempt in 2023.

¹ Protocol Relating to The Mechanism for Conflict Prevention, Management, Resolution, Peacekeeping and Security 1999 and Protocol A/SP1/12/01 on Democracy and Good Governance 2001

My ambition in this thesis is to address the puzzle of why specific sovereignty-limiting norms, such as collective security, are accepted and implemented with the full cooperation of member states while others, such as democracy and good governance, although accepted, are abandoned during implementation. To achieve this, I focus on developing minimally sufficient explanations for these variations, capable of describing the constituent features of an outcome with no redundant parts (Mackie 1965). A norm outcome refers to a result either in alignment, deviation or modification to an established community standard or social practice. The outcomes examined within this thesis relates to injunctive norms, which describe normatively appropriate behaviour in a specific context, reflected by the approval or disapproval within a community and motivated by the expectation of rewards or punishment (Heinicke et al., 2022). Some alternative plausible explanations for these outcomes have centred around institutional design. For instance, comparative regionalism studies between the European Union and ECOWAS have suggested that, although interregional influences shape the organisations, their outcomes have been dissimilar due to their variance in integration levels (Ahmed, 2006; Hartmann, 2016; Piccolino, 2019).

In contrast, I argue for a causal explanation that can be conceptualised within the framework of necessity to identify the mechanisms underlying these divergent outcomes (Mahoney, 2015). This will involve a sequential and causal analysis designed to develop explanations from events or chains of events at various points in the development of ECOWAS that can contribute to our understanding of these diverse norm outcomes. By examining the region's patterns of interaction with the international community from the pre-colonial to the post-colonial era, this thesis aims to identify critical factors that influence norm diffusion. This thesis's emphasis on the norm-building process recognises that norms constrain and constitute the behaviour of states and their actors, especially people-centred norms, which are only significant when translated into practice. Hence, to fully understand and explain the impact of norms on politics, researchers and policymakers must determine what conditions influence outcomes (Betts and Orchard, 2014). David Strang defines *norm diffusion* as a process identifiable when "prior adoption of a trait or practice in a population alters the probability of adoption for remaining non-adopters" (Strang 1991: 325). In this thesis, the norm diffusion process transmits information or practice from one actor to another. Norm diffusion has since been incorporated into the study of political norms such as democracy, human rights, responsibility to protect, sovereignty, the rule of law, justice, equality and equity (Valentim, 2024; Näsström, 2013; Waldron, 2016; Joel, 2021; Zimmermann et al., 2023)

Early norm research mostly restricted the understanding of accepted norms to the outcomes of international cooperation (Keohane and Nye, 1973). However, contemporary constructivist scholarship, including Finnemore and Sikkink (1998) and March and Olsen (1998), pioneered the shaping of current research towards the growing adoption of ideational factors to explain human interactions (see also Price and Reus-Smit, 1998; Finnemore and Sikkink, 2001; Lantis, 2017). These extensions have led to

the exploration of normative research into the formation and subsequent operation of regional organisations (Acharya, 2014, 2009, 2011; Lombaerde et al., 2011; Risse, 2015; Tallberg et al., 2017; Duina and Lenz, 2016); the nature of norms which shape the behaviour and the cooperation of states (Wiener, 2014); and norm diffusion and African regionalism (Hout and Mohamed, 2019; Risse 2016; Piccolino 2016; Lenz, 2012; Buzdugan, 2013; Clapham 2001). Related norm compliance research has also been expanded to highlight the regularity of violations across different policy fields or when unsuccessful norms are challenged to rejection or modification by state actors (Panke & Petersohn, 2015; de Nevers, 2007). Published research also focuses on social change from discursive interventions promoted by both norm-givers and takers (Payne, 2001; Weiner, 2004).

In addition, studies have focused on norm contestation and the development of re-legitimised norms, such as the limitations on sovereignty (Ng, 2021). Recent norm contestation research has also addressed forms of contestation that influence the implementation of norms (Stimmer and Wisken, 2019; Hall, 2019) and the institutionalisation and implementation's influence on shaping the outcome of fundamental international norms (Betts and Orchard, 2014). These research evolutions demonstrate the versatility of norm research's analytical utility, albeit with notable scholarly attempts to resolve related challenges to its conceptual and theoretical frameworks due to its increasing application. These studies analyse what complete norm-building represents and when norm implementation establishes norm compliance. Orchard and Wiener (2023) describe implementation as the "*sine qua non for normative legitimacy*", or a process upon which contestation is a condition without exceptions (Ibid: 14). On internalised norms, Wiener's behaviourist perspective calls for the prioritising of normative legitimacy, which can also be applied to when explaining how shared normative meanings change during the transfer to the state (Wiener, 2017b). Stimmer and Wisken (2019) highlight contextual differences in the contestation process (both discursive and behavioural), which, in their view, influence the implementation of norms. Panke and Peterson (2015) offer additional insight into circumstances under which embedded norms are either abolished or curtailed in their application.

Despite the growing body of studies on institutionalisation, compliance, contestation, and, recently, the implementation of norms, there remains an equally perceptible research gap that this thesis aims to address. To this end, I develop the concept of a *normative environment (NE)*, which describes a crucial source of influence on the implementation mechanisms used by actors when designing agreements to achieve targeted normative outcomes. As explained by Thomas Tieku, any framework to measure performance in international organisations would inevitably account for the creation and implementation of rules. However, these rules would require a "supportive normative setting to thrive" (Tieku, 2018:28). The concept comprises the region's cognitive priors and institutional sets of rules (IR) that form the bedrock of member states' preferences and mechanisms for implementing ECOWAS regional norms. The underlying proposition to enhance attention on the normative environment is for

researchers to collectively analyse the regional organisation and member states as primary actors in shaping norm outcomes within the region.

1.2. Case study Selection

In the previous section, I settled on the ECOWAS as a case study to explain the variation in outcomes of specific sovereign limiting norms, such as collective security, which are accepted and implemented with the full cooperation of member states, while others, such as democracy and good governance, although accepted, are abandoned during implementation. While these issues may not be limited to the region, the ECOWAS remains suitable considering certain similarities with regional organisations, such as the EU. The advantage here is that it provides sufficient comparative profiles to determine the measurement for the outcome investigated and the possibility of applying this thesis's explanation to other international organisations. In addition, the divergent outcomes of governance and collective security norms in ECOWAS present a striking puzzle, allowing for a ready-made comparison between the implementation of these norms within the same institution. This comparison enables me to examine norm outcomes while holding (some) other similarities constant. Betts and Orchard (2014) suggest that norm compliance should be monitored at the international level to expose normative political contestation, reinterpretation or the undermining of norms at the domestic level. It is essential, however, to reiterate that norms are neither inherently good nor bad but rather subject to the consideration of their proponents (Finnemore and Sikkink, 1998, p. 892).

I emphasise this due to the evidence of debates surrounding the dependence on institutional similarities when used to gauge outcomes or predict behaviour. For instance, although the ECOWAS is parallel with the EU, especially in linear integration succession patterns from regional customs unions to establishing common markets (Clapham, 2001; Gibbs, 2009; Bach, 2015; Hartmann, 2016; Piccolino, 2019), this is not an uncommon diffusion feature within regional organisations (Jetschke, 2010). Especially in ECOWAS, as Ahmed (2006) maintains, these are only superficial similarities, limited to regional integration structures, and do not encompass policy and practice. Some of these limitations have been found to impact institutional modelling, arguably in response to the region's colonial legacies, post-colonial dependence and isomorphism when embodying their conformity with universal standards of legitimacy and modernity (Piccolino, 2019; Beckert, 2010). Other results suggest an informality of the region's institutional regionalism (Bach, 2003) and the subordination of regional arrangements to the exigencies of the neo-patrimonial state (Piccolino and Von Humboldt, 2015). Jetschke (2009) focuses on secondary factors of this incompatibility resulting from the lack of resources to sustain these institutions and the reinforcement of the zero-sum conception of sovereignty. Fioramonti and Mattheis (2015) highlight critical operational issues that are responsible for poor strategy execution, ineffective operations, and the slow implementation of objectives (see also Gibbs, 2009; Söderbaum and Taylor, 2008; Van de Walle, 2001).

While these considerations are also relevant to the choice of ECOWAS, my decision to focus on the regional institution is reinforced by the broader contribution to the debate from other authors such as Acharya, who, while adjusting for regionalism's institutional and normative dimensions and accounting for issues surrounding regional diversity and complexity, warns of ignoring overlapping diversities represented by autonomy as well as the interconnectedness of regionalisms (Acharya, 2016). These overlapping diversities remain unchanged even as Lenz (2013) observes an ongoing institutional and normative decoupling of the regional organisations from the EU model. The EU model has always acted as a default when attributing West African regional outcomes as unstandardised. This includes outcomes within the ECOWAS region, which have demonstrated an absence of democratic ideals, weak political commitments, unfulfilled mandates, the undermining of regional political stability, the suppression of good governance and the exertion of widespread neglect in implementing community agreements (Tejpar and Albuquerque, 2015; Yaya, 2014; Okom, 2016). Such recognition has also driven the categorisation of outcomes within ECOWAS and many other African regional organisations as 'failed' (Van de Walle 2001; Fioramonti and Mattheis 2015; Söderbaum and Taylor 2008; Söderbaum 2010).

At this point, it is relevant to reiterate that I do not make any attempt within this thesis to solve challenges associated with democracy or good governance in the region. Neither have I set out to offer a blueprint for the legitimacy nor to offer judgment on the success or failures of the collective security initiatives in the region. Instead, this thesis explains the causality between the acceptance or the abandoning of norms in the West African region. Goldstein and Keohane (1993) propose that this diachronic approach is imperative when investigating norms that threaten sovereignty or those that limit it. This approach suggests analysing the old rules and socially embedded norms and exploring the archaeology of ideas to determine the preference for one idea over another. These preferences are reflected in the implementation mechanisms that have been converged upon, which include agreements, treaties, and protocols that directly affect the exercise of member states' sovereignty within the regional organisation. Therefore, to investigate this relationship, two normative instruments are singled out for attention.

First is the Protocol Relating to the Mechanism for Conflict Prevention, Management, Resolution, Peacekeeping, and Security (1999). Understanding the development of this normative instrument is significant because the ECOWAS security architecture is arguably the most sophisticated within the African continent. For emphasis, the African Union (AU) extensively models its structure after that of ECOWAS, incorporating it into its broader continental security framework (Musah, 2011). The collective security framework in West Africa has also undergone a transformation of its foundational agreements, shifting from a non-aggression and non-intervention framework to the current

interventionist framework. While the focus is on explaining the norm-building process and its influence on the decisions of political elites, this thesis also offers a renewed examination of the conditions under which these processes occur and why collective security norms have been fully integrated into the region. For example, this process happened against the backdrop of the perceived prevalent neopatrimonial regime style in Africa. Second, the region was undergoing major political upheavals, marked by coups d'état, largely military governments, intrastate conflicts, and struggles to maintain sovereign power over states by leaders. Third, the recognition by actors that any effective integration could lead to the weakening of member states' sovereignty and the loss of control by these undemocratic governments over their people. Fourth, the normative instrument, even before its integration, had been operationalised against a member state's sovereignty. For instance, the Economic Community of West African States Monitoring Group (ECOMOG) intervened in conflicts between 1997 and 2000 in Sierra Leone, the 1989-2003 war in Liberia, and the 1998-2003 conflicts in Guinea-Bissau. Other engagements following the integration include the intervention in Mali, which began in 2012, and the 2017 conflict in The Gambia. These conditions underscore the importance of analysing this Protocol, as the regional integration idea remained intact even in the absence of democratic governments. Also, amid the collective security challenges, state leaders and elites maintained a commitment to regionalised action even at the prospect of surrendering some form of sovereignty and control. Ultimately, the ECOWAS security mechanism protocol remains a significant normative instrument, and its analysis would enhance our understanding of the norm-building process in the region. In addition to examining the specific Protocol, this thesis also extends its analysis to related collective security agreements.

The second is the Protocol on Democracy and Good Governance, adopted in 2001, which is supplementary to the Protocol Relating to the Mechanism for Conflict Prevention, Management, Resolution, Peacekeeping, and Security, adopted in 1999. The Protocol represents the present normative instrument which recognises the acceptance of democratic norms in the region. It is important to note that the Protocol is currently being negotiated to conform with acceptable democratic standards. Similarly, while the focus would be on explaining the norm-building process and how it influences the decisions of political elites, the conditions under which these processes occur and why democratic and good governance norms have not been fully integrated into the region also receive essential attention. This thesis aims to investigate the history of the norm from the non-ratified Declaration of Political Principles agreement of 1991 to its current forms. This process is crucial to understanding norm contestation within the region and the conditions that influence how decisions are reached regarding the integration of norms. Most prominently, the analysis of the current instrument should develop an understanding to guide our explanation for the outcome of governance standards, which has resulted in the recent unconstitutional changes in government. This thesis also engages in the analysis of related agreements, including the Supplementary Act A/SA1/12/16, Relating to the Enhancement of the Powers of the ECOWAS Parliament. Within the reviewed Enhancement Act, I reflect on the normative

framework of the ECOWAS Parliament, beginning with its establishment and spanning nearly three decades of contestation, as elites attempt to transform the institution from a consultative body into a more effective one. Although its powers have recently been enhanced, the ECOWAS-P remains limited in its co-decision function. For instance, its budgetary oversight can only be expressed as an opinion. While scholarships within this study area have contributed empirically and conceptually to understanding the roles of parliament in regional organisations, this thesis focuses on the process of contestation towards congruence. For example, Rittberger (2007) explains the causal mechanism underlying the relationship between an enhanced parliament and an understanding of the behaviour and perception of the democratic legitimacy deficit in the EU. Rittberger suggests that, even before the Single European Act 1986, the political elites of member states had empowered the parliamentary institution as a representative body. This is in comparison to the ECOWAS parliament, which has effectively acted as a consultative body for nearly three decades.

1.3. Contributions and Significance of the Study

This thesis contributes to the growing body of research on norms in West Africa. The result of this thesis investigation expands existing knowledge on how and why certain norms are perceived as an adequate fit by groups of elites who share a common community (Glas and Balogun, 2020). This contribution is significant to norm research as it empirically highlights why and which unique member states' preferences are influential to the norm-building process, particularly for sovereign-limiting norms. As Stimmer and Wisken (2019) argue, while human rights norms can be associated with singular imperatives, sovereign norms, including collective security, offer counterpoints and heighten actors' normative choices. Another contribution is to the overall debate on the decolonisation of regionalism study. The concern for decolonial scholarship, as expressed by Mumford (2020), reflects the attempts by mainstream Western disciplines to build universal knowledge. This thesis's concentration on empirical science, as suggested in Acharya (2016), develops the normative environment, which introduces core political values essential to the study of norms and promotes the study of West African regionalism away from Euro-centricity (Jetschke, 2010). The normative environment comprises the region's cognitive priors and institutional sets of rules (IR) that form the bedrock of member states' preferences and mechanisms for implementing ECOWAS regional norms. The underlying proposition of the concept is to enhance attention to the dynamic nature and influences of the norm process in the region, as well as the researchers' ability to collectively analyse the regional organisation and member states together as primary actors in shaping norm outcomes within the region.

The above contributions are derived from the first significance of this thesis. This involves pinpointing the increasing role social interactions play in contemporary international politics (Barbieri, 2019; Björkdahl et al., 2015). To illustrate, norm contestation research on the transfer of state sovereignty to

supranational organisations has recently come under immense challenge. Since 2016, the rise in populism and its agenda for stricter immigration laws, as well as nationalism in the cases of Brexit and the EU, have all been underlying trends in the resurgence of sovereignty claims (Joel, 2021). These contestations have led to varied outcomes in Africa and Europe. While states in Africa are traditionally perceived as jealously guarding sovereignty concerning regional integration (de Oliveira & Verhoeven, 2018), the rise in populism seems to be more of a threat to established Western regionalisms. To explain these varied outcomes, research contributions, such as those offered in this thesis, empirically identify causal pathways or processes that lead to an enhanced understanding of the acceptance or rejection of new norms. In the case of this thesis, the integration process of various sovereignty-limiting norms is examined. As emphasised in the finding of Joel (2021), even though the sub-regional and regional integration process in Africa may have seemed improper, more attention was paid by states in contesting its locus of sovereignty, regional norms, and mechanisms - to accept, qualify or reject norms, which is evidenced within the region's treaties, protocols, acts and other agreement.

The second significance of this thesis is the interrogation of the implementation of sovereignty-limiting norms in regional organisations, which places the Westphalian state and its variations at the centre of the investigation (Jetschke, 2010). However, to adequately explain variations in the Westphalian concept, this thesis resists the tempting urge to address the common themes of Euro-optimism versus Afro-pessimism, which have typically dominated regionalism and norm diffusion research. In this case, contestation occurs prior to implementation and between transnational norms and pre-existing social orders rather than focusing on translating norms to address domestic social orders.

Third, recognising isomorphic diffusion broadens this thesis's ethnographic research capability, including the adoption of contemporary theoretical literature to illustrate implementation preferences. Investigating within an isomorphic framework enhances the debate by incorporating regional agents' reconstructions of foreign norms to align with their cognitive priors and identities. Preference, therefore, goes beyond theories of rhetorical adaptation frequently featured in discourse as they limit the role of member state actors to that of norm takers. This restrictive agency is unconventional, as increasing studies show the enhanced roles of developing countries and the norm dynamics within their regional institutions, characterised by high levels of normative agency (Lopez, 2016; Glas and Balogun, 2020; Acharya, 2011; Risse, 2015).

1.4. Methodology

1.4.1 Process Tracing

To develop a methodological framework that investigates the diverse outcomes of specific sovereign-limiting norms, such as collective security, which are accepted and implemented with the full cooperation of member states while others, such as democracy and good governance, although accepted, are abandoned during implementation, this thesis investigation will trace their norm-building process within the ECOWAS. This process-tracing approach is geared towards understanding how the normative environment in the region shapes the implementation of specific norms. The approach also enhances the structure of knowledge around norm outcomes by revealing unique causal mechanisms in the West African region, given that the approach can integrate social structure and context with individual agency and decision-making (see Checkel, 2008; George and Bennett, 2005) to enhance its explanatory value (Jackson, 2011; Waldner, 2012; Gerring 20017; Salmon, 1998; Humphreys, 2010).

The process-tracing methodology is adopted for this thesis given the following: first, it goes beyond the threshold of self-evidence that X was a cause of Y in case Z. Instead, I aim to identify the cause of the determined outcome by examining empirically the sequence of events that produced it. As Mahoney (2015) maintains, this type of sequential analysis identifies critical junctures when certain choices or events occur that set countries (or other units of analysis) on long-term trajectories of change (Ibid: 204). To clarify, critical junctures in this thesis are observed to occur in different ways, and these differences are highly consequential (Collier and Hoeffler, 2002: 39; Falletti and Lynch, 2009: 1155). Also, sequential analysis allows the use of process tracing to observe the flow of events to elaborate on intervening pathways, originating circumstances and/or auxiliary outcomes, particularly with inductive process tracing, where the causal process is traced backwards to establish the prime cause of the case outcome (Trampusch & Palier, 2016; Jacobs, 2015). Second, it is distinguishable from other small-n cases, allowing for inferences on causal pathways regarding the variation in outcomes within a single case compared to a cross-case (Beach & Pedersen, 2019; Mahoney, 2015). Third, process tracing is a reliable method of explaining the phenomena of social and political constructs, which are evaluated through causal claims.

However, as with most widely embraced socio-political theoretical frameworks, defining process tracing encounters similar epistemological and ontological challenges. George and Bennett describe it as when “the researcher examines histories, archival documents, interview transcripts, and other sources to see whether the causal process a theory hypothesis or implied in a case is, in fact, evident in the sequence and values of the intervening variables in that case” (George and Bennett 2005: 6). This operationalises the procedural definition in George and McKeown (1985) as an ‘attempt to trace the process – the intervening steps – by which beliefs influence behaviour’ and as a means to make

‘historical arguments about causal processes in studies of human *behaviour*² and organisational decision-making’ (Ibid: 35).

Research Question – *Under what circumstances do sovereignty-threatening or limiting norms in ECOWAS display varied outcomes, and how do we account for this variation?*

1.4.2 Explain-Outcome Process Tracing

The thesis follows the ‘explaining-outcome’ process tracing approach instead of the more theory-centric theory-testing and theory-building variants. This approach is better suited for “*little-studied*” outcomes due to its ability to sift through the evidence to uncover plausible sufficient causal mechanisms that produce the outcome (Beach and Pedersen, 2019: 20). Figure 1.0 below illustrates that the explaining-outcome process tracing model can be approached from the deductive part of theory testing and the inductive part of theory building. It can also sequentially combine the two approaches (Stokke, 2019). In the explaining-outcome process tracing, Stokke explains that the theoretical level involves examining existing scholarship for potential mechanisms that can explain the case study outcome. However, at the empirical level, which relates to this thesis methodology, empirical data is used to identify case-specific mechanisms and reconceptualise the theories. Beach and Pedersen (2019) also note that the explaining-outcome process tracing variation is adapted to seek minimal sufficient explanations, particularly for puzzling outcomes. This process involves working backwards or from the bottom by sifting through the empirical materials to develop plausible explanations for causal pathways that describe why X (or multiple Xs) produce Y. Other variations of process tracing include theory testing *and theory building*. Research on adaptability to these variations is guided by the nature of inferences made, whether theory- or case-centric, and how to engage in mixed-method designs and recognise causal mechanisms dimensions. Theory-testing is based on demonstrating with a select theory within existing literature that the causal mechanism hypothesised linking X and Y is present and functions in the given case. Theory-building develops a theory to explain the causal mechanism between X and Y, which is generalisable to the case population (Beach & Pedersen, 2019).

² Addition mine

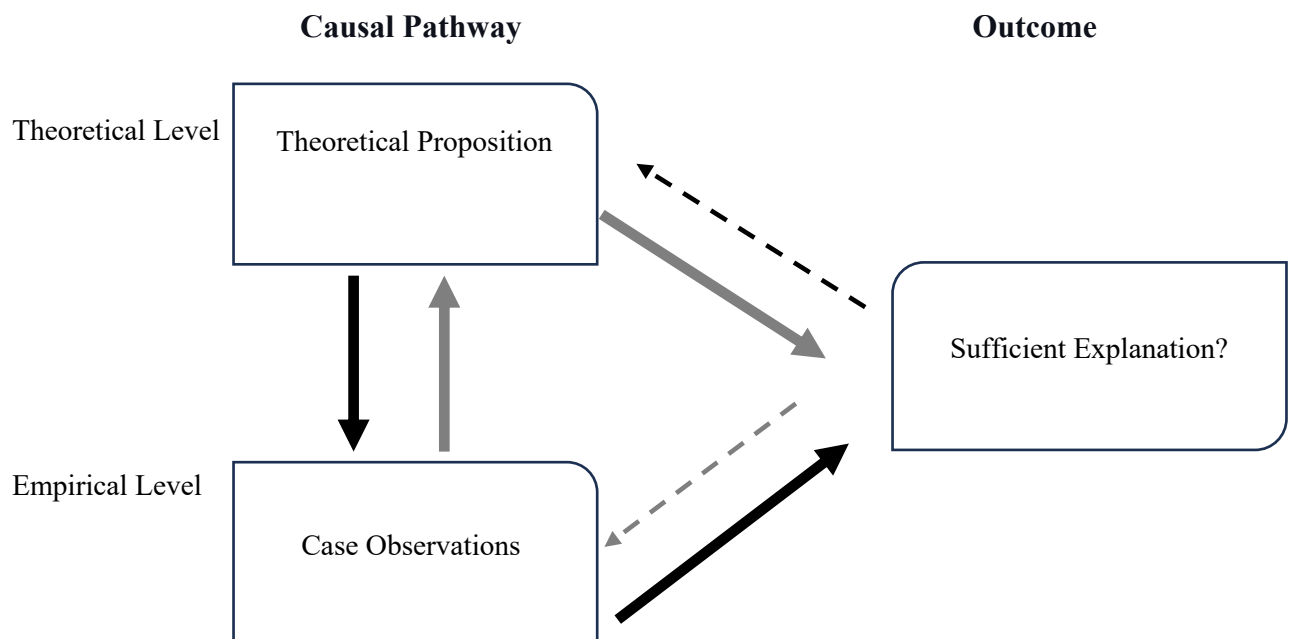


Figure 1.0 Explaining – Outcome Process tracing Model (Stokke, 2019)

1.4.3 Causal Reflection

The causality investigated in this thesis is treated as contributing conditions analysed to increase the probability of the outcome investigated. The absence of these contributions will not eliminate the outcome but rather presents a combination of factors that add weight and make it more likely (Mahoney, 2015; Beach and Pedersen, 2019). Causality is mainly aligned with the mechanistic understanding, primarily owing to the non-conjunction between the X and Y (see Groff, 2016; Baumgartner, 2008; Gerring, 2010; Mayntz, 2020; Pedersen & Beach, 2010). However, in this thesis, I deemphasise the mechanistic notion, although not in detail or in an attempt to mark a complete ideological shift from mechanistic causality.

This is important for two reasons: first, causal interaction represents a fundamental component of the relationship leading to an outcome, and it occurs when one causal process intersects with another to produce a modification of its structure (Woodward, 1989: 357). However, in this thesis, I interchange causal pathways with mechanisms to describe causes (X). Adopting the causal pathway presents a broader idea of factors contributing to causing an outcome without describing a specific process involved. Considering that the normative environment comprises factors such as cognitive priors and institutional rules that contribute to the overall likelihood of the outcome, the causal mechanism may not follow a specific set of steps through which the cause leads to an outcome. Explaining this nuanced

depiction of causal inference is essential to accommodate this thesis hypothesis. Growing ontological and epistemological explorations have highlighted conceptual variations between causal mechanisms and causal pathways. However, using either term equally increases the causal depth by diminishing the contiguity of time and space between causes and outcomes (Kohler-Hausmann, 2023). In causal modelling, Kohler-Hausmann identifies that, scholars sometimes use causal mechanisms to refer to the chain of causal relations released between a specified triggering event (X) and an outcome (Y), which can be related to a causal process or *pathway*³. Therefore, causal process in this thesis describes the pathway through which the impact of a treatment on an outcome is realised, placing the causal mechanism in the middle of the causal pathway X---M--Y (Röth, 2023; see Figure 2.0). Kohler-Hausmann explains the causal process as slowing down a movie to observe more distinct frames, thereby capturing prior events and triggering subsequent events as they unfold over time. This is in contrast to causal mechanisms, which represent whatever it is about the triggering variable (X) that endows it with the causal powers it has. In the movie analogy, this means zooming in on X at a specific point in time.

It is noteworthy that other scholars, such as Röth (2023), who conducted a systematic analysis of causal mechanisms, consider pathway analysis an essential complement to conventional approaches to causation, providing deeper epistemological explanations of the relationship between cause and outcome at a fundamental level (Ibid: 123). Röth suggests that pathways fail to attain the ontological criteria for understanding mechanistic causation when considering a sequence of mediators (or interactions). Therefore, they point out that pathways cannot demonstrate seamless productive continuity and that their core feature is the inferences from comparison across cases. In addition, although Röth concludes that pathways do not deserve to be regarded as mechanisms, he recognises that this is a rarity in the social sciences, as most scholars retain an evidential view of mechanisms as cause-to-effect pathways, which include at least one mediator (Röth, 2023: 128).

Second, given this thesis's commitment to an inductive approach to identifying causal pathways, as well as a relative lack of existing theoretical literature dealing with the type of norm outcome variation in question, it is not possible to set out a detailed account of the causal pathway invoked by this thesis in advance of the empirical analysis. However, this thesis does set out a broader hypothesis about the domain in which these causal pathways are to be found. The hypothesis is that the social context and institutional and discursive processes, which I refer to as the normative environment, through which norms become locally embedded, determine the success or otherwise of norm compliance. As such, my thesis's use of an explaining-outcome process tracing methodology is anchored to constructivist

³ Addition mine

ontology to map the critical junctures and causal pathways that explain different and contingent outcomes. The constructivist ontology recognises human agency and a more contingent account of social processes in which causal condition X may not always lead to outcome Y. This supports this thesis's choice of an inductive approach to demonstrate specific and contingent causal pathways that emerged in the case under study.

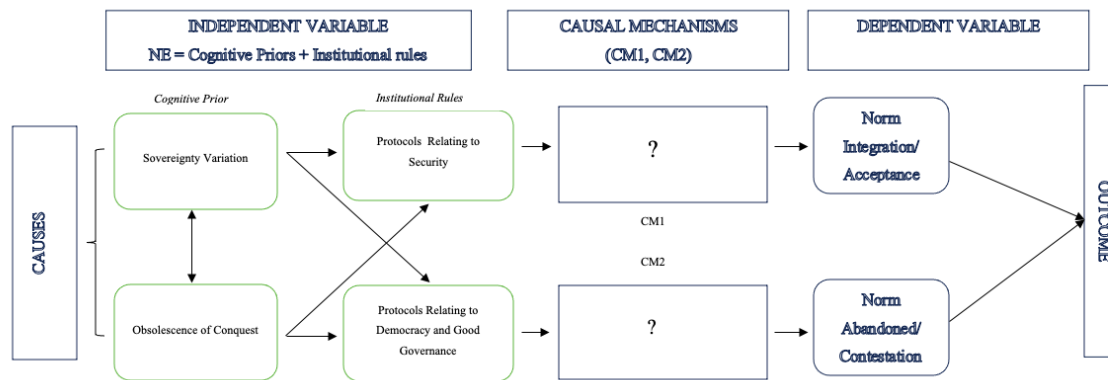


Figure 2.0 Causal Mechanisms in the Pathway to Norm Outcomes

From the foregoing, Waldner's (2012) definition of causal mechanisms mainly serves the methodological framework of this thesis as it symbolises "an agent or entity that can alter its environment because it possesses an invariant property that, in specific contexts, transmits either a physical force or information that influences the behaviour of other agents or entities" (Ibid: 18). In general, challenges to utilising causal mechanisms are associated with the ambiguity of the mechanistic explanation, the unrealistic demand for rigorous testing and the indistinguishability of the causal mechanism process from traditional practices in social sciences (Gerring, 2010:1499). Other issues can be identified in debates around their application in specific spatiotemporal contexts (Elster, 1998) or their uniqueness to a particular context (Wight, 2004). In this thesis, their application anchors around the role they may play within or across multiple cases. I agree with Beach and Pedersen (2019), who argue that a critical feature of social reality is not being subject to arbitrary occurrences, mainly when the context of these decisions is observed. Instead, mechanisms function across a range of cases within a bounded population (Ibid: 35) and establish the contribution of context to any plausible causal explanation (Falleti & Lynch, 2009). Context in this thesis is also acknowledged with the introduction of the region's normative environment and contextualised in Chapter Three. The aim is to account for variations to the institution, agreements, and background conditions around the case study. Referred to as a partner concept to the causal mechanism, Pawson (2000) describes context as the conducive condition for the operation of the mechanism (Ibid:296). For example, the right amount of humidity in

the air or gunpowder is necessary to support the combustion mechanism towards sparking an explosion. Falletti & Lynch (2009) define context “as the relevant aspects of a setting (analytical, temporal, spatial, or institutional) in which a set of initial conditions leads (probabilistically) to an outcome of a defined scope and meaning via a specified causal mechanism or set of causal mechanisms” (Ibid: 1153). The authors extend this argument by claiming that causal mechanisms singularly do not cause outcomes, and without research on the interaction between context and causal mechanisms, causal social scientific explanations will lack credibility. Furthermore, studies are susceptible to faulty causal inferences unless causal mechanisms are appropriately contextualised.

Another methodological discussion associated with utilising the causal mechanisms is the query around observation. The question arises whether mechanisms are directly measurable, or their implications are observable. Beach & Pedersen (2019: 44) argue that the methodological implication of such a choice border on whether the mechanism can be observed directly to examine the fingerprints on the empirical records or if there are observable implications that the mechanisms should leave when operationalised. The directly observable proponents argue that “mechanisms are not pieces of reasoning but pieces of the furniture of the real world” (Bunge, 1997: 414). Bunge’s view corresponds with Hedström and Ylikoski (2010), whose analogy advances that it is possible, to some degree, to directly observe the inner workings of an auto engine, and Glennan’s idea that parts of the mechanisms exist outside the materiality of the mechanism (1996: 53). While Reskin (2003) restricts any attempt at explanation outcome to researchers’ capability to directly observation of causal mechanisms. Other scholars believe that causal mechanisms are unobservable, representing them as ultimately unobservable physical, social, or psychological processes (George and Bennett, 2005: 137) or only as an analytical framework (Hedström and Swedberg, 1998). For this thesis, I share with Beach and Pedersen’s (2019) caution about the inability to observe causal mechanisms based on the analogy of brain waves, neurons, and atoms. This concern can also be extended to contexts of *groupthink* decision-making (Janis, 1971), a social description possibly aligned with the ECOWAS. Janis uses groupthink to describe a mode of thinking among persons driven by concurrence-seeking within a cohesive ingroup, with little attention to alternative courses of action. The symptoms include soft lines of criticism and seeking an amicable settlement to avoid upsetting the ‘we-feeling’ atmosphere. In similar circumstances, observing the causal mechanisms may only be restricted to indirect observation through indicators (Beach & Pedersen, 2019: 44).

Ultimately, in this thesis, the causal mechanisms investigated are ontological entities. They are theorised and unobservable but generate observable and testable implications. In addition, this thesis explanation aspires to meet the minimal sufficient explanation threshold but also engages in the lowest-level analysis to capture details to the degree possible. My ambition is to observe the changes that occur when collective security and democratic norms are implemented following the interventions of the causal

mechanisms and to develop confident explanatory theories that enhance our understanding of these conditions (see Bennett and Checkel, 2015: 12).

1.4.4 Data Sources

In this section, I discuss the framework used for gathering and analysing this thesis's data sources relied on to support the empirical contribution. As elaborated earlier, the objective of the investigation is to identify, analyse, and demonstrate evidence of patterns that substantiate the variation in outcomes investigated. The data evaluation process was essential to this thesis' investigation because it resulted from the causal-process observations on the context, process, and mechanism within the ECOWAS (Brady and Collier, 2010). This thesis process is observed beyond what has been "said" to identify or examine underlying ideas, assumptions, and conceptualisations of ideologies theorised as shaping or informing the semantic content of the data (Braun and Clarke, 2006: 84). This also reinforces the use of process tracing diagnostic strategy to evidence within cases that contribute to overturning the mainly rhetorical implementation I have argued exists and influences outcome (Bennett, 2010). My approach ensured that this thesis maintains an unbiased value judgement when collecting and analysing data relating to outcomes and the influence of the ECOWAS normative environment.

The primary data sources collected included meeting and project reports, protocols, agreements, internal correspondences and memorandum, speeches, news reports, the Commission's publications, interviews, draft protocols and other relevant documents. The secondary data sources included political commentary and observations from non-governmental organisations, books (including historical accounts of key participants), journal articles, and newspaper editorials. I collected the primary data for this thesis from the ECOWAS Commission and the ECOWAS Parliament, which took place over twelve weeks from September to December 2023. During this period, I visited the ECOWAS Commission Headquarters, the ECOWAS Commission Annexe at the Niger House, and the ECOWAS Parliament in Abuja, Nigeria. Throughout the collection process, I was allowed access to hard copies of documents from the ECOWAS Commission Library. These sources spanned a period from the time records were maintained within the department to the time of my request. During the process, all the documents I selected from the physical collection presented to me at the Commission were scanned by the commission staff and shared with me for storage in an external hard drive. I copied these scanned documents into the unmarked hard drive and immediately saved the selected documents onto my computer in an encrypted folder. Upon completing the transfer, I reformatted the external hard drive and deleted all previously stored files and documents. At this point, it is essential to highlight that for the ECOWAS Parliament, the data collection process was different and involved transferring the information from the institution's library to me via email. However, I also downloaded the documents sent from a representative of the institution into an encrypted folder on my computer. Afterwards, I deleted the specific transfer email from the representative. A critical inclusion in the collected document

was ECOWAS protocols and agreements. However, it is integral to note that while I initially accessed some of these documents online within the archives of the United Nations, the European Union, The African Union (AU) and other databases of independent think tanks, in the legal, political, security and other professional organisation, the draft supplementary protocol on democracy and good governance debated on in 2021 and 2022, were gathered at the ECOWAS Commission in person.

The second source of primary data for this thesis was interviews conducted. It is also important to note that I participated in nine recorded interviews and an additional fourteen that were private and off the record. In selecting participants for this interview, I employed a non-probability sampling method. The justification was to avoid a deductive generalisation of patterns and to engage in an in-depth case study analysis. Hence, interviewees were logically selected to satisfy two fundamental categories. First, regarding the interviewee's department, concerning the outcome investigated, and second, the interviewee's role in the department's decision-making process. This sample strategy enabled me to engage with senior management and officers responsible for decision-making. This is also reflected in the number of interviewees I engaged and their high ranks within the ECOWAS. I also employed a method of 'snowballing', where I asked participants at the end of an interview whether they knew of any who would be relevant to the project and who might be willing to participate. Another advantage of the sampling strategy was the high-ranked interviewees' willingness to speak on the record, as lower-ranked interviewees opted for off-the-record interviews despite offering critical insights into the areas of investigation. While I carefully observed and reflected on these opinions, they were not introduced as quotes or in any supporting framework for this thesis's empirical contribution. Instead, they have guided this thesis investigation into specific and significant epochs in the norm-building process within the period investigated. It is also important to note that all on-the-record interviews were designed to elicit personal perspectives and explain the motivation behind ECOWAS' actions in in-case situations. This thesis has utilised all interviews in their original forms and has avoided paraphrasing responses to maintain their context and relationships. Combining these interview credentials sets them apart and enhances their value to the research. Six (6) recorded interviews were conducted in Nigeria between three administrative locations of the ECOWAS Commission and Parliament, while the remaining three (3) were conducted online via phone calls and Zoom. The interviewees were senior officials and heads of departments who had been engaged within the ECOWAS for an average of fifteen (15) years. During the interviews, I aimed to complement and, at other times, contrast the rhetoric of ECOWAS norm implementation with the patterns identified in this thesis. This is to maintain the scope of this thesis during the interview, especially regarding the specific outcomes investigated. I had an average of 10 questions during these semi-structured interviews, which aimed to solicit the interviewee's opinions on various areas of the investigation. These were analysed independently of the data collected. Although the number of recorded interviews is low compared to unrecorded, the significance of the recorded interviews to this thesis cannot be overstated. While the unrecorded interviews pointed this thesis to

other relevant data, the recorded interviewees provided more insight by corroborating and explaining “why” and, most importantly, providing context to the norm contestation process and implementation patterns observed from primary data sources. In addition, it also demonstrates that I overcame substantial challenges in accessing the principal participatory representatives and made up for the shortfall of other bureaucratic officials, who preferred to discuss without being quoted in most cases.

1.5. Conclusion and Thesis Outline

In this chapter, I introduce the thesis puzzle, which focuses on investigating the circumstances that lead to variation in sovereigns limiting or threatening regional norms and what accounts for these variations. To engage in this investigation, I focus on ECOWAS, considering its unique position regarding the two norms under investigation. This thesis analyses the outcomes of two essential norms within the region: the regional security norm agreed upon in 1999 and the democracy and good governance norms in 2001. The security norm represents one of the most consequential frameworks for collective security within the global regionalism structure; the democracy and good governance protocol established this norm within ECOWAS. The outcomes investigate demonstrate observable variations in the implementation of specific norms in the region. Hence, observing and evaluating the member states’ behaviour patterns towards implementing norms is critical to investigating the outcomes. This primary focus explores the relationship between the process of norm contestation and how elites, as norm agents, perceive, respond to, and adapt to diffused norms. The chapter provides a robust description of the thesis methodology, relying on the explain-outcome process tracing approach to establish a sufficient link between causality and outcome. The thesis significance includes contributing to the decolonisation of regionalism studies, enhancing the use of ethnographic research considering ECOWAS’ connection to the larger norm diffusion research, and, most importantly, arguing for the relevance of a modified research framework that adapts sociological methodology to enhance understanding and analytical breadth. Chapter Two of this thesis provides an in-depth examination of the significant theoretical contributions within the study of regionalism and the normative development process. The chapter situates this thesis’s theoretical framework within the social constructivist theory, as it maintains the required elasticity for this thesis to theorise norms, where contestation and implementation significantly influence the outcome. Chapter Three focuses on contextualising the normative environment of the thesis. This is important because it introduces the conceptual framework of the thesis. The chapter also addresses alternative explanations from two typically presumed sources of the region’s experiences: neopatrimonialism and modernity of state. The chapter argues that the features of these two sources limit their investigative potential for studying norms outcomes. Instead, the chapter introduces and contextualises sovereignty variations and the obsolescence of conquest to represent the sources of the region’s cognitive priors that underpin this thesis. Chapter Four is the first part of the thesis’s sequential analysis of critical junctures, covering the period from pre-independence to the establishment of the ECOWAS norm-building process. This

included analysing the prevalence and influence of the thesis cognitive priors during the development of the normative environment and their impact on norm building. Chapter Five builds upon the analysis of the existing normative environment established in Chapter Four to examine the post-ECOWAS development of norms and other instruments. The thesis suggests that member states retained the influence of the normative environment throughout the post-ECOWAS norm-building process. I identified this pattern in agreements that expressed member state preferences and those that were rhetorical, aiming to achieve the illusion of compliance. Chapter Six seeks to reinforce these findings with empirical evidence after analysing the Protocol on Security Mechanism 1999. The aim is to explain with the causal mechanism the outcome of the complete integration of regional security norms. Chapter Seven's analysis of democratic and good governance norms identifies causal mechanisms that explain the variation in norm outcomes. In Chapter Eight, I recap the main contributions of this thesis, including its theoretical contribution and a summary of future research agendas.

“In order to understand the way in which society conceives of itself and the world that surrounds it, it is the nature of society and not that of individuals which must be considered. The symbols in which it thinks of itself alter according to what it is”

(Durkheim, 2013: 11).

2. Chapter Two: Literature Review

The concept of regionalism in international studies is used differently in various disciplines. In international relations and politics, the study of regionalism continues to solicit diverse interpretations. It is not unusual for a concept such as regionalism to be approached multidimensionally in the global political sphere. However, as Rudolf Heberle insists that “the very concept of "regionalism" needs unravelling; the various connotations should be defined, and their connections determined; the epistemological and methodological problems of regional studies should be clear in the minds of scholars engaging in such work” (Heberle, 1943: 280). Hence, in this chapter, I review related literature around the study, particularly surrounding challenges to the definition and conceptualisation – in a bid to understand what theoretical frameworks adequately analyse the phenomenon and how much can be shared within other distinct regionalism structures while empirically or qualitatively measuring its outputs.

In the previous chapter, while highlighting this thesis's alignment with constructivist ontology, I touted its suitability owing to the prioritisation of actors' agency and its accommodation of social processes. This aligns with this thesis interim-hypothesis on the influence of the ECOWAS normative environment representing constitutive explanations, which, I argued, better explain possible behaviour and the causes and outcomes under investigation. The constructivist ontology also restricts law-like assertions such as "if X happens, then Y must follow" as has often been applied in vast regionalism literature attempting to explain the success and failure of regionalism (Barnett & Finnemore 2004: 10). Instead, questions in regionalism study which are relevant to this thesis centre around, how the social process within the regional institutions affects the development of norms and the member states implementation. Although regionalism literature has evolved significantly, for most of that time, theorising the study relied on the either the liberal or realist paradigms (Mace, 2007: 1). The traditional approach initially focused on dominant theories defining regionalism in material terms, mainly around regional security concerns, trade, economic interdependence and the behaviour of agents and domestic actors (Mace, 2007: 1; Martin and Simmons 2002). Recent explorations in the literature reveal a movement towards understanding the role of international organisations and their constraints on the agent's behaviour. From a sociological standpoint, it appears to be a convergence point where regionalism transforms communities, shapes interests and identities, norms, and influences regional politics (Barnett and

Finnemore, 2004; Bennett and Checkel, 2015; Risse et al., 1999; Martin and Simmons, 1998). Theories like social constructivism have accentuated this intersubjectivity of the regional systems, partly by recognising diverse causes and contextualising normative meanings. The study of regionalism has been adapted to various epistemological assumptions resulting from its dynamic evolution often categorised into waves. These waves result from shifts in global political and economic systems. They can be depicted by the various forces or agents that drove the process, the nature of international cooperation, and the dominant theoretical explanations that underpin them.

This chapter critiques rational regionalism theories and demonstrates their inadequacy in addressing this thesis research question. In the following sections, I explain the methodological, materialist limitations surrounding particular rational theories. In contrast, the other part of this chapter, highlights the intersubjectivity and endogenous nature of state identities and interests. I also underline the constructivist theory's reliance on normative and ideational factors in the determination of outcome in actor decisions as primary analytical frameworks when investigating this thesis puzzle. Hence, this literature review is undertaken in two parts – the first involves an overview of related regionalism literature, reviewing various models, highlighting their drivers, the nature of cooperation, and theoretical foundations. The second part examines research on norm dynamics within the social constructivist framework. These sections particularly highlight developments in normative debates to evaluate existing theories and define the conceptual framework that underpins this thesis.

2.1 Regionalism Theories

2.2.1 *1st Wave (1940s to Early 1980s)*

The first wave of regionalism, or the “old regionalism” models, mainly focused on European integration; the analysis centred around explaining how integration was achieved and how the structure operated (Mace, 2007). This understanding is captured within the definition of integration in the 1950s by Ernst Haas as – “the attainment, within a territory, of a ‘sense of community and of institutions and practises strong enough and widespread enough to assure, for a long time, dependable expectations of ‘peaceful change’ among its population” (Haas, 1958: 442). The earliest form of regionalism can be traced back to the Victorian era, as well as to the pan-continental and other political movements of the late 19th and early 20th centuries (Mattheis, 2014; Söderbaum, 2016). The earliest federalist proposal to challenge dominance as a regional framework was the “United States of Europe” in 1849, based on the ideology of political democracy and respect for the rights of the man by French writer Victor Hugo (Söderbaum, 2016). This federalism theory, arguably the foremost analytical framework, sought to integrate the new regional entity within the existing societal structure, thereby retaining the state's agency and interests within the regional system.

The old regionalism era gained prominence in Western Europe from the 1940s to the 1970s, following agreements on geopolitics, socioeconomics, security, and law aimed at mitigating instability at the time - particularly after the Second World War (Fawcett, 2015). These agreements led to the establishment of the European Coal and Steel Community (ECSC) in 1951, and the Treaty of Rome established the European Economic Community (EEC) and the European Atomic Energy Community in 1958. The incremental nature of these agreements supported David Mitrany's (1943) functionalism theory, which analysed the phenomenon as a gradual process driven by function. Mitrany's functional approach analysed regionalism as part of a continuum guided by agreements that superseded the state's authority and would potentially spill over from initial economic sectors into other areas. This expansion, often driven by the regional organisation's performance in its function, will eventually enhance the synergy among member states in establishing a central authority. Although membership was based on voluntary participation, at the core of the theory, member states ceased to be wholly sovereign. They depended on other constructive techniques to resolve conflicts with other members (Haas, 1970). This process relied on the incremental surrender of the state's sovereignty, which was transferred successively for the process to function within the regional organisation (Mattli, 1999; Mace, 2007).

In contrast, neoliberal intergovernmentalism offers a contrasting perspective to the functionalist approach. For instance, Stanley Hoffman criticises the centralisation of power in regional organisations or functional agencies and considers this an abnormality within the state's system. Hoffman argues that centralised power is only feasible in a newly constructed world order, as the model still relies on the expected and actual gains from integration to drive decision-making dynamics and the design of the regional organisation and encourage members' willingness to promote the process. In addition, contrary to neo-functionalism's expectations of venturing into high politics, intergovernmentalism suggests that integration is limited to low politics due to impermeable barriers that restrict spillover to areas affecting vital national interests (Hoffmann, 1966). The implication for Hoffmann is that since most states consider certain areas, including foreign policy, to be exclusive domains of the state, external infringements from supranational institutions would curtail states' competencies. This exclusivity concern reflects what proponents of the theory see as the state's future bargaining positions, which are often jealously guarded to protect its sovereignty. For example, Tieku (2018), describing the neoliberal intergovernmental approach in the defunct 1963 Organisation of African Unity (OAU), argued that it was merely a ruling elites club which prioritised institutional goals that centred around protected core sovereign prerogatives and limited transnational influence, mainly due to the fear of the unknown and domestic political considerations. However, in instances of delegated authority, Hooghe and Marks (2019) suggest that such surrender of power resides within the perceived advantage of a deal for the national government's interest. Neoliberal intergovernmentalism continues to critique the theory following its transformation. Scholars such as Moravcsik have criticised the neo-functionalism theory

for measuring (un)intended outcomes and discarding the primacy of states' national interests as incentives. The authors argue that states' interests cannot be substituted by any contributions made by other actors within the process (Moravcsik, 1993, 1997, 1998). However, some significant shortcomings of the intergovernmentalism approach, including those within the non-western regionalism analysis, are associated with excluding social processes or mechanisms that predate the bargaining process. Additionally, the theory relies on a largely uncertain assumption that all agreements are guaranteed for implementation and, in doing so, fails to explain the constraints on the process, including cases of stagnation (Mattli, 1999). The author's concerns are centred on potentially influential events that have been left out of the examination of the integration process due to the overt focus on the outcome of interstate bargaining.

The neo-functionalism model was popular with scholars such as Ernst Haas, Joseph Nye, and Philippe Schmitter in response to criticisms from mostly proponents of intergovernmentalism (Mattli, 1999; Hooghe and Marks, 2019). Neofunctionalism emphasises the role of non-state actors, including associations and social movements within the region whose interests converge with the integration agenda, to enhance the entrepreneurial role of the secretariat. It is also thought to be influenced by pluralism in addition to the original idea of functionalism (Hooghe and Marks, 2019). The authors explain that within the democratic pluralism ideology, the theory disaggregates governments into component groups of actors with shared interests through collective interplay against the realist assumptions of individual states' interests. This aligns with Haas's functional premise, which posits that regional integration will be the outcome as more states perceive supranational institutions as a credible avenue to achieve their interests, thereby moving away from the clamour for survival (Haas, 1958). This implies that while member states retain their importance, they are limited to the initial creation phase of the supranational organisation. Regardless of the delays or crises observed during the process, spillover and outcomes will produce an upward trend (Hooghe and Marks, 2019). However, in variation to the focus of functionalism on the outcome, the direction of the regional integration plays a fundamental role in neo-functionalism. Mainly because member states possess fragmented and limited authority over the future direction and outcomes, they rely on other regional actors to define the trajectory by exploiting outcomes. Ultimately, the framework's success spills over to other interdependent activities following positive feedback from citizens while avoiding drawbacks from yet-to-be-integrated sections (Schimmelfennig, 2018). Neo-functionalism scholars argue that the approach is expected to increase the likelihood of a socio-economic spillover into political integration and develop independently to achieve unintended outcomes within the process (Schmitter, 2004; Lindberg, 1963; Haas and Schmitter, 1964; Haas, 1958; 1964). Causality in neo-functionalism rests on its path dependence based on the time and sequence of prior integration (Hooghe and Marks, 2019: 1115), and its mechanism for socialisation feedback sets it apart from intergovernmentalism. However, neo-patrimonialism has suffered the most rejection among regionalism theories (Schmitter, 2003). Critics

of the theory, including its originator, Ernst Hass, have called for its disuse (Ibid., 1958), partly owing to its narrow focus on the European experience (Breslin et al., 2002).

Parallel to the old regionalism wave were increasing developments in regionalism literature that sought to recognise new challenges facing the system. Growing research agendas made the case that, although the European Union remained a primary model, various regions had developed variations that needed further development of the concepts. For instance, in Africa, Jalloh Abdul suggests that pan-African interests led to economic cooperation among states, which was often fused with patrimonialism (Abdul, 1976). At the same time, multilateral treaties marked the South American process, while security regionalism dominated the Middle East. Jalloh argues that integration within Africa is biased towards capitalism and its theories of liberalism and neo-functionalism, prescribing an analysis based on the purpose regionalism serves, noting that in some cases, the question of control and interest transcends the degree or form of political integration (Ibid, 1976).

2.1.2 2nd Wave (Late 1980s to Late 2000s)

New regionalism is a notable theoretical approach identified with the second wave, which evolved from independent exchanges between groups and individuals as principal agents within the structure (Mace, 2007). This interregional structure, combined diverse set of actors with varying interests, including multiple state governments, varied institutional designs, and increased participation of various non-state actors, emphasises shared political regimes, culture, free trade, and security (see also Lombaerde et al., 2010; Schulz et al., 2001; Fawcett and Hurrell, 1995; Mittelman, 1999; Mansfield and Milner, 1997; de Melo and Panagaryia, 1992; Hettne, 2002; Söderbaum, 2016). The research on new regionalism aims to distinguish the approach from the previous features of the old regionalism model. The literature often argues that these qualities differ from contemporary “new” regionalism primarily because its emergence is a response to the recent development of regional trading blocs within the global economy. This coincides with the revival of scholarly interest in regionalism theories in the 1980s. This rejuvenation occurred against the backdrop of apathy towards studying the EU in the 1970s, following experiences associated with the Empty Chair Crisis and the Luxembourg Compromise (1965-66), the breakdown of the Bretton Woods System (1971), and the Oil Crisis (1973). Theoretically, Wunderlich (2007) observes that the study had been paralysed from the resulting deadlock of intergovernmentalism and supranationalism, necessitating a new regionalism theory that shifted its focus away from state sovereignty and the security dilemma. However, this also coincided with the need to understand and explain the neoliberal international economic system established after the Debt Crisis between 1982 and 1990, known as the Washington Consensus, as well as the apparent rejuvenation of European integration signalled by the Maastricht Treaty in 1992.

In essence, the new regionalism approach hinged on neoliberal economic globalisation, which facilitated shared norms towards pro-integration strategies, trade liberalisation, international financial deregulation, and increased transboundary economic, social, and political activities (Söderbaum, 1998; Wunderlich, 2007). At the threshold of international political systems, the approach sought to transform the nation-state by advocating for a change in fundamental norms, particularly sovereignty-limiting norms associated with discarding national borders and clamouring for an alternative to the Westphalia order (Söderbaum, 2011). Hettne and Söderbaum (1998) describe the new regionalism approach as a “comprehensive, multifaceted, and multi-dimensional process, implying a change of a particular region from relative heterogeneity to increased homogeneity with regard to several dimensions, the most important being culture, security, economic policies and political regimes, through either a natural process, politically steered or, in most likely cases, a mixture (Ibid: 2).

Another theory related to the second wave of regionalism study includes post-functionalism, initially proposed by Liesbet Hooghe and Gary Marks (2009). The post-functionalism theory was a response to the rising challenges posed by the role of identity within the EU (Börzel and Risse, 2009). The theory emphasises the disruptive potential of a clash embedded in the contending features of neo-functionalism and intergovernmentalism. Hence, the literature argues that for contemporary explanations of regional integration to adequately represent the process, particularly in the EU at the time, theories should incorporate public opinions and party politics (Leuffen et al., 2022). Hooghe and Marks (2009) argue that identity plays a decisive role in regional integration due to the nature of governance and exerts functional pressure due to mutually exclusive challenges to identity. This supports the theory’s focus on analysing domestic patterns of conflict and their impact on the integration process. For instance, when investigating increased attention to European integration amid public pressure due to the unique spatial concerns surrounding religion, culture, identity, and sovereignty, the impact of defence, migration, health, taxation, and judicial reform agreements is notable (see Costa, 2002). Scholars of the post-functionalism approach rely on the fundamentality of identity within the integration process to drive shared norms. These supranational organisations are then viewed as a substratum of individuals representing cultures and beliefs primarily interested in self-determination (Hooghe and Marks, 2016). The import of these features is the foundational challenge to the spillover idea at the core of the positivism theory and the emphasis on bargaining for economic gain at the centre of intergovernmentalism (Gruszczak, 2022).

Gruszczak also criticises the post-functionalism theory for its similar Eurocentric focus, an important consideration given the lack of research within the West African region. The author’s view on post-functionalism is “as a new research agenda seeking to better understand the intricacies and deficiencies of EU politics” (Gruszczak, 2022: 247). Other critical literature, including Moravcsik (2018), argues that liberal intergovernmentalism remains the only genuine integration theory capable of accounting for

all the stages of the integration process. Moravcsik argues that post-functionalism still relies on the micro-foundations of rational theories to constitute an efficient analytical framework for issues such as national preference formation and decision-making. In addition, the author also argues that post-functionalism is limited in its responses to sensitive issues. This deficiency, in contrast, is offset by the issue-specific advantage that liberal intergovernmentalism presents for explaining and predicting, for example, when the integration process reverses regional policies (Moravcsik, 2018). In their defence, Liesbet Hooghe and Gary Marks (2019) respond to these criticisms from Andrew Moravcsik. The authors rejected claims that popular oppositions have little effect and that national symbolism was without substance. This view is somewhat contentious with the largely state-led integration pattern observed in non-Western regionalism.

The last model within the second regionalism wave for this thesis is comparative regionalism. The approach began two decades after the introduction of the new regionalism approach, and the two frameworks underwent constant metamorphosis, especially with the intensification of globalisation (Lombaerde, 2021). Comparative regionalism literature examines the interactions between state and non-state actors that evolve into complex arrangements. These structures do not result in new regional organisations but rather elicit increased scrutiny over the current compositions of regionalism (El Maaly, 2022). In some studies, contrasts are drawn between new regionalism, based on the end of the Cold War, the rise of neo-liberalisation of markets and the stretch of globalisation, and comparative regionalism shaped by the increasingly diverse regional patterns and trends, such as the changing understanding of governance and governments, the war on terror, the rise of power blocks (e.g., BRICS), recurrent financial crisis, interregional cooperation, the development of a multi-layered global order and an understanding of the enhanced role of regional organisation in world politics (Söderbaum, 2016: 30; Acharya, 2017).

The comparative approach offers a methodological framework which enhances its utility. For instance, as Söderbaum (2015) explains, “.....today’s regionalism is characterised by a changing intellectual landscape of regionalism, with increased dialogue between theoretical approaches but also the increasing acceptance that a multitude of scientific standpoints and perspectives are necessary and plausible” (Ibid: 21: see also Hoffmann, 2016; Acharya, 2014; Fioramonti, 2012). When viewed through the lens of a reorganised global order, comparative regionalism literature acts as the antidote to the potency of the intergovernmentalism approach. I highlight this observation owing to Stanley Hoffman’s prediction that only a new world order could challenge the force of the intergovernmentalism model (Katzenstein, 2005; Van Langenhove, 2011; Fawn, 2009). The theory’s accounting for multidimensionality represents an important part of its framework. For instance, Söderbaum observes that “contemporary scholars have been able to move beyond binary conceptualisations that dominated previous regionalism debates, such as formal versus informal, regionalism versus regionalisation, and

whether state or non-state actors drive regionalism” (Söderbaum, 2016: 31; see also Shaw et al., 2011; Fioramonti, 2014). Instead, scholarly attention focuses on regional identities, highlighting the complexity of inter-regionalism, interactions between state and non-state actors, the mechanisms of institutions, and the downplaying of Eurocentrism (Baert et al., 2014; El Maaly, 2022). The implication is that researchers find a singular theoretical approach inadequate to explain diverse strategic purposes in response to peculiar regional circumstances and priorities (Acharya, 2014). Instead, scholars consider the comparative approach adaptable to research agendas, applying investigative approaches such as governmentality, power, constructivism, neo-functionalism, historical institutionalism, regime theory, neoliberal institutionalism, and new regionalism (Laursen, 2018; Acharya, 2012). Specifically, Acharya notes that the constructivist approach challenges the rationalist and materialist assumptions of previous theories, such as neoliberal institutionalism and neo-functionalism. As a “post western” approach, Acharya suggests that comparative regionalism presents the non-western regional organisations outside the shadow of ongoing Western domination. Acharya’s contribution presents the approach as more loosely structured conceptually and innately diverse politically due to significantly varied historical experiences and cognitive trajectories (Rüland and Bechle, 2013; Acharya and Buzan, 2007; McOmber and McNamara, 2002). This has driven the clamour for specialisation to deepen debates, moving away from previous contentions around the composition of regions or the drivers of the process. This trend is observable across scholarships in Africa, Asia, and Latin America, where time and space, history, the normative environment, the spread of ideas, policies, and institutional designs are increasingly differentiated (Börzel and Risse, 2012; Reiss, 2022; Söderbaum, 2016; Acharya, 2012; Laursen, 2018).

However, the approach has been criticised for its ambiguous conceptual and methodological pluralism, arguing that without clear research parameters, it relapses into Eurocentrism (Acharya, 2012; Söderbaum, 2016: 33; Sbragia, 2008; Lombaerde, 2011). Söderbaum (2008) promotes calls for conceptual clarity, especially in the social sciences, to guard against ethnocentric biases and culture-bound interpretations, which can result in over-contextualisation in the event of specialisation. Lombaerde et al. (2010) advocate for deepening comparative methodology, observing that “..... the role of comparison is underdeveloped in the field of regionalism compared to most other fields within the social sciences” (Ibid: 733). With their contribution to the study, the authors aimed to challenge what they describe as the lack of systematic debate around the fundamentals of comparison, which they argue has led to the weak application of conceptual rigour, theoretical eclecticism, and the adoption of less robust empirical research methods. Ultimately, I agree with Börzel and Risse (2019) that while the evidence suggests comparative regionalism has altered the approach to studying regionalism, it still needs to travel a long journey to achieve empirical validity, thereby substituting for grand theories that are currently dominated by the European experience.

Having examined most of the key literature related to rational regionalism theories, I articulate the critique of these theoretical traditions in the next section and highlight why this leads to the logical exploration of constructivist approaches.

2.2 Rationalist and Social Constructivism Theories: Beyond Non-Western Regionalism

In the previous part of this chapter, I demonstrated that traditional approaches theoretically interpret regionalism as a form of cooperation between state actors, primarily for material or security benefits. This process can be observed within transnational institutions. The rationalist approaches of materialism or methodological individualism still retain a unique position as the primary challengers to any analytical singularity that may be allocated to social constructivist theory (Abdelal et al., 2011; Wendt, 1994; Checkel, 1998; Finnemore and Sikkink, 2001). However, the critical role expected of this thesis' investigative framework is to empirically explain the outcomes resulting from mostly ideational influences within regionalism, specifically in the West African region. This thesis analysis reveals that traditional frameworks have substantial limitations in addressing the thesis question, particularly in their overt focus on material interests, exogenous identities, and Eurocentrism. These considerations necessitate a deviation from the rational to a social constructivist framework.

Social constructivist theory has been increasingly engaged regardless of its conceptualisation, theorisation, and methodology challenges. Scholars like Söderbaum support these paradigmatic conflicts due to the accompanying eclectic approaches that underline the richness of comparison (Söderbaum, 2016). In Adler (1997), social constructivism offers a middle-ground approach. For instance, while the theory expands to the social origins of norms, values, and identity, other theories, particularly poststructuralism, credit the development of these social practices within the authority of a group of elites (Checkel, 1998, 1999; Slocum and Langenhove, 2004; Guzzini, 2000). In contrast to the preceding evaluation of rational theories, while the aim is not to entirely dismiss the analytical foundations within the rational choice theories, this thesis considers their framework unsuitable for this thesis investigation. The following reasons inform this theoretical choice: First, an unreconcilable area of contention with rationalist theory relates to the limits imposed by methodological individualism in understanding essential issues related to interest and identity (Checkel, 1999). Instead, by applying a sociological understanding to the function of human perception, social constructivism recognises the influence of ideational factors, which are widely intersubjective and contribute to shaping the actor's beliefs. These enhancements extend to important concepts such as constitutive institutions, which recognise that state interests can result from endogenous interaction within these institutional structures. Second, the basis of this thesis's social constructivist argument involves analysing forms of cooperation

outside the influence of materialist incentives but with the identities and interests capable of bringing about structural change. Third, the following core theoretical claims proposed by Wendt (1994) sufficiently represent this thesis's analytical foundations: (1) state identities and interests are not exogenous to the system but are constructed by social interactions; (2) states represent the primary analytical unit in international political theory, and (3) the fundamental structures of states are intersubjective. Lastly, social constructivists recognise that normative and ideational factors represent variables that influence the measurement of outcomes and are applicable in determining actor preferences in economic, political, and security decisions without constraining the pursuit of exogenous interests (Price, 2006: 256). These adopted theoretical premises challenge the focus on ethnocentricity or reductionism, which is reserved mainly for less developed countries to dismiss strong cultural accounts in comparative politics. (Wiarda, 1982; Thomas et al., 1987; Almond and Verba, 2016). Moreover, sociologically themed normative research, including the earliest form, demonstrated that, for example, comparative research, which studied international interaction with Western liberal democracies, created a vacuum in our understanding of implementation in challenging environments incompatible with the "Weberian ideal types of state" (Finnemore and Sikkink, 1998: 893; see also Jackson, 1993; Clapham, 1996). Krook and True (2010) also acknowledged that the static and unitary conceptualisation of norms in the diffusion explanation, which combines norm creation and socialisation with changing external environments, remains challenging without applying sociological adaptation principles. However, challenges with the theory include viewing it as a form of discourse with numerous variations and disregarding the influence of domestic politics, which could lead to an inadequate research program and testable hypotheses (Adler, 1997; Finnemore and Sikkink, 2001; Sterling-Folker, 2000; Jachtenfuchs, 2002; Checkel, 2006).

While rational and social constructivism have often been presented as contending theories, notable literature has suggested bridging the gap between rational policymakers and their normative preferences. For instance, rationalist scholars promoted the principal-agent theory in the systemic analysis of actor behaviour and decision-making. They regard political behaviour as a factor in the physical world, and material influences the ideological cornerstone following its domination in early EU regionalism research (Rittberger & Zangl, 2006). In addition, methodologically, constructivists like Finnemore and Sikkink (1998) have endorsed applying rational choice theory to support norm-based behaviour research. The authors believe that the utilities of actors could adopt the ideational as easily as the material, citing evidence of conceptual similarities irrespective of the ideational weaknesses in the rationalist argument. Finnemore and Sikkink state, "One could model rational choice as producing social knowledge as easily as one could model social context as a background for rational choice, depending on the empirical question being researched" (Ibid: 911). Rittberger and Schimmelfennig (2007) applied this convergence framework to develop the "Strategic Action in Community Environment Approach". The authors identify some benefits attributable to the framework when

applied to assess the European Union's decision to enlarge to the East. First, it enabled community actors to utilise values such as liberal democracy and its normative ethos to force the convergence of member states. Second, the values, identities, and norms constructed are specifically elite-shaped; they follow the logic of consequentiality, and their norms remain unchanged due to interaction. However, the approach neither captures the procedural dynamics of norm development nor recognises the influence demonstrated by the normative environment within the EU. The literature on the combination of rationalist and social constructivist theories is yet to extensively develop in its research parameters, particularly in regions with high state involvement, such as West Africa, and shares limitations with rational theories due to their disproportionate focus on EU regionalism.

In the following sections, I examine the existing literature on norms in regionalism supported by the social constructivist model, emphasising research areas such as norm diffusion, compliance, contestation, and implementation. It discusses social constructivist analytical foundations within the norm debate. Additionally, it explains the analytical advantages of sociological paradigms in politics, particularly when measuring outcomes and fully understanding norm dynamics within the international system.

2.3 Norms a Social Constructivist Research Agenda

In the following sections, I examine existing debates around developments within norm research in the social constructivism literature. My approach would be to divide the engagement with the literature into three areas relevant to the investigation conducted by this thesis. First, on the concept of norms - definitions and designs, challenges to compliance, validity and justification, and their application within international institutions (Van Kersbergen and Verbeek, 2007; Wiener, 2004, 2007, 2008, 2010; Witt, 2019). In contemporary research, norms have been considered “a thing and a process” (Onuf, 1994: 1) or a “work in progress” (Krook and True, 2012) and have been adapted to advance the study of regional organisations significantly (Acharya, 2014, 2009, 2011; Risse, 2015; Rüländ and Bechle, 2013; DiMaggio and Powell 1983; Bicchi, 2006; Jetschke, 2009). Finnemore and Sikkink (1998) define norms as the “standard of appropriate behaviour for actors with a given identity” (Ibid: 891). The focus on norms in regionalism occurred alongside the neoliberal decades following the end of the Cold War. During this era, constructivist scholars expanded on the growing incorporation of ideational factors into investigations of human interaction (Price and Reus-Smit, 1998; Finnemore and Sikkink, 2001; Lantis, 2017).

However, this led to challenges in explaining the results of new norms against pre-existing and widely accepted norms, as well as other issues related to compliance, focusing on social change through discursive interventions promoted by norm-givers and takers (Payne, 2001; Wiener, 2004). To resolve these issues, Finnemore and Sikkink (1998) introduced the norm cycle model (*emergence, cascades*

and internalisation) to explain state and nonstate behaviour when influenced by a standard of appropriate behaviour. The authors explain that states comply with norms that relate to their identity within the international society, often influenced by socialisation in adapting to new norms motivated by peer pressure (Ibid: 891). Finnemore and Sikkink suggest that when a norm is introduced, actors are triggered to use it or reconstitute it; ultimately, the successful diffusion of international norms depends on internal norm contestation within divergent expressions and contradictions. Therefore, a state's identity shapes its behaviour, often occasioned by the society's cultural institutional context (Ibid: 902). March and Olsen (1998) propose similar analytical frameworks such as the "*logic of expected consequences*" - driven by expectations of consequences, and the "*logic of appropriateness*" where actions involve evoking an identity or role and matching the obligations of that identity or role to a specific situation (Ibid: 949-951).

Wiener and Putter (2009) contribute to the norm compliance debate with the internalisation reluctance argument. The authors find that although the validity of norms is supported by a legal framework (*formal validity*) and the achievement of social facticity (*social recognition*), a third dimension of cultural validation is considered an essential dependent variable for the successful interpretation of norms. In essence, outside the dimensions of formal validity and social recognition, states resort to culturally constituted normative baggage to establish the required understanding of the norm. These contributions to norm research acknowledge an essential concern to the study of norm compliance. Mainly around implementation and accounting for contestation towards preferences based on experiences and expected outcomes. This is also reinforced when contextualising cultural validation as a combination of factors, such as historical and cultural, which play an impactful role in the preference of the specific norm eventually practised (Wiener, 2014). The cultural validation dimension has also extended constructivist research towards exploring norm meaning and explaining the socially constructed model of norm development (Lantis, 2017). In addition, other scholarship has investigated norm learning and socialisation, shared identity, and repeated interactions (see Tilly, 1975; Giddens, 1979; Finnemore, 1996; Zürn and Checkel, 2005; Katzenstein, 1996; Adler, 1997; Tully, 2002). Although framed to utilise the relational approach, cultural validation research depends on two assumptions. First, norms have inherent contested qualities and develop "meaning in use". Second, contestation is key to augmenting norm acceptance levels (Wiener, 2014). Meaning-in-use when defining the constitutive dimension of the norm during the reconstruction and mapping of cultural validation as an interactive process (Wiener, 2012: 5).

The second set of engagements relates to the alternate patterns of norm diffusion, including localisations and how norms reach internalisation at the state level (Capie, 2008; Cortell and Davis, 2005; Acharya, 2004). Some vital contributions to norm diffusion research include Checkel (2005), which examines how international norms reach the local arena, and Risse (2016), which explores the complexity of the

norm diffusion process involving the transmission of ideas and institutions, often influenced by domestic and transnational coalitions. Recent studies, such as those by Orchard and Wiener (2023), have also investigated the role of politics at both the local and global levels, focusing on its agency in developing specific norm diffusion mechanisms. This research interest highlights the importance of agency in the diffusion process, challenging the previous assumption that norm providers were often reserved for actors in the global North. Murray-Evans explains that contemporary research focus “.....permits a view of norms that sees them as contested and contestable and challenges conventional views of norm diffusion as a top-down process that flows from Global North to Global South” (Murray-Evans, 2020: 776; see also Katsumata, 2010; Acharya, 2009: 2014).

Acharya (2009) investigates this norm agency in Asia, and the study’s findings indicate that the concept of norm localisation describes an evolutionary form of diffusion, representing norms as neither regressive nor static but relatively progressive, as they attempt to reshape existing beliefs and practices by transforming foreign ideas into a local context. Acharya’s conceptual argument suggests that legitimacy is achieved by building congruence with universal norms while transforming norm entrepreneurship understanding from an external proponent focused on a universal moral agenda to a localised normative order. In Asia, the study concludes that the impact of a localised normative order adopts a process contingent on its normative regional priors without replicating, for example, the European design and institutional purpose (Ibid). Schmidt (2010) also identifies that norm transformations are incremental in response to discursive actions among actors within the local normative order. However, they may seem frequent in response to external shocks to normative orthodoxy (Legro, 2000; Radaelli, 2000; Risse, 2000). Rüländ’s (2012) investigation considered ASEAN’s attempt at wholesale adoption of liberal-pluralist norms. The study found that ASEAN countered external attempts at diffusing democratic norms within its regional governance with variable strategies, including localisation, isomorphic adaptation and, in some cases, outright rejection to maintain its cognitive prior. Rüländ’s study corroborates norm transformation theory in participatory regionalism, where cognitive priors established from age-honoured local traditions are combined with modernised heritage to achieve legitimacy for imported ideas mainly from post-World War II Europe.

2.3.1 The West Africa Region and Norm Diffusion

To understand how norms reach internalisation at the state level, particularly in West Africa, scholars have suggested that future norm compliance research must continue to set parameters that recognise interest in specific regions (Acharya, 2003; Rüländ, 2012). Several studies have linked outcomes and interests with actors or institutional rhetoric. Norm rhetoric explains the appropriation, reconstruction, and integration of external ideational pressures and has been applied mainly to non-western-styled regional organisations with low democratic densities (Rüländ & Bechle, 2013). Dixon (2017) describes

rhetorical adaptation as the intricate uncertainties of states' responses to international norms, which either reject the norm validity or deny violation charges (Ibid: 85). In the EU, for instance, these studies can be found on the politics of legitimization (Rittberger and Schimmelfennig, 2008)⁴ and in observations around institutional changes in the absence of public discourse (Rüland and Bechle, 2013). In West Africa, Mumford (2021) applies norm rhetoric to explain the empowerment of the ECOWAS Parliament.

Other debates around norm internalisation include Piccolino (2016), who concludes that the regionalism structure in West Africa is rooted in legitimacy concerns. Piccolino observes that the ECOWAS and UEMOA are modelled after the EU to meet these criteria. However, the author notes that significant differences persist and are influenced by geographical, economic, and political factors responsible for the observed divergent norm outcomes. In addition, these inconsistent norm outcomes result from adopting institutional isomorphism to strengthen UEMOA's legitimacy while undermining endogeneity (Piccolino, 2019). The study's argument contends that in West Africa, normative outcomes are determined by the region's normative environment, often influenced by cognitive priors derived from colonial legacies and postcolonial dependencies, which ultimately shape actors' preferences, including UEMOA's mimicry of the EU to embody modernity and legitimacy (Ibid). These debates on norm outcomes and interests form part of a growing body of research investigating whether outcomes are superficial, shallow, or a syndrome of partial norm implementation or outright mimicry, especially of the EU model (see Fioramonti and Mattheis 2015; Gibbs 2009; Söderbaum and Taylor 2008; Van de Walle 2001).

Results from these investigations, particularly across the non-Western regions, have been mainly mixed. Another relevant debate surrounding norm internalisation presents inter- and trans-regionalism norm diffusion dynamics (Ribeiro-Hoffmann, 2016; Jetschke and Lenz, 2013) as the source of international norms, and the EU is often singled out for its overarching influence in shaping the norm environment of receiving agents. Börzel and Risse explain that interaction with Europe serves as a stimulus and an active promoter of the diffusion process within and outside its region (Ibid., 2009; 2009b). The authors base their conclusion on the EU's concerns for its regional security, prosperity, and stability. The literature points to specific tools (*including conditionality and capacity building*) to incentivise the diffusion dynamics in other regions. Börzel and Risse (2009b) argue that conditionality influences the cost-benefit considerations of target actors by employing both negative and positive incentives, while capacity building involves providing additional resources to aid actors in making informed strategic choices. Other related literature have argued that they represent financial and technical support provisions aimed at controlling the spread of its ideas, norms, and institutions (see Schimmelfennig and

⁴ See also rhetorical action gaps in Meyer and Rowan, 1977

Sedelmeier, 2005; Kelley, 2004; Vachudova, 2005; Börzel, Pamuk and Stahn, 2008). It is important to point out that Börzel and Risse diverge from their previous claim in subsequent literature. The authors retracted claims that there was evidence to indicate any degree of normative changes or any active EU policy within other regional organisations which influenced their preference. Börzel and Risse, instead, concluded in their new findings that the EU institution had fewer modes of influence than previously stated. Noting that the mechanism at play in the diffusion process is indirect and limits the EU's influence in regions such as Latin America, Asia, and Africa (Ibid, 2010). These withdrawals scale down the European laboratory's initially perceived potency in the norm diffusion study. As the authors acknowledge, the aim was to present the EU as another institution similar to the World Trade Organisation (WTO) and the North American Free Trade Agreement (NAFTA), which are primarily involved in regional cooperation.

These considerations raise additional challenges to the research agenda, which include understanding particular outcomes where actors resist the diffusion of new norms but also act to compete with other norms and perceptions of interest. Indeed, norm contestation is a growing research area that can investigate the variability of normative meaning when conditioned by local contexts and cognitive priors. For instance, Wiener (2004) suggests that contestation between norm takers and setters alters the content and scope of norms (Ibid: 192) and can now be used to explain aspects of departures from expected behaviour (Jose, 2018). I believe the growing attention on behavioural research follows a revolution in compliance measurement leading to a “*norm contestation turn*”. I leverage these distinctive social constructivist features to enhance this thesis investigation, particularly as the validity of norms can be sustained even within variations to structural and normative contexts, and norm meaning can be maintained during a transfer from the transnational to the domestic political arena. In the next section, I examine the literature on norm contestation and implementation.

2.3.2 *Contestation in Norm Building: Retheorising Outcomes*

The third engagement with the norm literature focuses on debates around contestation and implementation of norms. Norm contestation refers to disputes surrounding the idea, meaning, validity, and applicability of norms within a target normative environment. Wiener (2014) defines *contestation* as “.... the range of social practices which explicitly express disapproval” of norms (Ibid: 3). For Stimmer and Wisken (2019), contestation occurs mainly in the grey area between compliance and non-compliance. Three assumptions form the crux of the contestation argument – first, norm contestation significantly aids in understanding norms. Second, norm contestation is inherently neutral, but it highlights the complete norm development process. Mostly because, although arguments suggests that contestations impact norms negatively, the authors argue that, actors' choices determine if a particular contestation impact a norm positively or negatively. Third, although contestation may be neutral on

norms, they are norm-generative processes strategically intended or not due to their normativity (Orchard and Wiener, 2023: 3-4). The debate on norm contestation seems to be driven by ambiguities in etymology or other unforeseen contingencies associated with the development of norms. For instance, the challenges to the assumption that norms spontaneously conform as advocated in Finnemore and Sikkink's (1998) "norm cycle". Scholars such as Wiener (2017a) have argued that the diffusion process may not be as straightforward as previously assumed, and norms, even with universal validity, are not readily adopted into societal environments as often assumed. Instead, they are continuously challenged by pluralistic validity claims in the shared environment by local actors, an explanation for the failures of norm diffusion (Isaac, 2017).

Therefore, as observed, norm contestation supports research into the emergence of norms from highly contested social environments rather than in a vacuum (Krook and True, 2010). This theory has also been applied to explain norm outcomes where unsuccessful norms are challenged to rejection or modification by state actors (Adamson, 2005; de Nevers, 2007), as well as to understand the evolution of norms and regimes (Müller and Wunderlich, 2013; Wiener, 2009). Wiener describes the extent of the theory's analytical utility as "it is for understanding the distinct meanings of contestations as both a social practice of merely objecting to norms (principles, rules, or values) by rejecting them or refusing to implement them, and as a mode of critique through critical engagement in a discourse about them" (Wiener, 2017a: 109). Winston (2017) notes that the norm contestation process highlights the dual nature of norm stability and flexibility, as well as the processes of interpretation and reconstitution. Winston's argument suggests a complication in norm evolution from the taker, the diffusion mechanism, and the diffusing object. However, characterising norms as processional and continuously contested has also raised concerns about their constitutive and regulative qualities (see Lantis, 2017).

For instance, questions around the stability and flexibility of norms in the presence of norm contestation have rightly raised concerns. Although the consensus is that there is an impact on contested norms, agreements around the magnitude vary; see *waning* (Bellamy, 2012), *eroded* (McKeown, 2009) or *dead* (Panke & Petersohn, 2016). Studies such as Deitelhoff and Zimmermann (2018, 2019) attempt to measure the impact on the robustness of norms when they undergo contestation. The study finds that although contestation represents a poor predictor of norm robustness, frequent contestation of norm validity would lead to low robustness, while contestation addressing the applicatory dimension of a norm could lead to the strengthening of the norm (Ibid, 2018). Notably, Deitelhoff and Zimmermann also determined that robustness is enhanced when norm validity is discursively accepted compared to low when validity is discursively rejected (Ibid, 2019). Norm validity describes discourses over the preferred norm on which actors settle. These discourses are based on core questions and the standard expectations from the community, regardless of context. Counterpart concepts, such as applicatory norm contestation, which is often a constant feature of international politics, seek to contest the

application rather than the validity of a norm. The process involves questioning the suitability of the norm and, given the prevailing context, determining what action is suitable and what the norm's priority is in instances where multiple norms exist (Deitelhoff and Zimmermann, 2019; see also Zähringer, 2021; Zimmermann et al., 2018; Hoffman, 2010). Insights from Badescu and Weiss (2010) suggest a decrease in intensity in applicatory discourse, as norms require proactive behavioural responses from actors.

Orchard and Wiener (2023) recently proposed an interpretation-contestation framework. The framework is proposed to explain three scenarios: where actors object to the norm, leading to a violation (reactive), where actors improve norms through engagement (proactive), and where actors' norm understanding differs across the international community (interpretative). The author's interpretive contestation emphasises individuality in conceptualising norms, and the approach is considered relational and historically developed through a socially constructed model of norm development. This strategic model, in my view, enhances research into the West African normative environment, as it supports equal access to the production of international norms, acknowledges unintended consequences in the evolution process (including the potential for decay), and increases attention to the role of agency in the norm diffusion process. The framework also adapts socially constructed recognition of cultural factors such as race, inequality, or class, exemplifying an overlooked postcolonial agency that identifies with norm translation. These socially constructed recognitions are observable in recent regionalism literature, as scholars such as Merry (2006), Zimmermann (2017, 2014) and predominantly Acharya (2004, 2009) have demonstrated norm opposition within the regional and state levels (see also Deitelhoff and Zimmermann, 2013; Lantis, 2017; Engelkamp et al., 2014; Epstein, 2012; Ulbert, 2012).

Other empirical regionalism studies on sovereign norm contestation, particularly within regional organisations in the Global South, have concluded that norm contestation in Africa is steered towards precedent-setting norms at a fundamental level (Joel Ng, 2015). The study addressed criticisms directed at the AU and ASEAN for failing to adopt liberal norms, specifically regarding the ceding of sovereignty. Relying on the model of cultural validation, Joel Ng, citing the struggles of the former colonies, justified the development of visibly distinct regional values and the difference in their understanding of sovereignty norms. The study's findings hinge on these distinct values to explain the re-legitimisation of each region's processes and the development of norms more attuned to the members' preferences. Joel Ng affirmed in his findings that the African norm contestation process is guided by the solid intellectual traditions of Pan-Africanism, which ultimately sought to overcome its colonial legacy, strive for continental unity, undo the divisions of colonialism and limit external influence beyond independence. This literature's core contribution demonstrates that the contestation within the norm-building process is noticeably different in regionalism between the West and the Global South. Coe (2019) also echoes this uneven evolution of African sovereignty norms by emphasising that

the norm of non-interference in the region had eroded from contestation over time into what the study terms an “intrusive interventionist” regionalism. The author argues that, at a fundamental level, the Global South opted for a strict interpretation of sovereignty in the wake of decolonisation. These findings on sovereign norm contestation complement Amitav Acharya and A. I. Johnston’s earlier comparative research, which concluded that the diffusion of European Union-styled regionalism did not displace the long-standing and consistent sovereign-preserving norm that had come to characterise regional institutions in the developing world (Acharya and Johnston, 2007).

2.3.3 Behavioural Contestation and Implementation of Norms

In the previous section, the literature on non-Western regionalism argued that contestation between the Global South and North was noticeably different. In addition, the literature claimed that EU-style regionalism was not a substitute for the developing world’s sovereignty-preserving regional organisations. These assertions open the region to scrutiny regarding norm compliance, outcomes, and implementation, highlighting central deviations that necessitate the development of separate analytical structures for implementation within the norm diffusion process. Some key literature that provides additional insight includes Betts and Orchard’s (2014) investigation on norm compliance and implementation, which addresses the need for a coherent conceptualisation of the institutionalised implementation gap within regional organisations. Betts and Orchard approach implementation as a process that furthers the assimilation of a new norm, whereas compliance involves states following an existing norm. The authors argue that implementation does not follow a sequential process and may be triggered throughout the stages towards or after institutionalisation. The study suggests that implementation can be triggered in cases where norms are the status quo within states, when they define the functionality of new norms, create a space for interpretation and contestation, and when outcomes are clear and observable. Key findings include that, for the norm diffusion process to be considered internalised or complete, a parallel process must be analysed to study the preference for new norms and their outcomes and to determine the importance that actors attach to international norms. Additionally, to fully account for variations in practice, explaining implementation is considered a critically distinct phase of normative contestation, although it is often neglected in the literature on norm emergence. Betts and Orchard’s contribution responds to the calls for a critical reflection on the distinctiveness of institutionalisation at the international level (Risse et al., 1999; Goldstein and Keohane, 1993; Katzenstein, 1993; Keck and Sikkink, 1998) and at the domestic level (Acharya 2004; Checkel 1999, 2007; Wiener 2007, 2008). The study also reinforces the need for norm compliance to be a diagnostically separate process domain.

However, this thesis and current literature are challenged by interpreting outcomes in normative environments where contestation is continuous. For example, how does implementation impact existing

norms in such a situation? Can compliance be essentially regarded as rhetorical, or does the meaning of existing norms change? In other approaches, the nature of contestation and how the implementation is applied is further analysed. For example, Stimmer and Wisken (2019) argue that there are “no ‘correct’ cut-off points or threshold level at which a norm starts being contested” (Ibid: 525). Particularly, as previously determined, when international norms are weak, ratified treaties are erroneously seen as implemented, or the norms are considered static (Krook and Ture, 2010). The authors point out that numerous debates misdiagnose contestation because most investigations are based on the discursive approach. Discursive contestation is primarily conducted through discourse and is based on voluntary and intentional engagements stemming from mutually recognised disagreements over the nature of the norm. Recently, Anette Stimmer and Lea Wisken (2019) explored this differentiation between contestations into discourse (discursive) and action (behavioural) to balance existing typologies of contestation. For Stimmer and Wisken, norm contestation is “when relevant political actors are involved in any social practices that entail a different understanding of the norms or the relative weight of competing norms” (Ibid, 2019: 519). The study’s view on norms is categorised broadly to include prescriptive statements that vary between legal status and procedural or substantive precision. Hence, behavioural contestation constitutes actions by relevant actors responding to conflicting understandings of the nature and importance of norms. Stimmer and Wisken suggest that actors utilise the different types of contestation formats, and this aligns with their understanding of norm contestation, which involves any differences, regardless of their source.

The literature also contributes that while behavioural and discursive contestation are not mutually exclusive, they are analytically distinct. For instance, states primarily employ behavioural contestation, and non-state actors (NSAs) rely on discursive contestation. Some features of Stimmer and Wisken’s behavioural contestation include that because the validity or meaning of norms is not contested, the actors engaging in behavioural contestation are below the radar often to avoid reputational costs. Tieku explains that reputational costs for ignoring recommendations from international actors to intergovernmental bodies are often enormous, citing the previously ignored General Assembly’s recommendation on apartheid that collapsed the political system (Ibid, 2018). Hence, states execute normative standards within the threshold of their preferred interpretation while reaping the reputational benefit of complying with the norms. For example, states refuse to introduce or implement mechanisms structured to support particular norms while paying lip service to the norm. Stimmer and Wisken conclude that behavioural contestation could translate into norm violation, and the impact could lead to a change in the norm’s meaning, importance, precision, or eventual weakness. Two types of behavioural contestation are introduced in the literature: the first involves the ways norms are implemented, primarily at the domestic or state level, where the choice of implementation exists, and the second occurs in cases where third parties attempt to obstruct, interfere with, or influence the implementation process through their actions.

However, Betts and Orchard note that the actor's ability to engage in behavioural contestation depends on their "access to implementation" and the capacity to generate resources (Ibid: 526). Hence, settling for behavioural contestation depends on the norm's type, degree of acceptance and ambiguity. The challenge of this research relates to interpreting the results from specific case studies. For instance, building on Stimmer and Wisken's article, Hall (2019) tests the impact NGOs rather than state actors who utilise behavioural contestations without access to implementation have on outcomes. Hall finds that, although these actors have limited access to implementation, they significantly influence the implementation of norms. The study also contends that the NGO substituted discursive for behavioural and increased overall influence in shaping norm outcomes (Hall, 2019: 581).

2.1. Conclusion

This chapter aspired to review the existing literature that seeks to explain the outcomes of processes of regional integration with a view to developing a theoretical framework for explaining the divergent normative outcomes within the ECOWAS region. Although studying politics in regional organisations, mainly in West Africa, has yet to gain a complete foothold within international political theories, this chapter highlights the growing literature underscoring transformations within classical and contemporary theoretical frameworks, paving the way for inclusive research in the region. These considerations formed the dual purpose of the chapter. First, how the study of regional and normative politics in the region fit in with the early, classical and contemporary theoretical frameworks, and second, to establish why and the limitations within these theoretical structures which have led to the region's exclusion. Hence, within the chapter, I highlighted some common theoretical challenges to fitting West Africa within the regionalism debate. These include overt Eurocentricity and its Westphalian variation, limited representation of social processes driven primarily by material interests, and the disavowal of alternatives. In the subsequent sections, this thesis builds from the theoretical foundations of comparative regionalism and the social constructivist approach. I highlight that the introduction of comparative regionalism expanded the research field towards African regions by adopting a consolidated methodological framework. The impact on research translates to recognising previously excluded analytical variables, including identity and social interactions, which constitute pivotal influences on norm outcome. In addition, adopting the expansive and critical framework within the social constructivist theory injects intersubjectivity alternatives capable of catering to West Africa's regional normative diversity. This thesis critique of the rational process therefore focused on its overt attention on material interest and states exogenous identities. On the part of the promise offered by comparative regionalism is its lack of explicit theoretical engagement with the social processes through which regions are constructed. Hence this thesis turned to the norm research within constructivist theory to address this gap.

Consequently, I highlighted essential debates critical to norm research within social constructivism and relevant to this thesis, including contested compliance, the influence of identity and other cultural contexts, norm validity and contestation. These debates I reflected on have facilitated several other recent extensions to norm research vital to this thesis, such as contestations and implementation. These expanding theoretical frameworks emphasise the emergence of norms from contested social environments and explain the nature of norms following contestations, significantly contributing to the debates. In this thesis, the growing literature on behavioural contestation and implementation supports the premise that implementation can be triggered at any stage in the norm-building process. This further determined that norm diffusion can only be complete after a critical analysis of preference and outcomes. Therefore, this chapter demonstrated the depth of contemporary scholarship and their corresponding transformations to theoretical frameworks tailored to adequately accommodate research on regional and normative politics, including in Africa. These developments are highlighted in several non-western normative literatures aimed at identifying and assimilating hitherto excluded regions within the global study of norms and developing concepts such as norm rhetoric and localisation.

Having determined the suitability of the social constructivist approach and developed the theoretical framework for this thesis, I make the following arguments to establish the analytical premise. First, the ECOWAS normative environment is shaped by the experiences of its member states. Therefore, for this thesis, I investigate the cognitive prior associated with sovereignty variation and obsolescence of conquest (discussed in Chapter Three). I argue that these specific cognitive priors represent pivotal factors influencing the normative environment and, by extension, member states preferences. This analytical stance is bolstered by Ng's (2021) findings on the influence of cognitive priors on norm contestation processes, the uneven evolution of state sovereignty in Africa demonstrated in Coe (2019), and the development of a new arena for interpretation and contestation owing to ideological and cultural divergences across states (Betts and Orchard, 2014).

Second, member states' access to implementation determines the outcome of norms, and in the case of ECOWAS security norms, it serves the preference of the regional actors. Meanwhile, the implementation mechanics for democratic and good governance norms contest the norm's validity. However, the meaning remains intact, resulting in the continuous contestation of the norm within the region. I argue that the norm outcome may have been weakened by the limitations placed in the ECOWAS treaties, protocols, and member state actions when agents challenged the norm. This conclusion mirrors Betts and Orchard's argument that the implementation process stalls out or, in another instance, fails, resulting in "an ignored or undermined norm outcome" (Betts and Orchard, 2014).

Third, I argue that the ECOWAS and its member states actively engage in behavioural contestation via implementation to shape the outcomes of democracy and good governance norms. This submission is based on the outcome of democratic and governance norms in the ECOWAS region. The outcome indicates that despite internalising these norms, member states' preferences towards the norms are continuously contested within the region. This argument challenges the notion that democracy and good governance norms have been universally validated in the ECOWAS region.

The benefit of this thesis's theoretical framework is its support for enhanced analysis of behavioural contestation and its impact on the outcomes of norms in the region. This analytical sophistication also aims to foster a critical understanding of implementation and compliance within diverse communities, such as the Economic Community of West African States (ECOWAS). This is similar to Glas and Balogun's (2020) attempt to understand the distinct ways particular diplomatic communities address the preference for norms surrounding diverse community practices. However, this thesis deviation is based on the recognition that, although there is a direct influence on the norms from actors, at the core of the contestation process is not a group of officials bound by a joint enterprise but a significantly diverse set of member states with interests and identities developed from cognitive priors. Hence, preferences remain paramount irrespective of the norm's capability to threaten member states sovereignty. This is mainly because member states can adopt behavioural contestation to maintain an internalised impression of international standards and norms, thereby avoiding reputational costs. It also, allows for contingency - divergent outcomes which can be explained by careful interrogation of these discursive processes.

3. Chapter Three: The Causal Pathways and Normative Environment

3.1. Introduction

The thesis draws on an inductive process tracing methodology, to identify causal pathways that link the local adoptions of global norms to the success or abandonment via their implementation through ECOWAS protocols and policies. This investigative model aligns with the constructivist ontology, which prioritises actors' (human) agency and seeks to develop an enhanced understanding of the social process (Röth, 2023: 128). This thesis's inductive reasoning implies that identifying causal mechanisms cannot be determined in advance of the empirical analysis. Hence, the focus of the explain-process tracing approach is to map critical junctures and intervening causal pathways that trace backwards to establish the causes of the case's outcome (Trampusch & Palier, 2016; Jacobs, 2015).

Therefore, in this Chapter, I discuss the proposed intermediate causal pathways by linking normative conditions that reinforce the internal and external validity of causal relations. This effort complements the evidence from this thesis investigation but also exposes limitations to alternative explanations. In the following sections, I analyse two commonly perceived alternative sources of regional cognitive priors, establishing that there exists no substantive underlying relationship to causation. Next, I examine the West African normative environment and ECOWAS, highlighting the region-specific context that facilitates the development of its initial cognitive prior. The final two sections contextualise this thesis—the normative environment—and intermediate causal pathways, which I argue represent the social context through which norms become locally embedded, determining their compliance or otherwise.

However, before I explore this thesis's causal claim further, I argue that the basis for its determination rests on the following arguments: first, outcomes of causal mechanisms are not static. Instead, they depend on the contexts within which they occur (Falleti & Lynch, 2009: 1152). To elaborate, this thesis causal claim recognises that mechanisms relate to outcomes which in part, are products of actor's interpretation of their political systems thorough ideational elements (Parsons, 2007: 96). Parsons maintains that, regardless of how institutions constrain behaviour, ideas matter or what makes certain policy choices more likely than others cannot be reduced to the objective position of the actor (see also Beach & Pedersen, 2019: 53). Therefore, in explaining this thesis outcome, I argue that the causal process also includes interactions of operating elements within initial conditions which link the outcomes through a path of different co-existing processes (Mayntz, 2020: 3). Hence, to craft a sufficient causal explanation of the outcome, a process which recognises a variety of ideas or methods is essential (Beach & Pedersen, 2019: 35). However, this thesis does not focus on mechanistic understanding of causality, especially on how causal forces producing an outcome follow an interlocking path. Rather, the thesis engages in a step by step test of each pattern of evidence in relation

to test this thesis causal mechanism (Beach & Pedersen, 2019). The formal mechanism model seldom captures social processes without recognising context pathways in the formulation of the mechanism (Falleti and Lynch, 2009).

Second, considering that the aim is to develop an adequate causal explanation, I recognise that this can only occur, as Falleti and Lynch (2009) argue, “...if researchers are attentive to the interaction between causal mechanisms and context...” (Ibid: 1143). Pawson (2000) describes context as a partner concept to causal mechanisms. Falleti and Lynch (2009) define context as the essential pieces of a framework in which a collection of initial conditions leads to an outcome with a defined scope and meaning via causal mechanisms (Ibid., p. 1143). The authors demonstrate that causation resides within the interaction of mechanism and context and that mechanisms alone are not capable of influencing an outcome (Ibid., p. 1145). Bunge’s (1997) context defines mechanisms that function within a system where the environment influences or is influenced by the constituent parts of the system (Ibid., p. 416). Therefore, in agreement with Falleti and Lynch (2009), I adopt the strategy of defining context for this thesis by establishing contours within the environment in which they operate. The authors explain that contours vary over time; hence, to observe causal mechanisms, researchers should allocate critical junctures into sections where the relevant context is constant. This implies a justification of the explaining outcome process tracing method, which concentrates on explaining events in history (Beach & Pedersen, 2019: 48).

In the next section, I begin the attempt to contextualise this thesis’s normative environment by addressing the unsuitability of two alternative sources for causal explanation. These include two often debated sources of experiences considered influential in the West African norm-building process. They include the neopatrimonialism regime style, where political elites use state resources to reward clients for their support to remain in power, and the modernity of states, which describes the state’s formation and development process. These perceived sources of cognitive priors are the subject of ongoing debates in African regionalism and form a substantial part of the literature (Piccolino, 2016). Hence, preceding the discussion around this thesis’s intermediary causal hypothesis, I demonstrate the limitations of these two perceived sources of cognitive prior and explain the necessity of moving beyond them when accounting for the observed regional outcomes.

3.2. Alternative Explanations for Causation: Neopatrimonialism and Modernity

In the previous section, I agreed with Piccolino’s (2016) assertion that most contemporary attempts at explaining the diverse outcomes observed within Africa’s regional organisations, including ECOWAS, can be grouped into two debates (normative tensions *in this thesis*, the modernity of states and neopatrimonialism). The importance of revisiting these debates lies in their perceived influence on the region’s experiences, which have been interwoven mainly within the African regionalism analytical

framework. Muldoon (2017) emphasises the importance of accounting for a community's perspectives, particularly when they deviate from the standard rational actor model (see also Jervis, 2017). Muldoon contributes that, perspectives are potent because they can interact with social norms to determine the resilience or difficulty of adopting norms. For example, Chabal and Daloz (1999) concluded that African societies depended on norms derived from the traditional structure of administering politics and the economy. While I acknowledge some features of neopatrimonialism and accept a level of influence from the transition of post-independent African states into modernity, the analysis provided within some contemporary research discussed below indicates that these perceived sources still have limited potential in explaining the emergence of regional norms. Therefore, my objective in this section is to make the case for their rejection. To achieve this, I first address the overt reliance on neopatrimonialism and its unsuitability for analysing West African regionalism studies. This is demonstrated by highlighting multiple drawbacks to the theory, particularly in contemporary norm research. Second, I explain, based on the previous discussion, why experiences associated with the neopatrimonial regime pattern, and the contested modernity of the West African states are insufficient to constitute the region's primary source of cognitive priors.

First, in Weber's 1946 *"Essays in Sociology,"* patrimonialism is described as a form of legitimate authority derived from the traditionally sustained practice of norms, customs, and beliefs. This authority is formulated at the centre of these societies to develop and preserve their traditions in politics and economics. In effect, patrimonialism bestows and institutionalises complete control of all mechanisms and the power of coercion in an individual (*essentially bordering on domination*). The neopatrimonialism modification is derived from the fusion of these patrimonial systems with some attributes of state modernity (Sigman and Lindberg, 2017). Its core features include a dominant and overriding structure characterised by a patron-client relationship. Where the patron, usually an elite, is represented as the *"big man"* connected to groups of clients either by some shared primordial ties, beliefs or, in some cases, charisma. This symbiotic relationship involves the patron rewarding his clients for their continued loyalty. It also involves the complete transfer of the client's collective authority to the elite, even when at odds with their interests. The second core feature is the principle of complicity on the part of the clients in their subjugation. This principal presents client exploitation as perpetual due to the indissolubility of the patron-client relationship. The third feature is the patron's distinct nature, often portrayed as an absolute ruler devoid of accountability, with an insatiable desire for power and an excessive engagement in societal vices, including greed and material gratification. The neopatrimonialism debate extends not only to the diverse normative outcomes in politics but also to the economic realm within the African region. Parts of these outcomes, some studies argue, are reflected by the normalisation of corruption (Phiri and Edriss, 2013; Bratton and van de Walle, 1994; Clapham, 1985) and lead to less successful democratised states (Bratton and Van de Walle, 1994; Erdmann and

Engel, 2007; Brown and Kaiser, 2007; Kirschner and Staple, 2016), due to the perpetuation of traditional structures to benefit the ruler (Wai 2012: 32).

In African regionalism, studies have attributed neopatrimonialism with the outcome, for example, in the Central African region, where “their sovereignty do not contribute to the crystallisation of a mode of political behaviour which would favour integration and the construction of the community” (Ibid: 79). In the East African region, neopatrimonialism explains their preference for resistance to the norm of supranationalism to avoid a loss in decisional power (Fanta, 2008: 18; see also Herbst, 2007; Bach, 2006, 2011; Clapham, 1996; Collins, 2009; Allison, 2008, 2018). While similar to the West African region, Söderbaum argues that the South African region, converged on the preference for interventionist norms, guided the decision by the South African Development Commission (SADC) to strengthen member states and their fellow neighbour’s weak governments against domestic opposition and national disintegration (Söderbaum, 2004: 42).

However, these attempts at explaining outcomes within the neopatrimonialism framework have been criticised as being too Africa-centric, “selective and arbitrary”, and founded on unstable assumptions (Mkandawire, 2015; Parsons, 1964). Neopatrimonialism is seen as a “catch-all concept for all the norm failures” in the region (Bach, 2011; Wai, 2012; Pitcher et al., 2009; Crook, 1989; Theobald, 1982). For instance, Mkandawire challenges the logic behind the “perpetual client”, referring to it as irrational, especially considering that it is also designed against their interests. In addition, the author argued that the theory achieved tenure viability in contractual relationships, a feat not replicated elsewhere. Mkandawire also objects to the capaciousness in categorising big men in Africa, insisting that the theory failed to describe who, why and when a leader or individual is considered the patron. For example, would the theory categorise individuals such as Mobutu Sese Seko, Idi Amin, Charles Taylor, Francisco Macias Ngwema, and Ibrahim Babangida, but also Nelson Mandela, Julius Nyerere, and Kwame Nkrumah (Mkandawire, 2015: 571)? Parson emphasises this inadequacy by highlighting the difficulty in using Weber’s definition to capture the varied African experiences. The concept only gained traction on the continent in the late 1970s, after Eisenstadt (1973) had only recognised the practice within “post-traditional societies” in Latin America, South Asia, and the Middle Eastern regions (see also Bach, 2011).

Second, the foregoing criticisms of neopatrimonialism conceptual and theoretical foundations highlight the gulf between analysis and reality, which makes this commonly perceived African regional experience unsuitable for explaining outcomes. Moreover, its key features are non-transferable to the regional organisation or extended beyond the state level, as the practice is not sophisticated and nuanced enough to be maintained at the supranational level (Moti, 2009). Mkandawire also disputes neopatrimonialism as an alternative explanation due to the failure of most analysts to recognise states’

preferences. These preferences, Mkandawire argued, may be related to culture, which often contains a repertoire of behaviours and capacities essential in determining norm outcomes. For instance, when accounting for the fluctuation of democratic values in the past three decades within the ECOWAS normative environment, Mkandawire associates observed outcomes with the continuous contest of the norm. This, in Mkandawire's assertion, underscores that neopatrimonialism fails to account for the degree of variations and contingency at play in the African context (Hoffman, 2018: 434)⁵. Similar criticisms have also been extended towards its failure to sufficiently explain how predetermined outcomes are arrived at (Heron, 2018; Booth and Golooba-Mutebi, 2012; Crook, 1989; Posner and Young, 2007) and its meaning and application particularly when it exists simultaneously with Western norms (Hoffmann, 2018; Beckman, 1993: 21 – 22; Wai, 2012; Mkandawire, 2015; Bach, 2011; Kelsall, 2011). Essentially, the perceived influence of neopatrimonialism on the investigated normative environment presents deeply rooted challenges to its explanatory framework, suggesting that its influence on causation offers an insufficient basis for explaining outcomes.

Another debated potential source of causal explanation relates to the state's lack of modernity. Axtmann (2004) depicts a modern state by territorial consolidation, centralisation of governance and the defence of sovereignty. This criterion largely excludes African communities, most of which have remained in the developing category following the near-perpetual state of crises in parts of the region. This conflict-prone environment and the attendant lack of governance structures in some studies are responsible for pushing the region's states further away from modernity and towards categories such as failed states, shadow states, warlord states and weak states, usually applied as a basis to explain divergent norm outcomes in the region (see Rotberg 2004; Warner, 1999; Jackson 1987, 1990, 2000; Bayart, Ellis and Hibou 1999; Migdal 1988; Clapham 1998; Goldsmith 2000; Gros 1996; Helman and Ratner 1993; Hopkins 2000; Reno 1998). As seen with the neopatrimonialism narrative, the convergence around the influence of the state's modernity on normative outcomes appears not to be isolated to independent states but rather to have expanded continent-wide.

For Mkandawire, this argument is too analytically simplistic. In the author's view, other contending outcomes are often disregarded in cases where, to achieve modernity, local elites, while gravitating towards these prevailing standards, lean towards irrationality, falsity, and self-discrimination (Ibid, 2015). Considering also that, in Africa's case, much of these state structures were bequeathed by their colonial authorities, and the conflicts observed have concentrated on protecting these inherited demarcations. These criticisms become reasonable as promoting the modernity argument as a potential source for explaining divergent norm outcomes without an understanding of the impact these conflicts have on shaping the process overshadows a fundamental premise. That for modernity and norm

⁵ Hoffman's 2018 interview with Thandika Mkandawire

development to thrive, the state must contend with the process of norm-building outside of threats, existential or not (see Herbert Smith Freehills, 2014; Austen, 1987; Mattingly, 1955; Tilly, 1990; Newman, 1995). In addition, while modernity may impact the state's construction, the experiences from the process fail to capture the source of compliance, which some studies argue resides in African tradition, culture, and normative contestation (Chazan et al., 1988; see also Tordoff, 1993; Hodder-Williams, 1984; Mazrui, 1995).

In conclusion, although the neopatrimonialism theory is a comparative tool to measure political and economic performance across international systems (Mkandawire, 2015; Bach, 2011), it relies on static assumptions and demonstrates little evidence that the normative environment responds to its influence. Instead, it conveys, with a healthy measure of criticism, that the neopatrimonial normative environment is shaped by predictable outcomes promoted by analogous elites. Similarly, basing the explanation of an outcome solely on the level of modernity a state achieves ignores the reality of diverse experiences shaped by its unique history, identity, and, ultimately, the state's laws, which represent a constituent part of its normative environment. In contrast, this thesis argues that norm-building is a contingent process shaped by the region's diverse historical and constitutive uniqueness, given its spatial attributes (Erdmann and Engel, 2007; Pitcher et al., 2009). This focus is crucial for distinguishing between normative agency and capturing the challenge to norms that are often overlooked within modernity and neopatrimonialism explanations. In the following sections, I contextualise the ECOWAS normative environment relied upon by this thesis to develop explanations for causation concerning the diverse norm outcomes investigated.

3.3. The West African Normative Environment – On the Road to Regionalism

In this section, I diachronically map the presence of unique cognitive priors within the ECOWAS region to display how notably varied experiences have impacted the non-linear evolution of the region's normative environment. This unravelling of the region's normative environment is important to support this thesis's focus on nonconventional and less predetermined sources of influence during the norm-building process. The experiences discussed in the following sections highlight potential sources of explanatory causation influenced by culture, societal peculiarities, and domestic political ideology, which appear to inform statecraft and diplomatic interactions. These observed sources also exhibit essential peculiarities, for instance, the inherent effect of differentiated state regimes along the French, British, and Portuguese colonial administrative patterns⁶. I present these sources in two parts: the initial part reviews the direct and external influences exerted by the diffused norm of sovereignty (Acharya,

⁶ Interview 08, Senior ECOWAS Official, August 2024, Phone Call

2009: 7), while the later part demonstrates the relevance of member states' preferences towards norm outcomes (Legro, 1997). The two parts examine the ECOWAS regionalism attempts, focusing on how cognitive priors developed and influenced norms, which form the basis for this thesis's attempt at contextualising an analytically, feasible normative environment.

In May 1975, when the West African states adopted their ambitious integration and cooperation agenda, several significant and influential social conditions prevailed in the region. First, it signalled the official commitment of the region's political actors to present a common strategy. However, this commitment occurred against long-running political and economic disagreements during the first decades of independence between states of the former French and British colonies. For example, the West African anglophone and francophone groups were fundamentally divided on the acceptable levels of influence to be exercised by their respective former colonial powers on these states. The francophone states consistently strived to maintain and develop additional institutions under the influence of their colonial authorities, while the anglophone countries, mainly Ghana, opted to disband these institutions. The francophone group's invitation to France's external interference led to military, economic, and political agreements (Hartmann, 2013). For example, although the independent francophone replaced the French West African Currency Union with the West African Monetary Union, the new currency was still convertible into French francs. In contrast, the anglophone states completely replaced the West African Pound with national currencies immediately after independence (Adedeji, 1970). The impact of this contentious normative environment was the failure of various regional experiments attempted initially. These include the Ghana-Guinea experiments in 1961, the economic integration of Senegal and the Gambia in 1963, the West African Free Trade Area, which involved Sierra Leone, Liberia, the Ivory Coast, and Guinea in 1964, and the establishment of the UN Economic Commission for Africa (UNECA) in 1963. The primary consideration in this part, as highlighted, involves the ECOWAS regionalism subsisting within a normative environment conditioned to recognise diverse approaches to external influence or domination. This source of cognitive prior presents a significant potential source of cognitive priors to explain members' states' preference for social identities that shape the region, especially regarding the outcomes investigated.

Second, the creation of ECOWAS was also noteworthy because, initially, the proposed West African regionalism was predicted to have detrimental effects on the member states. For context, in 1969, at a seminar for Inter-African Public Administration bureaucrats in Monrovia, Professor Adebayo Adedeji's report enumerated potential difficulties based on various contending ideologies prevalent at the time, which were capable of hampering any integration in the region. Adedeji argued that the normative environment influenced opposing ideologies developed from the colonisation era up to the late 1980s, including Pan-Africanism, socialism, and neoliberalism (Novicoff, 2022). Adedeji maintained that all previous failed attempts by fewer states meant that the prospects for all 14 states were unlikely to

succeed and would produce no net advantages. In Adedeji's opinion, the normative environment lacked traditional cooperation among its infant states, which, in his view, was a recipe for an irrelevant or detrimental customs union (Adedeji, 1970). Despite Adedeji's predictions and dire warnings of potential economic devastation, ECOWAS member states agreed to create an economic union less than a decade later. Most importantly, the Treaty of 1975 established key normative frameworks for integration, significantly altering the initially contentious approach to cooperation observed at the outset. The emphasis here is on the potency of member states' preferences in determining particular normative outcomes. The implication, when combined with the concerns discussed in the previous part, emphasises an understanding of the source of convergence and how the institutional agreements were used to ensure that the achieved regionalism accounted for shared norms and their ability to exclude others.

The brief analysis of the sequence of events above highlights the importance of contextualising a unique ECOWAS normative environment while accounting for the influence associated with the observed cognitive priors. This also provides a credible explanatory tool compared to neopatrimonialism or the modern state. Notably, the following decades witnessed further consequential changes adapted to support the region's metamorphosis, for instance, the emergence of security regionalism (Hettne, 2005). During this period, many of the introduced norms could be traced back to the ECOWAS Revised Treaty of 1993, which adopted a more heterogeneous set of social, economic, and political agreements designed in response to the region's confounding security situation. Normative instruments introduced include the Protocol on Non-Aggression (1978), the Protocol Relating to Mutual Assurance and Defence (1981), and the Declaration of Political Principles (1991). While the newly accepted norms should have indicated increased convergence, they also suggest that the preferred outcomes of member states for these norms require closer inspection. For example, the prevailing international political dynamics in the 1990s were marked by the rise of a unipolar power that favoured democratic systems of government. To this end, ECOWAS member states, led chiefly by military dictators, agreed on the Declaration of Political Principles 1991. This non-binding instrument was proposed to promote democracy, respect human rights, and enhance the rights and freedoms of sovereign states in the region, enabling them to exist without interference. In essence, the accepted democratic norms became a new set of challenger norms to the ECOWAS normative environment influenced by military dictators with conflicting interests about external interventions.

As previously elaborated, the frameworks of neopatrimonialism and the modern state's approach would fail to offer the analytical depth necessary to explain these outcomes sufficiently. Instead, as demonstrated above, the focus on sources of states' cognitive prior can link to the outcome. In the next section, I contextualise the ECOWAS normative environment proposed by this thesis.

3.4. Contextualising a Normative Environment

In this thesis, I explore divergent outcomes in West African regionalism by developing an explanatory framework based on the contextual normative background which influences the region's norm-building process. This thesis's intermediate hypothesis relates to a normative environment that describes the region's social system, which supports the interaction of heterogeneous member-states. This system, in turn, develops mechanisms to accommodate and maintain the mutual commitments of member states, which translate into norms. Hence, the normative environment in this thesis describes a milieu in which to observe essential micro processes, including normative contestation, norm implementation, and compliance, and to identify and analyse the diverse norm outcomes (Checkel, 1988). In Chapter Two, I demonstrated that adapting sociological research paradigms extended this thesis's norm outcome investigation beyond the limits or constraints of choice based on past-predetermined individual behaviour towards contestation and implementation. While the evidence-based causal pathways are yet to be determined, this section contextualises the normative environment through which norm outcomes are influenced and explains why this attention is imperative.

Consequently, in this thesis, the West African "Normative Environment" (NE= RS, CP, IR)⁷ is composed of the (RS) region states, (CP) cognitive priors, which are social identities, values and norms, specific to the region and (IR) institutional sets of rules that manipulate the region states. Within the ECOWAS normative environment, I highlight the obsolescence of conquest and the West African state's variation of sovereignty as mutual hierarchical sources of cognitive priors among the regional states, which mediate the implementation of norms towards diverse outcomes. A cognitive prior (CP) is defined as "an existing set of ideas, belief systems, and norms, which determine and condition an individual or social group's receptivity to new norms" (Acharya, 2009: 21). They are fundamental to this thesis investigation mainly as they define the normative positions of regional states to deepen the analysis around challenger norms, provide a credible assessment to the levels of acceptance or rejection of norms, and play a profound role in achieving the mapping of ideational flows crucial to the investigation in this thesis (Rüland, 2018: 70). In studies such as Levitt and March (1988), the authors conclude that regional organisations like those in the West African region, rely on cognitive priors to encode causal inferences into routines that their guide behaviour. The institutional set of rules (IR) are mutual agreements relating to regional normative instruments. These rules demonstrate the region's preference, hierarchy, and expected outcome to measure compliance or violation of norms. In essence, the rules translate norms into law, define the normative position and monitor the regional states, and can be adopted implicitly or explicitly (Holsti, 2004). These include norms adopted from diffusion

⁷ See Cardoso and Oliveira (2009)

mechanisms within and outside the region, as reflected in ECOWAS treaties, protocols, and other agreed-upon policy documents.

The importance of relying on the normative environment, as Achille Mbembe puts it, is to establish correspondence between what is observed and exposed and the real value of things. Mbembe, who encourages a more thorough investigation into the African experiences, argues that “to know it, you must really get to know the environment in depth” (Mbembe, 2001: 148). This sociological research emphasis enhances our understanding of normative conditions and context by evaluating the behaviour of member states or regional organisations, including in instances where the influence of socialisation deemphasises exogenous constraints of institutions within social interaction (Wendt, 1994). For instance, although sociological research on norm outcomes indicates that norms are dissimilar and can have opposing or contradictory imperatives, it is essential to explain clearly and concisely why some norms are more influential than others (Legro, 1997). In other instances, such queries would raise mutual challenges emanating from the context, causal inferences, and factors uniquely attributable to the observed social interaction.

In addition, adapting the normative environment within the constructivist analysis also avoids the impracticality of other theoretical pitfalls, such as contractual institutionalism. Johnson (2001) describes this indifference to socialisation as an oddity in the contractual institutionalism theory, given the possibilities of change in preferences, interests, and even fundamental security philosophies and ideologies within such social interactions (Ibid., p. 490). Johnson’s criticism also targets the constraints on rational optimising behaviour due to the assumption that social interactions are fixed within institutions and incapable of accounting for actors’ identities or interests. This fixed preference assumption is seen in Johnson as antithetical to the norm-building process, mainly conflicting with the established notion of variation in the durability of norms, given the type of socialisation micro-process (Ibid: 496). Therefore, as contextualised for this thesis, the normative environment holistically engages the various stages and backgrounds that support the norm-building process and the actors’ agency.

The normative environment investigation is not limited to the socialisation theoretical dynamics. Rational theories also offer recognition, although they are primarily based on the limits to agency and result in less analytical intensity. For example, sociological institutionalism focuses on an actor’s adherence to rules and norms based on their identities and culture, assuming these to be the source of interest to individuals. However, this negates the fact that human action is subject to symbolic rather than just utilitarian impulses (Friel, 2017: 213). For the liberal hypothesis, the agency of actors and the normative environment receive similar recognition. State preferences are also considered relevant to international politics and assumed to shape state behaviour, often influenced by societal ideas, interests and institutions (Moravcsik, 1997). This treatment is in direct conflict with neorealism, where

socialisation is treated “as a process by which autistic non-balancers are weeded out of the anarchical international system” (Johnson, 2001: 487). The implication I discussed in the previous section suggests that excluding states with perceived neopatrimonial ties or those believed to have deviated from the standards of the rational actor model threatens the viability of studying normative orthodoxy.

In conclusion, this thesis’s adaptation of the normative environment serves as a much-needed analytical bridge for research into non-Western states that cannot create their normative environment, like powerful states, but recognise the peculiarity of the region’s social interactions. The normative environment in this thesis is used to account for the heterogeneity of claims in West African systems in response to numerous varied and complex systems, a deviation from the neorealist model of an anarchical international system.

In the previous section, I described the normative environment (NE) as comprising the regional states (RS), the institutional set of rules (IR), and the cognitive priors (CP). This section focuses on diagnosing the earlier specified mutual hierarchical sources of cognitive priors observed within the normative environment. I proposed that the West African state’s variation of sovereignty and the obsolescence of conquest act as intermediary causal pathways to the diverse norm outcomes investigated in the region. These sources precede the formal determination of norms or ideas, contributing to the contestation process and significantly influencing the receptivity of new norms, including shaping the implementation preferences in cases of internationally diffused homogeneous norms. As emphasised, building norms is slow-moving and dependent on encoding inferences from history into routines that guide behaviour, aligning with Levitt and March’s view on organisational learning (Ibid, 1988:319). To account for this process within causation, particularly as it relates to the development of paradigms to interpret experience, these isolated sources of cognitive prior present a basis for resolving shared regional experiences. They also contribute conceptually to this thesis’s explanatory framework, addressing the diverse norm outcomes investigated.

3.5. Diagnosing Sources of Cognitive priors

The West African state’s variation in sovereignty represents a critical part of the region’s experience and is impactful as a source of cognitive priors in the region’s norm-building. The variation consideration in this thesis does not apply to tangible or recognisable structural differences. Instead, it is used to elaborate on the perceived understanding of the concept in regions where the idea of sovereignty is developed out of the relationship with colonialism. Implying that, as Holsti (2004) reiterates, although facts exist around the constitution of a nation-state, sovereignty is the norm. Sovereignty, irrespective of the status, condition, size, strength, socio-economic dynamics and the revolving administrative patterns -civilian or military- is immutable to the distinct political community. For emphasis, I do not claim that the West African state’s sovereignty norm is undergoing

any form of transformation, nor is such an assumption associated with the norm contestation process analysed in this thesis. The normative and descriptive understanding of sovereignty norms remains tethered to the bounds and principles of the Westphalian doctrine, devoid of linguistic differentiations or the need for redefinitions.

3.5.1 Variation in Sovereignty Source

Although I retain a non-contradictory representation of sovereignty, debates surrounding the variations of the concept in contemporary literature present credible arguments which introduce pragmatism to this thesis's investigation. The idea of sovereignty has never been a static concept. Historically, societies within the international system have been constructed and recognised based on prevailing fundamental social laws (Pham, 2016). For instance, between 1830 and 1865, states granted independence, such as Greece, Moldova, and Wallachia, had limits to their sovereignty. The conditions from Britain, France, Russia, and Austria-Hungary for their sovereignty included the mandate that these new states, treat minorities properly, protecting their race, language, and religious rights. By the end of World War I, these sovereignty conditions had become universal, with most subsequent treaties guaranteeing minority rights as a fundamental condition of exercising sovereignty (Philpott, 2001). While newly created states were subjected to these sovereignty conditions, European monarchies did not consent to any oversight, leading states like Poland and Germany to renounce their treaty obligations in 1930.

By the second half of the century, the recognition of sovereignty had shifted with the establishment of the United Nations, which was tasked with determining conditions and granting sovereignty. The UN Charter recognised state's sovereignty as "Provided States have supreme authority within their territory, the plenitude of internal jurisdiction, their immunity from other States' jurisdiction and their freedom from other States' intervention on their territory (UN Charter, 1945, Rt 2 (1)). The challenge with these criteria, as observed by proponents of sovereignty variation, is that at the time, most colonies granted independence, including West African states, failed to qualify as sovereign states but were fully recognised (Holsti, 2004; Jackson and Rosberg, 1982). For instance, many states still lacked the internal attributes of sovereignty as "Africa has been the site of one-third of all the armed inter- and intra-state conflicts that have taken place since 1946" (Brosché and Höglund, 2014: 110). These conflicts ensured that most states could not have had supreme authority within their territories. This maintains a somewhat contrary understanding of Westphalia and colonial independence. In Philpott's (2001) assessment, they represented revolutions in the globalised sovereign state systems that fundamentally changed the international society.

Some studies on the effect of these nuanced considerations regarding sovereignty have suggested that these variations influence norms at both national and regional levels (Englebert, 2009). For instance,

the United States' sovereignty is recognised as a model of citizen representation and the people's government (*for the people and of the people*) (MPM, 2022), while the Chinese define its sovereignty within the foundation of *the state's exclusive and boundless authority over its territory and identity* (Hellström, 2023). The observed differences guide their individual states' responses to the diffusion of specific norms. For instance, although the United States is a staunch defender of its sovereignty, it is also a strong advocate for the global spread of democratic norms. In contrast, China advocates fiercely for the norm of non-intervention and rejects the diffusion of democratic norms, including within its territories (*de jure* borders), both discursively (FMPRC, 2023) and behaviourally (Brands and Beckley, 2022). China's sovereignty variation also guides its responses to the diffusion of most Western norms, including those on human rights and humanitarian intervention. It extends these rejections to its *de jure* territories, like Taiwan and Hong Kong (Hellström, 2021). These diverse normative preferences can be related to the constitution of their normative environment, which is influenced by the region's experiences, including those related to its sovereignty.

In Africa, the sovereignty bestowed on states post-1945 has also been debated as a significant variation of the Westphalia model. Some of the categories for this observed variation include "diplomatic and juridical recognition" (Englebert, 2009) or "conditional sovereignty" (Holsti, 2004), and "juridical sovereignty" (Jackson and Rosberg 1982). Englebert (2019) contends that African sovereignty gets its distinction from the condition of international recognition rather than the domestic transfer of authority. Krasner (2001) advocates for this acknowledgement, describing African states as *international - an* identification solely based on mutual recognition with other states (see also Hout and Salih, 2019). In addition, Holsti (2004) argues that, unlike in Europe, sovereignty for previously colonised African states was delivered with predetermined constitutions shaped by democratic, self-governance, and self-determination norms. These norms, the author maintains, were superficial as most states remained primordial, revolving around clans, tribes, and religious groups, or had severely restricted authority over large parts of their geography (Ibid: 55).

Furthermore, these perceived elemental variations have been considered a source of complex norm outcomes within societies (Oksenberg, 2001). For example, Pierre Englebert observes that the African state's sovereignty limits the policies that are possible, explicitly noting that the normative environment of post-colonial sovereignty will not support the diffusion of democratic norms, given the constraints that sustainable democracy poses in their experience (Englebert, 2009: 223). Mbembe (2001) also suggests that the cognitive priors that influence outcomes on security norms are shaped by colonial sovereignty and rest on the experience of three types of violence. First is the right to conquest, where states exercised all power, often described as a founding act of violence. The second is the power of arbitration to judge its laws. This sort of violence came before and after or as part and parcel of conquest, based on the logic of legitimisation. The third form of violence was designed to maintain authority,

spread, and permanence. In Mbembe's view, the third source of violence reoccurred on numerous occasions and in the most banal and everyday circumstances in Africa "—in short, it played so important a role in everyday life that it ended up constituting the central cultural imaginary that the state shared with society, and thus had an authenticating and reiterating function" (Ibid: 25). Accounting for these exogenous effects on sovereignty within the African region's normative environment cannot be overstated. Some implications for the normative environment based on these experiences include the de-emphasising of normative institutions or structures and the consideration of norms as emergent properties of preferences due to the influences of the region's cognitive priors.

3.5.2 *The Obsolescence of Conquest Source*

The second source of cognitive prior under review is the region's experience with the obsolescence of conquest. The discontinuance of international practices, including ideas, political systems, norms and runs, are common occurrences. In Holsti's assessment, the most prominent change to international politics, which bears fundamental consequences, is the obsolescence of the right of conquest (Ibid, 2004: 141). The right to conquest had been a crucial feature of the international political system, often exercised by stronger states. While the fear of war and impending conquest reinforces the institution of sovereignty and its associated norms of self-governance and determination, in Africa, a residue of this experience remains, which fundamentally shapes the normative environment. As discussed above, Mbembe's third form of violence, experienced in the region during colonialism, play a crucial role in the central imaginary culture that the state share with society (Mbembe, 2001: 25).

Some scholars, such as Kalevi Holsti, Max Weber, and Charles Montesquieu, attribute the obsolescence of war to the industrialisation of societies. The belief was that with the demise of military and feudal societies and the rise of production and commerce, the normative preference for war would be eroded in favour of material development. However, Majeed (1991: 423) characterises these suppositions more as an act of faith. Majeed's concern expands to the African region, its developing political economy and the potential for conflicts. The author argues that the fundamental structure of international politics remains unchanged, and although the agenda can be reviewed, the anarchic nature cannot be substituted. This lingering experience contributes to defining the West African normative environment and draws attention to the fear surrounding the obsolescence of conquest. This concern, maintained mainly by African societies, is reinforced by the knowledge that "the use of force remains an implicit option" (Majeed, 1991: 420).

It is also important to reiterate that the West African states appear more receptive to the norms of conquest, regardless of their sovereignty. For example, the previous discussion around industrialisation and its effects on the preference for war excludes the region's states. In addition, other constraints to

conquest, like territorial norms, when redefined to accommodate the focus of conquest post-1945, demonstrate that, unlike attempts at conquering entire states, twenty-first-century challengers seize relatively smaller regions more frequently than previously recognised (Altman, 2020: 490). Similarly, Atzili's norm of border fixity, recognised as having contributed to peace and security in the West, is observed to have adverse consequences in regions such as Africa, particularly in areas with weak socio-political states. The author posits that the norm of border fixity perpetuated state weakness in these regions due to the absence of historical drivers of state-building, like territorial pressures (Atzili, 2012: 20).

In this thesis, isolating the obsolescence of conquest as a source of the region's cognitive prior accounts for the experiences of the region from the nineteenth through to the first half of the twentieth century. These experiences formed the bedrock of normative orthodoxy and defined the boundaries of the normative environment. For example, describing the initial colonial experience in Africa, Mbembe notes that "Civilisation" initially made its presence felt in its brutal form - war, through the act of conquest—that is, the right to kill and make force prevail (Ibid, 2021: 32). Not much has changed to contest this experience with the normative environment in the region. As Majeed explains, the prevailing international system is interwoven with diplomacy and war, and big states still retain the right to take what they want to take and keep what they want to keep (Majeed, 1991: 424). The international system's transformation to coercive diplomacy means that a challenging state now demonstrates its quality of force, capability, and intention (Majeed, 1991). Much of this residual right to conquest can be observed, for instance, in the abrupt change to the US foreign policy position as mandated in a joint resolution of its Congress after 9/11. The Bush administration secured an "all necessary and appropriate force" authorisation to go after sponsors of terrorism across at least fourteen countries across Africa, the Middle East, and South Asia (CFR, 2004).

The impact of colonialism and other forms of conquest still manifests itself within the West African normative environment. This residual fear from the obsolescence of conquest remains influential in the norm-building process because the region's sociopolitical condition remains weak, and the threat of war within the international system cannot be eradicated. The delegitimation of conquest, as it existed as a right of sovereignty, is a primary constitutive factor in sovereignty norms and significantly impacts the preferences of member states within the normative environment.

3.6. Conclusion

In this chapter, I examined the causal pathways of this thesis to enhance the identification of causal mechanisms. I achieve this by engaging in an in-depth analysis of the context and conditions that impact the specific norm outcome investigated. The chapter contextualises the causal process that links outcomes through co-existing processes and accounts for the interaction between causal mechanisms and context. The chapter initially discussed two commonly presumed sources of cognitive prior: neopatrimonialism and state modernity. A key criticism of neopatrimonialism as an explanatory tool was its inability to demonstrate the transfer of its impact from member states to the regional organisation. Additionally, utilising the modernity of state perception proved inadequate in influencing the region's norms and dynamics. These conventional frameworks, I argued, were ill-suited to determine causal mechanisms due to their fundamentally flawed structures. The chapter also explored the establishment of West African regionalism, highlighting the presence of unique cognitive priors, notably developed from varied experiences, that impacted the non-linear evolution of its normative environment. The analysis demonstrates the prevalence of nonconventional and less predetermined sources of influence during the norm-building process. The normative environment is contextualised as composed of regional states (RS), cognitive priors (CP), which are social identities, values, and norms specific to the region, and institutional sets of rules (IR) that influence the regional states. I reiterated that the normative environment provided the crucial link between what is observed and the credible causal pathways

The concluding section examined variations in sovereignty and the obsolescence of conquest as intermediate pathways for understanding shared regional experiences and developing the explanatory framework presented in this thesis. I demonstrated that the normative environment of particular variations, including postcolonial sovereignty, affected the norm-building process by restricting the development of specific norms. Similarly, I discussed the obsolescence of conquest, which also contributes to defining the region's normative boundaries and orthodoxy, particularly in light of the residual fear stemming from experiences of conquest and war. The basis of this consideration is reflected in the unchanging anarchic nature of the international system, even as contemporary transformations present a more diplomatic framework.

This chapter follows a logical progression in identifying the causal mechanisms of this thesis. By engaging in the discussion around the causal pathways, I enhance the transparency and context required to identify the relevant causation. This augmentation to the causal inference observations highlights essential micro-processes, including normative contestations within norm-building, which are uniquely applicable to the West African region. This complements the constructivist research approach, which

increases the analytical utility of this thesis by accounting for changes to preferences, interests, and fundamental ideologies through the study of social processes and context.

This conception of the social environment as the determining factor in collective evolution is of the greatest importance. For if it is discarded, sociology is powerless to establish any causal relationship
(Durkheim, 2013: 94)⁸

4. Chapter Four: West Africa's Sovereignty Norm Variation

4.1. Introduction

In Chapter One, I discussed this thesis puzzle regarding the diverse outcomes from norms, particularly in the areas of security and good governance in the ECOWAS region. I observed that while the security norms in the West African region are accepted and internalised irrespective of the threat to member states sovereignty, similarly characterised norms on democracy and good governance, although accepted, are abandoned during implementation. Hence, I argued that norm outcomes in the ECOWAS region result from member states' preferences, which are implemented through behavioural contestation. In Chapter Two, I situated the theoretical framework within social constructivism, highlighting the transformations within theoretical political frameworks that are sufficient to contextualise and explain the region's experiences. In Chapter Three, I discussed the vital contexts in which investigating the region's normative environment supports this thesis's causal explanations, mainly as it targets specific regional micro-processes and changes to member states' behaviour. In this chapter, the thesis attempts to establish, through the analysis of the initial constitution of the ECOWAS normative environment, evidence for the context of the region's cognitive priors and the history of its influence on member states' preferences, particularly in response to the challenge to colonial sovereignty. Taken together, I argued in Chapter Three that the normative environment impacts the implementation mechanisms responsible for the outcomes of norms. I further demonstrated the potency of these contexts within the analysis, which identified the variations in sovereignty and the obsolescence of conquest as unique to the region. They also present critical analytical positions for understanding the sources of cognitive priors in investigating the outcomes of norms in the West African region.

The basis of causality resulting from necessity has been adequately established within research in the philosophical and social sciences (Mahoney, 2015: 203). Hence, the contribution of this chapter to determining circumstances when specific ECOWAS norms display diverse outcomes and to account for the variation. The process tracing method adopted relies on the analysis of these events over time to identify sequences that link causal factors, as well as the necessary conditions that brought them about. The necessary condition in Mahoney (2015) describes an intuition that relies on a particular cause being

⁸ Durkheim, E. (2013). *The Rules of Sociological Method and Selected Texts on Sociology and its Method*. Houndmills, Basingstoke: Palgrave Macmillan.

permanent regardless of circumstances. Therefore, in the ensuing sections of this chapter, my analysis focuses on critical junctures in the region's history, centred around tracing evidence of the influence of this thesis's established necessary conditions. These include variations in sovereignty and the incredulity regarding the obsolescence of conquest in the West African norm-building process, from the creation of states to congruence on a regional organisation. As Niang (2018) suggests, norm building in the West Africa region is always ".....a transient form constantly challenged by rejection, resistance and the limits imposed upon its rhetorical and institutional legitimation by pre-existing temporal and spatial modes of structuring" (ibid: 21). Hence, these social processes when captured adequately, around specific periods in the history of the region, enables this thesis to re-evaluate the earlier consideration of the region's social cohesion away from a statist premise — reinforcing this thesis deviation from singular theories such as prebendalism or patrimonialism which arguably narrows complete understanding. The point here is to deepen insight into the relationship between historical agents - in this case, relating to the influence of their diverse cultural expressions and societal practices with the existing regional institutions. This essential micro-analytical endeavour links, for instance, member states' reflection on sovereignty as crucial in defining the characteristics of social processes within the West Africa region.

Consequently, I begin this chapter by submitting to re-examine the West African context of sovereign norms exhibited through the acceptance of the Westphalia principle. They highlight significant variations in how states share in the normative meaning of sovereignty. In the subsequent sections devoted to the development of norms in the West African region, I demonstrate that the concern over the obsolescence of conquest, stemming from a fractured understanding of sovereignty, is the fundamental source of cognitive prior during the norm-building process. These factors inadvertently impact the relationships between member states, resulting in significant implications, including convergence on external influences and conflicting norms and identities. Specifically, outcomes from this norming process are often also significantly permeated by these differences, impacting the separation of ECOWAS normative mechanisms (treaties and protocols) into categories such as the core of certainty (clear and unambiguous meaning) or the penumbra of doubt⁹ (requiring interpretation). This chapter analysis ultimately establishes agency for the region's political actors, away from a singular ideological function that had seemed antithetical to the model of sovereignty experienced by the rest of the fledgling Westphalian states.

⁹ Hart, H.L.A. (1994) *The Concept of Law*. 2nd ed. Oxford, Oxfordshire: Clarendon Press.

4.2. Colonial West Africa and the Challenge to Westphalian Sovereignty

The West African region, predominantly composed of ethnic settler communities, hosted European trading partners in the early 1820s, like most coastal communities across Africa. Although some historical records have maintained that their interactions were within the bounds of economics and trade, other scholars have explored specific simultaneous diffusion mechanisms. Hargreaves (1985) explains that scholars can emphasise two relationships during this period: the exchange of cultures to promote civilisation and the penetration of primitive commercial activities with modernised capitalism. As described by Victor Hugo, the notable poet, “.....we have not come to this old Roman land that will be French to inoculate barbarity to our army, but our civilisation to a whole people; we have not come to Africa to bring back Africa but to bring Europe there” (Cited in (Belmessous, 2013: 127).

While the West African region's response to the increased economic activity can be implied from the volume of trade, the profundity of the period's cultural and political exchange can be measured in the various records of contentions between both parties. Much of the understanding of the earliest recorded contestation centred on challenges to the norm of aggression. This norm was initiated when the trading partners representing Europe ventured further inland for direct access to the interior markets. This led to growing discontent amongst the leaders of the host communities against what could be termed an act of aggression (Hargreaves, 1985). Although it is unclear whether issues surrounding imbalanced economic agreements or the rejection of the spread of new socio-political norms were responsible for these challenges, the Berlin West African Conference of 1884-85 provides a possible explanation. The conference's outcome reflected a response to resistance from community leaders, such as King Jaja of Opobo, and the emerging rivalry among European actors. To resolve these impasses, the German Chancellor Bismarck convened a meeting for European traders, which sanctioned coercion to facilitate the acceptance of the norm of aggression and resolve the navigation issues along the coast. To this effect, the meeting ended with the partitioning of the West African region for trade amongst the following countries: United Kingdom, France, Germany, Austria, Belgium, Denmark, Spain, the United States of America, Italy, the Netherlands, Portugal, Russia, Sweden-Norway, and Turkey (Ottoman Empire). In addition, despite the West African actors' challenges to European incursion, the Berlin Conference imposed effective occupation on the colonies, sanctioned by military force where necessary (Berlin Conference, 1885).

Furthermore, the Berlin Agreement also granted protectorate rights to European states over tracts of land on the coasts of the African continent that had been hitherto unencumbered by rival states. This represented an essential point in the evolution of states; as Herbst (1997) describes, pre-colonial sovereignty had two features radically different from modern African states sovereignty. First, Herbst explains that pre-colonial Africa's political structure was exercised over people, while colonial Africa

viewed states as territorial entities. The distinction was that pre-colonial polities were not constrained by land ownership. Hence, although surrounded by large tracts of political or physical land, political authority at the time was wielded primarily to control individuals. Second, sovereignty was shared in pre-colonial practice, as it was usual for communities to owe nominal allegiances and obligations to numerous political centres: power in pre-colonial West Africa was defined spatially. Therefore, for the Europeans to effectively administer the region, the colonial authority, as Hargreaves (1985) pointed out, introduced the term and practice of *sovereignty* through the British Colonial Office in 1895. The British colonial office suggested that to exercise its authority and jurisdiction over the newly acquired region, control similar to sovereign status was required to discharge the duties of a protector. The conference addressed this significant omission in Article Six of the General Act of the Berlin Conference of 1895, which established sovereign rights over territories. Suffice it to say that the Berlin Act effectively discarded the pre-colonial geographical constitution of the region, the ethnic definition by communities and the cultural demarcations applicable at the time.

These fundamental changes to the West African region's normative environment led to sustained norm contestation of the concept of Westphalian sovereignty. However, to redirect consideration, the introduced norm of Westphalian sovereignty was not to the African continent. Following the presentation within the signed treaty, partitioned Africa shared sovereignty as an extension of the colonial powers¹⁰. This important observation is captured by the spirit of a proclamation made by Napoleon III in 1863, which considered Algeria a *royaume arabe*, an Arabic kingdom under his sovereignty (Belmessous, 2013: 135). Effectively, re-interpreting African sovereignty was an exercise of authority over the partitioned land, properties, and resources (including the citizens/people, who were also considered commodities) and identifying territories to be defended against other colonial sovereign authorities. This sovereignty variation suggests that inhabitants were not the primary targets of the sovereign norm but rather were items that preceded sovereignty. As described by Jackson and Rosberg (1986), "... European settlers acquired sovereignty at the expense of the native people" (Ibid: 5), but while the Europeans established a new form of authority over the existing traditional structure, inhabitants considered their communities a direct target of new norms coerced into diffusion coupled with the norm of subjugation. This subjugation interpretation arises from the conscious discarding of the prevailing normative system of pre-colonialism, which was responsible for the territorial integrity of the target colonised region. Richard Smith, citing Larson et al. (1965) in elucidating this premise, highlights through the framework of international law that "customary law shares with customary

¹⁰ General Act Of The Conference At Berlin Of The plenipotentiaries of Great Britain, Austria-Hungary, Belgium, Denmark, France, Germany, Italy, The Netherlands, Portugal, Russia, Spain, Sweden And Norway, Turkey And The United States Respecting: (1) Freedom Of Trade In The Basin Of The Congo; (2) The Slave Trade; (3) Neutrality Of The Territories In The Basin Of The Congo; (4) Navigation Of The Congo; (5) Navigation Of The Niger; And (6) Rules For Future Occupation On The Coast Of The African Continent.

international law the characteristic that its validity does not depend upon any theory of sovereignty” (Smith, 1976:4-5).

Following the Berlin Act of 1895 establishing Westphalian Sovereignty, the Europeans exercised greater political control, such that between 1885 and 1914, they had successfully conquered and amalgamated pre-colonial societies into newly designated states. However, parallel accounts of challenges suggest increased resistance from diverse ethnic and cultural communities who rallied against the new sovereign structures. Among these ethnic and cultural movements were the Fante Confederacy (1868-72) of the Gold Coast (now Ghana), the Egba United Board of Management (1865) of Lagos, Nigeria, the Aborigines' Rights Protection Society (1897), and numerous others. All these referenced movements, which developed before the 1890s, were constituted by agitators against the prevailing norm of diffused sovereignty and reflected the traditional makeup of their communities. Post-1900 movements had again modified their demands to align with the struggle for independence, signifying a shift in the clamour by individual ethnic societies to demands from groups within demarcated state boundaries, including some of the earliest activist groups, such as The National Congress of British West Africa (1920).

In the preceding account, challenges to the sovereignty norm were contested by groups of ethnic communities that resisted territorial rule in order to protect their way of life. To contest the imposition, several strategies were engaged, including diplomacy, alliances and, in the extreme case, war. Within Africa, much of the contest ended in wars, which Europeans triumphed in, except in regions such as Ethiopia or other West African colonies, where the challenge spanned decades. Some notable events include the Asante Wars, one of which began in 1805 and lasted for a hundred years, culminating in the final battle of 1900, which resulted in the defeat of the Asante people. The Baule-French War from 1891-1911, the Igbo-British War of 1898-1910 and the Tiv-British War from 1900-1930. As highlighted earlier in my argument, the early communities of the Western African region were profoundly opposed to the amalgamation of their territories; they challenged the concept of *Westphalian sovereignty* offered by Europeans, principally because they had existed as separate, independent entities with their way of life ingrained in their ethnic and cultural composition. In addition, the challenges from the colonies to the new norm of sovereignty also represented an outright rejection due to the significant differences in their political structures. Accordingly, until the end of the Second World War in the mid-1900s, much evidence suggests that the norm of self-determination¹¹ was the principal challenger to Westphalia's sovereignty norm, which was also represented by the norms of interference and aggression.

¹¹ Bereketab, R. (2012) *Self-Determination and Secession: A 21st Century Challenge to the Post-Colonial State in Africa*, DIVA. Available at: <http://www.diva-portal.org/smash/record.jsf?dswid=264&pid=diva2%3A567296>

4.3. The Extension of Colonial Sovereignty and the New States

Although sovereignty had been an established norm between the colonial powers, the concept continued to find difficulty amongst the inhabitants of the colonised communities. Another critical juncture in the transformation of the normative environment was the involvement of Africans in the two World Wars, which contributed to shaping and desensitising future resistance to the Westphalia model. The interactions with other conscripts of the Allied forces from Africa and other regions during the First World War exposed contesting agents to the influence of international norms and, most importantly, to the structures of governance protected under these norms. For emphasis, we observe that future contestations evolved from challenges for communal self-determination to demands for citizens to control the prevailing sovereign structure and the guarantee of territorial independence. Hence, previous self-determination agitators, reintroducing their challenge based on the prevailing wartime rhetoric of freedom, liberty, and the right to self-actualisation, sought to undermine European external sovereignty. Adebajo (2016) notes that the revolt by leaders of the Global South adopted Western idioms to resist what was referred to as an injustice in the international order. Significantly, at the end of WWI, President Woodrow Wilson, in a speech to the American Congress in January of 1918, called for impartial considerations of the question of sovereignty in the interest of the population with equitable claims. Similarly, addressing the League of Nations, President Wilson again echoed the norm of self-determination by advocating that the population had the right to choose the sovereignty under which they lived rather than being handed from one sovereignty to another as possessions. In light of US support, colonies requested the application of similar principles advocated by President Wilson, which had been proposed as the basis for the Allied war against Germany. This demand for fairness eventually led to the introduction of norms such as the right to self-rule, human rights, freedom, and liberty. Noticeably, the jostle for the reconstitution or contest for the revalidation of the sovereignty norms had all but been reshaped by a new call for independence.

By the end of the Second World War between 1939 and 1945, France and Britain, the two major colonial powers in the West African region, emerged damaged and needed renewed legitimacy for their colonial movements. Their cities and industries also required rebuilding amid substantial debts, primarily to the United States. Meanwhile, calls for international justice, supported by the reason for war, beset the colonial powers. This placed the colonial powers in a precarious position and created a tricky balancing act: to present the international system as genuinely diffused of these international norms or detaching from the colonies who also existed as an avenue to earn US dollars towards a path of recovery from the sale of agriculture and mineral products (Cooper, 2018). Faced with this internal dilemma, externally, the demands from the colonies for more development and the distribution of power to locals heightened. Concurrently, in the aftermath of the war, norm challengers were also energised into developing nationalist sentiments, as observed in their demand for self-determination as contained in the 1941

Atlantic Charter. The document advocated for the right of all people to choose their preferred form of government. Dr Nnamdi Azikiwe of Nigeria and G. E Moore of Ghana led the demands for representative government and extended calls for the right to self-determination to all colonies in West Africa. Activities on the global scene, including the reconfiguration of the global power structure and the anti-colonial stance of the new dominant international powers—the Soviet Union (USSR) and the United States—also provided new motivation to the anti-colonial movements (Suret-Canale and Boahen 1993)¹². Inevitably, in the decades that followed, Europeans made compromises by increasing capital investments in primary production activities, including the construction of ports and the development of skilled labour, education, and healthcare sectors. This only fuelled more clamours for independence, and by 1975 all Western African Colonies had regained independence beginning with Ghana in 1957, Guinea in 1958, The Gambia in 1965, Nigeria, Benin, Burkina Faso, Côte d’Ivoire, Mali, Niger, Senegal, and Togo in 1960, Sierra Leone 1961, Guinea Bissau 1973, and Cabo Verde 1975¹³.

It is essential to note that the colonial entities did not transfer sovereignty to the newly independent states. First, the European states instead maintained original sovereignty, which, in effect, meant that only an extension was granted to the colonies within the region. Hence, the sovereignty of the new states carved out by European colonial powers is guaranteed by the United Nations General Assembly Resolution 2621, based on their decolonised status (Herbst, 2007). To clarify, the United Nations did not directly guarantee the sovereignty of a state in the region; instead, it guaranteed the former colony of a European sovereign state the right to exercise the rights of a sovereign state. Second, the impact of this history is often diminished within the norm contestation literature on the region, even as numerous historical accounts observe that the new West African states deviated from established models of developing statehood and territorialism prior to colonisation. As Jackson and Rosberg (1986) conclude on the African state’s normative meaning of sovereignty, “...their sovereignty is not contingent on their credibility as authoritative and capable political structures.... often under the conditions of war” (Ibid, 1986: 2; see also Diop, 1987; Smith, 1976). This reaffirms my analytical position that African states inadvertently continually revalidate their bestowed sovereignty, a status that was unwarranted before their defeat and subsequent colonisation. The key emphasis here is the change to sovereignty’s normative meaning, which becomes a primary variable in the norm contestation process. Most importantly, it sets the stage for the analytical framework of the normative environment post-independence.

¹² Ibid, highlighted the transformation being forced through by rising forces of the Socialist-Communist in the French Constitutive Parliament and the victory of the Labour Party in Great Britain.

¹³ Liberia had its independence in 1847

From the preceding, for emphasis in this thesis, most Western African state's sovereignty was inherited and legitimated by international law at independence. This contrasts a more definitive acknowledgement of self-determination earlier clamoured for by the pre-colonised communities. Herbst (1997) highlights the conditions under which the political actors converged on Westphalia's sovereignty and the motivation for their actions. Herbst argues that the nation-states designed by the Europeans were the elite's preference for distinct territorial boundaries in contrast to the precolonial mixture of political institutions represented by innumerable lineage and clan groups. Most importantly, the region's political elites maintained the inherited European models because there were no guarantees that any other African governance structure would keep them in power (Ibid). For context, political actors at independence, including leaders of several countries, sought the complete disengagement of all ethnic political structures from their new sovereign model. This was to revalidate and redefine the African state's sovereignty forcefully, in some cases, even though the Westphalian sovereignty practised by colonial powers had coexisted with their ethnic structures. As Niang (2018) puts it:

The post-colonial constitutional program of Thomas Sankara (1983–1987) is an illustration of how the post-colonial African state formation became a series of requirements that Africans should overcome their “primordial” attachment to kith and kin, locality and spiritual beliefs and commit to the modernising ambition of the nation-state. This demand was accompanied by a witch-hunt of chiefs as conspicuous avatars of “primordialism”. A similar purge occurred in Ghana under the revolutionary leader Kwame Nkrumah, who went robustly after traditional chieftaincy (....) Sankara's advocacy of a narrowly conceived African originality led to the alienation and the ostracising of a range of domestic symbols of legitimacy” (Ibid: 191-192).

Sovereignty to the new leaders of independent West African states meant clans and political structures within a territory, juxtaposed against clans and political structures that bordered the territory. This need for revalidation also lends credence to the assertion that sovereignty is unsettled between the political elites and the citizens. Due in part to, as described by Herbst (1997), the little or no allegiance of the population to the idea of the state, not to mention the absence of features including physical control of territories and administrative presence¹⁴. For Herbst, African sovereignty seemed a legal fiction, and the economic crisis of the 1960s and 1970s, leading to a decrease in territories controlled by some African states, supports this claim. In addition, incidents of post-colonial rejection of Westphalian sovereignty and a preference for self-determination signal an incomplete diffusion of Westphalian sovereignty. Hence, the states in West Africa, like many other states across the region, remain in conflict areas, in some cases breaking into civil wars. As Herbst puts it, “states have atrophied, those who wish to

¹⁴ Reinforcing Almond and Verba (1963) on the persistence of habits and attitudes as a defining factor of norms where citizens develop engagement

challenge a government have been able to arm, helped by the weapons spillover from conflicts throughout the continent and the low price of armaments after the Cold War” (Herbst, 1997:123).

Accordingly, sovereignty in West African states remains a contested process post-colonialism. Its initial definition and practice among diverse communities, clans, and tribal settlements has evolved away from the model utilised by colonial powers for over a century (Blanton et al., 2001). Some outcomes from these normative contestations are outlined in the Report on Conflict Trends in Africa, 1946-2004. The authors argued that the vast majority of armed conflicts in the region since 1955 had been associated with ideological differences within states, including ethnic, communal, and revolutionary wars (Marshall, 2006). The report demonstrates that differences in normative understandings of sovereignty fuel these feuds. Their conclusion dismisses the idea that the distribution of power is the proximate cause of these conflicts within the region. Instead, they attribute these conflicts to the way sovereignty is understood. Particularly when states attempt to establish the fundamental principles of sovereignty while designing and implementing public policies, disagreements often escalate into conflicts during this period, the report notes. These disagreements persisted throughout the Cold War era until the end of the Soviet Union in 1991. They accounted for one-third of the global total conflicts due to the proliferation of small arms (Ibid: 26). For example, across the Horn of Africa, Matshanda (2022) describes, “In 1991, following more than a decade of civil war, Ethiopia adopted a federal system in an attempt to address long-standing questions on national belonging and to avoid the disintegration of the state. Fast-forward to November 2020, and the country finds itself amid another civil war. At the centre of the conflict lay contradictory visions of the Ethiopian nation-state” (Ibid: 5-6). A similar result from conflict associated with the contestation of sovereign norms across the region is the sovereign conundrum of Somaliland. In 1993, Somaliland unilaterally reverted to their British Protectorate boundaries after achieving domestic legitimacy in 1991. Although Somaliland is not a sovereign country recognised by the international community and law, it enjoys *de facto* statehood.

In conclusion, I demonstrate in the preceding sections that sovereignty norms in West African states reflect a continual contestation process, as there was little evidence of assimilation in the early post-colonial era. Within the African regions, two distinct understandings exist regarding the translation of the sovereignty norm. Most prevalent is the norm on display in most African states, with Sudan conflicts rising to a clear example, the preservation of its unity as the colonial state, while ethnic tensions and, in some cases, even violent contestations occur within the borders. The second understanding is projected from Ethiopia following the breakaway of Eritrea. Deng (1997) explains that Ethiopian sovereignty, as portrayed by its leaders, guaranteed large measures of ethnic-based autonomy, constitutional rights to self-determination, and even succession, wherever it may lead. Hence, the region’s states’ sovereignty was mainly internalised but not validated. The presence of bordered territories with consistent conflicts for supremacy or autonomy signifies challenges to the present sovereign configuration. In the following

section, I focus on West African regionalism politics, the development of its early norms, the region's contestation process, and, most importantly, how this discursive notion of sovereignty contributed to this process.

4.4. West African Regionalism and the Discursive Sovereignty of States

In the previous section, I established the profound significance of the variations in sovereignty bequeathed to the newly independent states. These differences in normative meaning had a significant impact on the formation of cognitive priors and the development of regional norms. In this section, I demonstrate that these were not just variations but crucial factors that influenced the behaviour and preferences of member states.

Pre-independent African states were mainly administered regionally by the British, the French and the Portuguese. However, the depth of integration varied between colonial empires, and even after independence, these political links to the individual metropolises continued to be a significant source of external influence in the trajectory of the newly independent state's national and regional development. For example, elites in Algeria continued to tolerate French interference in their sovereign affairs even after independence. In West Africa, the French and British patterns of colonial administration established the initial cognitive priors, which constitute the pre-existing beliefs and attitudes that influence the preferences for norms in post-independence member states. For context, while the francophone West African colonial states were administered directly, and their independent states depended on the French for the validity of their sovereignty, the British preferred the indirect approach and built communal congruence. However, the independent states rid themselves of any vestiges of sovereign authority attributable to the British. These differences in administrative patterns were significant, as they shaped the behaviour of member states and their potential for regional convergence. The challenges of cognitive priors, shape norms and the varying normative environment meant that shared regional norms between the groups were absent. Fenwick (2009) addresses this in a study investigating the principal difference between Senegal and Kenya. The author also suggests that:

France and England had fundamentally different approaches to their colonial rule. While England wanted to exploit resources and create a profitable environment for its settler communities, France espoused an additional goal of transforming the African populations within its sphere of influence into French citizens. Nowhere is this effort epitomised better than in Senegal. These different approaches significantly impacted the type of colonial rule and the postcolonial relationship (Ibid: 2).

As Fenwick discussed, the complexity of the empire and colony relationship for the French and her colonies was intended to diffuse a system of internal autonomy to territorial governments but with an assimilation agenda via French citizenship to facilitate political participation in the enlarged French Republic. Although this partially succeeded, the colonies had to undergo intense struggles to gain equal rights and representation (Ibid). Further ideological cleavages that contributed to shaping the development of cognitive priors in the West African region's normative environment are outlined in Frederick Cooper's (2018) historical account. Cooper explains that, for the French, the colonies were exposed to far closer cultural exchanges and economic and political ties with the metropole in contrast to the British and its colonies. Cooper writes,

“.... all inhabitants of the empire were “French”—and the ideologues of the empire insisted they could not be anything else—but they were not French in the same way. The complication was that the different categories contaminated each other; citizenship was for most Africans something theoretically available but in practice withheld” (Ibid).

Hence, for post-independence West African francophone states, the French maintained supranational sovereignty and shaped the preferences of the member states culturally and economically, particularly in terms of citizenship status, which significantly impacted cultural mobility and defined the cultural and political life of French West Africa. Saliha Belmessous maintains that the French strategy constituted a profound approach to the assimilation of their colony. Belmessous noted that while *miscegenation was crucial to achieving francisation* in the Americas, in Algeria, the attempts depicted a “*uniform empire*”¹⁵ where subjects or citizens would be sharing the ‘same law, the same measurements, the same rules, and if it were possible, progressively the same language’—this would be, in other words, the perfect social organisation” (Belmessous, 2013: 127). However, not all French colonies subscribed to their continuing interference. Guinea rejected all entreaties, maintained a constitution that guaranteed the inviolable sovereignty of the state and clamoured for independence in 1958 (Mytelka, 1974). The Guineans considered the aim of the French interference to be the effective subordination to any future French Community. However, even as Guinea protested against the perceived subjugation attempts, other French West African states were simultaneously and voluntarily calling for either a Franco-African federation or to be recognised as equals in a French federation, an apparent contradiction to the principles of Westphalia (Cooper, 2018; see also Schmidt, 2009; Renninger, 1979).

For the British colonies, the experience was different; the colonial power opted out of significant cultural diffusion with its colonies and maintained a largely separate political relationship. Cooper

¹⁵ emphasis mine

observed that similar to the French, the British Parliament at the tail end of the colonial era created a citizenship pathway for the United Kingdom and its colonies. This scheme allowed British Africans to settle in the British Isles outside the mainland while political representation remained decentralised. British West African politics primarily occurred at the centre of power in each colony rather than at the metropole. In Cooper's view, the cultural experience of the British African colonies was somewhat unsavoury and exploitative. Hence, the political actors at independence not only rejected the ideas of reform but sought to overthrow the overall structure. The immense resentment of the British regime's style led it to employ other strategies, including divide and conquer. Cooper writes, "In Nigeria, the British tried to manipulate regional divisions. They administered the colony as a federation of three regions: North, West, and East. Each was demographically dominated by a particular ethnic group, which produced tensions within the region and quests for alliances outside it" (Cooper, 2018: 14). Much of this had been the practice of Britain since the inception of colonialism and frayed cordial relationships post-colonialism compared to France. For example, towards the Asante's, in Addo-Fening accounts,

"In July 1874, Captain Lees was sent to Asante to pressure the Asantehene to grant complete independence to Dwaben. The British Administration sent a gift of a gold-plated stool to the Dwabenhene to encourage him to claim status parity with the Asantehene. In a dispatch to the colonial office in October 1875, Governor G.C. Strahan expressly stated British policy as one of "breaking up of Ashanti into two or more tribes who would be independent of each other" to prevent "Kumasi from establishing itself in its former power." The policy was reaffirmed by a minute of the Colonial Secretary Kimberley on Lonsdale's report of 1882. The minute recommended that British policy "should be to steadily encourage the independence of the countries bordering on Ashanti and cultivate good relations with them. Any recovery by Ashanti of its former predominance will be sure to bring us serious trouble" (Addo-Fening, 2013: 48).

James Coleman predicted the impacts of these differing regime influences on outcomes from the French and British colonies post-colonialism. Coleman hypothesised that the rise in tensions precipitated by constitutional steps to replace the imperial powers with more modern centralised states in each direction would provoke group tensions, although more pronounced in the British empire. Additionally, Coleman states

"Conversely, French indifference or resistance towards local government reform in Afrique Noire is as much the uncritical extension to Africa of the statist and centralist tradition of metropolitan France as it is a special imperial device for discouraging African autonomy. In any event, laudable though it may be on many counts, the British policy tends to perpetuate

indigenous cultural cleavages and to *foster separatist movements* within the new states” (Coleman, 1955: 55).

In conclusion, most francophone colonies recognised their sovereignty as an extension of France and aimed to maintain a fused sovereign structure, albeit somewhat subordinate. However, the anglophone states considered themselves a territory subdued by English sovereignty, preferring to overthrow the entire system and establish independence over the territorial sovereign structure. This contradictory normative environment is evidence of the impact of colonial administration patterns on the member states’ behaviour and preferences. This was clearly expressed during an interview regarding the external influence on ECOWAS member states sovereignty by a senior ECOWAS official:

What I think is that they all want sovereignty. But just that it has been easier for English speaking countries to speak of sovereignty. Because after independence, the colonial masters, who were the British, left them with their own way of doing things. They are members of the Commonwealth, yes. But being a member of the Commonwealth doesn't mean that you have to be subject to control or manipulation or influence from the colonial masters. That is Great Britain. On the other hand, the French speaking countries are still, whether we like it or not, under the influence of the colonial masters or the French. Their laws are still mainly based on French law. It's almost a copycat. It's only now that these member states are now trying to change their laws to suit their own perspectives. So, they are talking more about sovereignty. That is what we are hearing now. It's a new concept now and it's been developing especially with the younger generation (Interviewee, 0120E)¹⁶.

The primary significance of the West African regionalism process lies in the development within the region’s normative environment, which fostered separatist sovereignty, mainly due to the absence of proper assimilation in the constituent components of its newly independent states. This section demonstrates this by analysing actions taken by the independent francophone elites who were prepared to dilute sovereign norms through their involvement in the proposed French Federation. At the same time, the anglophone leaders were strengthening the norm of self-determination. Therefore, norm contestation over limits to sovereign norms had been transferred from the external to the internal among newly independent states, which faced the prospect of regionalism that required their sovereign contributions.

Having elaborately analysed the prevailing post-colonial West African normative environment and the impact on the preferences and behaviour of member states, I discuss the development of regional norms

¹⁶ Interview 07, Senior ECOWAS Official, August 2024, Online

around these parameters in the next section. As established, although sovereign norms are internalised in the region, variations persist, suggesting that sovereign norms would undergo revalidation towards regionalism. Hence, this would lead to the puzzling behavioural differences shaping their convergence on agreements that impact sovereign norms.

4.5. Contesting the Norm of Interference and Aggression and the Biafra Civil War

As highlighted, the first successful attempt at regionalism and the transfer of sovereignty to a central bureaucracy occurred under colonialism. This section aims to understand regionalism among post-independent member states, providing an analytical comparison and measuring the influence of prevailing inherent regional differences. The political activities of the West African region during the 1960s had two main reflection points: the promotion of the norms of self-reliance and the geo-political contest between French and British territories. As noted by Stephen Riley, the geo-political considerations essentially overruled the economic projects in the region, with the francophone states concerned about Nigeria's growing interest in controlling its external environment. These concerns effectively shaped the development of the region's future contestations (Riley, 1999).

A notable political event during the period was the establishment of the United Nations Economic Commission for Africa (UNECA) in 1958, which intensified local calls for independence and drove continental and sub-regional integration. President William Tubman of Liberia and his Pan-Africanist counterpart, President Kwame Nkrumah of Ghana, were at the forefront of these negotiations. They advocated for continental unity aimed at protecting the continent's post-colonial states. President Tubman played a pivotal role in the ECOWAS movement, contributing to the drafting of the charters for the Organisation of African Unity (OAU) and the African Development Bank (ADB). Additionally, on August 24, 1964, President Tubman hosted representatives from the francophone states, including Ivory Coast, Liberia, Sierra Leone, and Guinea, in Monrovia to discuss the prospects of establishing a free trade community. These negotiations would be a precursor to the prospects of post-independence regional integration in West Africa. By February 1965, member states signed an agreement to set up the African and Malagasy Common Organisation (Organisation Commun Africaine et Malgache (OCAM)). This francophone West African regionalism maintained a normative environment although, with limited norm interference from the French, having excluded the previously agreed-upon joint defence pact.

This political development is important because it marked a shift in the continued acceptance of the norm of interference towards the norm of self-reliance, supporting a normative environment necessary for convergence on a common regional organisation. For instance, Mytelka (1974) notes that initially, the French were not averse to the growing influence of Nigeria as an anglophone country but were in

opposition to any potential federation (between the French and anglophone groups) and exhibited their rejection with calls for more integration within the French Federation by guaranteeing economic and political protection (Ibid: 299). On the significance of France's influence in regional security dynamics during the formation of ECOWAS, an interviewee responded that,

France was adamant. Anytime ECOWAS moved towards collective security, France frowned and attempted to block it. I do not want to say more; the ECOWAS commission has the proof" (Interviewee, 01100)¹⁷.

The French also engaged in other sovereign-level interferences aimed at dissuaded regional autonomies that were not within its influence. Only French-backed regional organisations such as the Afro-Malagasy Union for Economic Cooperation (Union Africaine et Malgache de Coopération Économique) (UAMCE) of 1964, formerly known as the African and Malagasy Union (AMU) or the *Union Africaine et Malgache (UAM)* of 1961, which had a combination of economic and political aims, established along a joint agreement on international policies, a common defence pact, and the promotion of economic and cultural cooperation had been promoted to the 12 francophone member states from West and Central Africa. (NATO Archives, 1963). However, upon recognising the outcome of these agreements, which were impacted by the norm of interference due to their overwhelming dependence on France, particularly in addressing the deteriorating regional security conditions, there was an observable sense of apathy amongst member states.

As stated earlier, the African and Malagasy Common Organization (Organization Commune Africaine et Malgache (OCAM) in 1965 was part of efforts by the francophone states to limit the influence of the French on their sovereignty. Hence, while the OCAM successfully established a regional organisation with generic vision statements which linked it to France, the member states opted out of the joint defence pact. This new regional organisation, without the French security guarantees, saw an increase in membership to 14, with the Congo and Rwanda joining. As Brooke Coe describes, "Even before the formation of formal regional organisations, non-interference was already the subject of high-profile debates among diplomats and heads of state in Africa and Latin America, but not in Southeast Asia. This sovereignty norm contestation contributed to the gradual erosion of non-interference in these regions over time, leading up to the "second wave" of regionalism in the late 1980s" (Coe, 2019: 1-2).

Subject to these modifications to the West African normative environment, in May 1965, the Anglo-French nations agreed upon an interim sub-regional organisation in Freetown, Sierra Leone. With the

¹⁷ Interview 05, Senior ECOWAS Official, October 2023, Abuja

support of the United Nations Economic Commission office for West Africa (ECA), in September 1965, the interim organisation established an administrative office of the *West African Interim Organisation* in Monrovia. Following meetings in April 1967, the region established a newly expanded interim organisation, the West African Regional Group. By May 1967, thirteen French and English states had signed an agreement on seven Articles of Association in West Africa, including the establishment of an Economic Community for West Africa. These protocols, established by the Heads of State, paved the way for the first meeting of the Economic Community of West African States in Dakar, Senegal, in November 1967.

However, another test of the now shared normative environment following the recent agreements was the break-out of the Nigerian Civil War in 1967. During the late 1960s, regionalism consultations, Nigeria, still viewed as a rival to the francophone nations, underwent major political upheavals capable of altering its sovereignty. The Biafran battle for succession began in July of 1967 and immediately developed into the most critical geo-political point of contention between states in the region. Tanzanian President Julius Nyerere and Zambian President Kenneth Kaunda, respectively, were the foremost African leaders to recognise the secessionist regimes in April 1967, followed by Ivorian President Félix Houphouët-Boigny. The Nigerian President at the time, Yakubu Gowon, claimed that the aggressive, coordinated attempt to undermine Nigeria's sovereignty was a political action by France and Ivory Coast, who were "both anxious about the growing economic strength of Nigeria and were not averse to exploiting her internal tensions" (Gowon, 1984: 140; Obasanjo 1980, Gambari 1991). The former head of state recounted the feeling of concern being surrounded by former French colonies who could wield immense influence over Nigeria's affairs. More important was the security risk posed by the Benin Republic, whose airport was used by the International Committee of the Red Cross in 1969. In response, General Gowon opted for the continued challenge to the norm of interference accelerated by the French and its former colonies (Gowon, 1994). Nigeria also targeted OCAM, which France used as a vehicle to neutralise its political and economic dominance. The plan was to strengthen bilateral ties with the francophone states surrounding its borders through economic initiatives, aiming to dilute French influence and develop new markets for the country's industrial exports (Bach, 1983).

Nigeria's concern about interference in its civil war is also related to other political developments within the region at the time, termed "*the military decade in Africa*"¹⁸. Instability in the region had been fuelled by sustained coups, beginning with the intensely bloody affair in Senegal in 1962, followed by those in

¹⁸ McGowan, P.J. (2006). Coups and Conflict in West Africa, 1955-2004. *Armed Forces and Society*, [Online 32(2), pp.234-253. Available at: Coups and Conflict in West Africa, 1955-2004. Pg. 236.

Togo and Benin in 1963, Ghana in 1964, Nigeria in 1966, and Sierra Leone in 1967 (see McGowan, 2006; Boyd, 1979). Baffour Agyeman-Duah describes, “A wave of military coups, beginning in the early 1960s, added to the fear and sense of insecurity, with suspicions running rife that most of the coups were instigated, supported, or inspired by neighbouring states” (Agyeman-Duah, 1990: 550). Hence, the initially analysed cooperation, beginning in the 1960s, towards regionalism was not just to dilute the norm of interference; it also revealed an immense sensitivity towards territorial or sovereign encroachment.

This concern over the obsolescence of conquest stretches outside the confines of the francophone and anglophone mutual suspicions to cases such as Côte d’Ivoire and Nigeria’s joint resistance and resentment towards the actions of Ghana’s President Kwame Nkrumah’s seeming radical Pan-Africanism position after independence in 1957 (see Agyeman-Duah, 1990: 549-550). Other conflicts related to suspicions of conquest include border issues of the 1960s involving Togo and Benin, Niger and Benin, Togo and Ghana, and Upper Volta against Mali. These conflicts increased security tension in the region and were notably even between francophone states, with France playing a neutral role (Koga, 2018). As Kornprobst concludes, interstate conflict in Western Africa is rare, mostly around border issues, stating that “there exist different configurations of norms and identity, i.e., different social structures in which the territorial integrity norm is embedded” (Kornprobst, 2002: 370). So, although francophone and anglophone power dynamics may have been a reaction, the post-independence normative environment was heavily influenced by the fear of conquest coming from member states’ fractured understanding of sovereignty, which represented the trigger.

4.6. Sovereignty and Bifurcation of West African Regionalism: CEAO and ECOWAS

The fallout from the development of sovereign norms and the concerns over conquest continued to overshadow the building of shared regional norms for cooperation into the 1970s. In hindsight, the previous decade focused on security, while the 1970s saw a tilt in the objectives towards the proposed economic union. In the 1970s, previous negotiations spearheaded by Nigeria’s President and his Liberian counterpart continued. The duo made several overtures to leaders of the francophone states to solicit an engagement for the revival of the Economic Community of West Africa established in 1967. President Tubman’s successor, William R. Tolbert, Jr., another significant addition to the negotiating team, was a personal friend of President Félix Houphouët-Boigny of the Ivory Coast. President Tolbert demonstrated diplomatic prowess in diffusing regional tensions through reconciliatory engagements between Guinea, Sierra Leone, Nigeria, and Ivory Coast. President Tolbert played a crucial role in addressing the grievances of the two primary rivals and the dominant states within the anglophone and francophone blocs (Gowon, 1984). In 1972, Nigeria’s President Gowon and Togo’s President

Gnassingbe Eyadema, during the former's visit to Togo, announced their support for a draft proposal for the region, which was to serve as the nucleus of a comprehensive economic community. Following several other visits to various West African state capitals lobbying for the revised proposal, in February 1973, members of fifteen West African countries gathered in Accra to study the draft treaty.

However, it is also important to highlight an essential political activity that was developing yet again, simultaneously with the proposal for an economic community in the region. In a third attempt, with the support of France, several francophone countries, including Mauritania, Niger, Senegal, Mali, Upper Volta, and the Ivory Coast, proposed the creation of the *Communauté économique de l'Afrique de l'Ouest* (CEAO) (Mytelka, 1974). The proposal for the CEAO was touted by the President of Senegal and his Ivorian counterpart, as Bach suggested, for political reasons. To elaborate, during a 1971 visit to the Ivory Coast, Senegalese President Leopold Sedar Senghor suggested that all UDEAO member states would transfer their membership to the CEAO. Meanwhile, President Georges Pompidou of France also echoed his support for the newly proposed organisation as a model to counterbalance the growing influence of Nigeria (Bach, 1983). In Nigeria, this was viewed as an attempt to contain the country's rapid recovery and economic performance following the end of the civil war. As discussed, France continued to guard against any influential political federation while striving to maintain easy market access by rallying its colonies into innovative groupings to divert reliance on Nigeria (Mytelka, 1974; Gowon, 1984). Nigeria contested this norm of interference by arguing that the francophone states' dependence on France conflicted with developing an African region with corresponding interests, priorities, and political structures to reflect its aspirations.

Analytically, the divide between the two groups offers an interpretive perspective on the developments within the normative environment. As a common feature in the account of the region's political history prior to ECOWAS, France is presented as a source of mutually accepted external authority for francophone political actors. The French colonial experience, therefore, equates to the "life-world" developed beyond domestic political considerations, which facilitates shared identities (Wiener, 2007: 52). This contrasts with British West Africa, which was secured by a distinct cognitive prior of self-determination influenced by the British style of direct rule. However, both regional blocs would consider economic sovereignty to be externally determined. These socio-political divisions will come to shape future norm dynamics and the actions of political actors towards regionalism. As observed further in the ensuing discussions, these divisions were never really settled; instead, they set the region on a path towards the bifurcation of its regional organisation. This is empirically addressed during an interview concerning the division's impact on the relationship between the two groups. The interviewee responded:

It is indeed a problem that the region is confronted with, and I have not seen any steps taken by the authority to be able to address that. We always find ourselves in a very awkward situation wherein we don't know where our francophone member states reside. If they're genuinely committed to ECOWAS or if they are more committed to UEMOA (Interviewee, 020L)¹⁹.

In June 1972, preceding the meeting of former UDEAO members scheduled for Bamako, the President of Niger, Hamani Diori, suggested that Nigeria, which was also clamouring for a similar proposal for the entire region, attend the forthcoming meeting as observers. This suggestion was rejected, particularly by Ivory Coast. President Houphouët-Boigny, associating with the Malian position for a new sub-regional organisation, was convinced that “English- and French-speaking groups would not be viable owing to the differences of language, monetary systems, tariffs, and cultures” (Mytelka, 1974: 309). The rejection of a regional organisation presupposes the acknowledgement that membership in the CEAO was reserved for states with sovereignty revalidated by the French but did not restrict inter-state relationships at the state level. For instance, Niger's economic relationship with Nigeria was significant and played an important role in President Diori's challenge to the CEAO proposal. President Diori contended against Nigeria's exclusion by describing the deeply embedded socio-economic ties between the two countries, common matrimonial ties, and national routes that supported its agricultural exports. Other states, such as the Upper Volta and Mali, contested the nature of the agreement, which accorded relatively higher benefits to the Ivory Coast and Senegal. General Gowon maintained that although Niger was disposed to certain concessions to the francophone sentiment, countries such as Togo and the Republic of Benin were adamant. The two states, although observers in the CEAO, withdrew their support, with the Republic of Benin's new leadership distancing itself from his predecessor's commitment to Ivory Coast. Instead, the new president sought closer economic ties, primarily in areas of cement and sugar production, with Nigeria in return for its support of the new government. Hence, in opposition, Benin's Foreign Minister, Major Michel Alladaye, reiterated that “Since Ghana and Nigeria do not belong to the CEAO, Dahomey's membership of this organisation would not have meant very much... [we] could not become a member of a community from which Nigeria would be absent.” (Gowon, 1984: 280).

In April 1973, at a scheduled meeting in Abidjan, Ivory Coast and Senegal officials remained adamant about the proposed changes and amendments submitted by Niger, Mauritania, and Benin on the previous agreement in principle. As reported by Gowon, the proposing states considered creating a smaller group to exclude the contending countries. The French and its francophone group's position was borne out of the conviction that forming CEAO was a political necessity to challenge Nigeria's growing influence in Africa. At the end of the meeting, six countries signed the agreement, excluding

¹⁹ Interview 02, Senior ECOWAS Official, October 2023, Abuja

Benin. As emphasised, francophone West Africa was committed to building regional organisations based on the previous colonial structure, specifically including the unique feature of an arbitration court within the new CEAO. The actions of the opposing states described in Mytelka (1974) explain that the “Togolese and Dahomean position is evidence of a new element in intra-West African politics - the growing assertion of independence by the francophone states” (Ibid: 310). Mytelka recognised that the renegotiation of the Franco-African relationship, following the failure of previously proposed regional organisations, was a profound change signifying the development of self-interest and the intent to divorce from the constraints of the colonial past. These normative changes at the regional level, including sovereignty norms, self-determination and non-interference, were developing within a new shared normative environment influenced by economic interest. For instance, with the challenges of Niger and Benin, the development of these norms remained non-negotiable, as the reliance on Nigerian sovereign norms was directly proportional to their economic survival.

Nigeria’s response to CEAO was a heightened imperative to hasten the formation of the wider regional economic community. This was important to avoid the permanent bifurcation of the region into two mutually exclusive economic zones. The intention, therefore, was to drown the CEAO in the long term with a significantly greater offering from the ECOWAS (Gowon, 1984). For context, during the ministerial meeting in Lomé in December 1973, the Mauritanian delegate emphasised that although member states of CEAO had granted their support in principle to the ECOWAS proposals, in reality, CEAO members remained aligned with their collective preferences. In addition, the francophone members sought the inclusion of similar caveats in future agreements, which would have placed political hurdles on the evolutionary path of the ECOWAS. The francophone states’ primary concern, as Gowon notes, was an infringement of the ECOWAS in their operations, restricting the development of an all-embracing and outward-looking community of states, which, in Gowon’s view, came with enormous political implications (Gowon, 1984). The Lomé Convention Agreement in February 1975 presented a specific context of convergence point for the region’s two major contending sovereign norm environments. The convention, Samuel Asante argued, was viewed as essential to perpetuate a client status of the African continent with limited or no power over the determination of its economic future (Asante, 1982). Gowon reaches a similar conclusion on the impact on the region’s autonomy of economic and political decision-making. The former Nigerian president concluded that West African states increasingly realised that political sovereignty had little significance in the absence of power over the region’s economic future. In addition, for the region’s integration to meet its objectives, regional policies must hasten to a position where trade liberalisation, tariff protection and the harmonisation of industrial policies regulate the flow of foreign investments and repatriation of profits. However, given the peculiar position of the ECOWAS, he suggested that only a joint political intervention could motivate closer integration to favour a balanced and equitable distribution of benefits. The problem he

highlighted was how best to secure such an intervention and reclaim political sovereignty without agitating the disintegration of the regional community (Gowon, 1984).

In conclusion, a key aim of this section was to highlight instances of temporal convergence on sovereign norms within the historical trajectories of ECOWAS. As I suggested earlier, sovereign norms converge in specific contexts and under defined conditions, for example, the formation of the CEAO, which was shaped by a shared identity and significantly influenced by an external actor—the French. The negotiations for ECOWAS were also in response to the Lomé Convention proposal, which was perceived as capable of diluting the West African region's self-determination norm. In the two cases, the obsolescence of conquest retains a poignant analytical position in explaining the outcome and the behaviour of member states.

4.7. A New Regional Economy, Cooperation and Nigeria's Non-Intervention

The direct influence of the French on its former colonies meant that a decision on the region's future was plagued by different approaches steered by the socio-economic and political interests of the metropole. Indicative of this premise is the surface commitments to agreements based on the principled differences in beliefs and doctrines stemming from the Europeans' role in member states' developmental capitalism and export-oriented economies (Riley, 1999). Riley's analysis suggests that political actors in states such as Nigeria did not view the formation of the CEAO as a curveball towards a more comprehensive economic community, at least not publicly. Gowon instead predicted the collapse of the Entente spearheaded by France, which was already in progress and would lead to the exposure and vulnerability of the Ivorian economy (Gowon, 1984). In addition, as Daniel Bach explains, Gowon's primary concern centred around the future competition between the industrial sector of ECOWAS and the foreign-owned advanced manufacturing companies operating out of the Ivory Coast and Senegal. In retrospect, that was a key selling point of the CEAO to the rest of the francophone nations (Bach, 1983). In 1973, this sticking point reverberated during a meeting in Brussels to discuss a potential economic agreement between the CEAO member states, Nigeria, and the European Economic Council.

The Nigeria Finance Commissioner, Shehu Shagari, rejected the idea - although Nigeria had signed a similar agreement in 1996, which was not implemented due to the outbreak of the Biafra Civil War. Nigeria had expressed its grievances about the francophone nation's dependence on the EEC, and this action furthered the distrust between the francophone and anglophone groups. Nigeria, however, reiterated during a visit to the Ivory Coast by its External Affairs Commissioner, Okoi Arikpo, in March 1973 that the creation of ECOWAS was the much-needed first step towards improving its position in negotiations with the EEC. By May 1973, Gowon had assumed the Presidency of the Organisation of

African Unity and led negotiations between the Trade ministers of African, Caribbean, and Pacific nations and the EEC. Gowon's success in the role, to the admiration of the francophone states, motivated further discussion on the subregional front. In what can be deemed a significant turning point, the Nigerian President and his Togolese counterpart sent a joint delegation to all regional states. The leaders called for a conference of ministers from all West African states to consider and conclude the proposal for the regional economic community. Significant to this renewed call was an additional paragraph contained in a letter to all heads of state of the six CEAO states, which stated:

Our two governments are not unaware of the recent creation of CEAO, an organisation of which your [G]overnment is an honoured member. We appreciate the lofty ideals that inspired its establishment and fully understand your genuine intentions. Our two governments, nonetheless, believe that an opportunity to exchange ideas and information between us and your [G]overnment on intra-African economic cooperation will prove both fruitful and highly rewarding to all of us. It is in this spirit that our two [G]overnments considered it necessary to send a joint Togo-Nigeria Ministerial delegation to hold discussions with your [G]overnment. It is my fervent hope that it will receive your blessings (Gowon, 1984: 288)

Gowon's shift from his previous antagonistic stance on the CEAO was significant. His statement showed a willingness to compromise and was seen as a recognition of the CEAO as a potential partner in the broader regional community. More importantly, it signalled a desire for increased cooperation within the region. This message was well-received in the francophone region, sparking encouraging responses and fostering a sense of optimism about the potential for regional cooperation.

In December 1973, the Mauritania President, speaking on behalf of the francophone countries, emphasised the preservation of the CEAO as a singular unit in any potential organisation for the region. In January 1975, a ministerial council meeting in Monrovia approved the draft treaty. In February 1975, a series of protocols implementing the ECOWAS were signed by all parties at the Lomé Convention. A key aspect of ECOWAS's formation was the agreement on a unifying framework, which allowed all states to maintain economic relations with other outside parties, such as the French, in the case of the anglophone region. On May 28, 1975, in Lagos, Nigeria, the treaty establishing the West African Economic Community (ECOWAS) was signed by the Heads of State of fifteen countries from the region. The agreement comes on the heels of substantial diplomatic gestures, including Nigeria's commitment to non-interference. Also, the Ivorians and Senegalese had their fears allayed as Nigeria played a more sacrificing role in the region. Nigeria also pledged to provide financial aid to ailing nations and offered oil on soft credit to countries like Senegal, Togo, and the Ivory Coast.

However, the cost of the Treaty was high; as Bach would later mention, the dramatic unity among the francophone and anglophone states towards the 1975 Lagos treaty was superficial. To buttress this, Bach notes that the acknowledgement of the CEA group and the participation of all individually independent Western African states in the agreement with the African, Caribbean, and Pacific countries and the EEC would adversely affect the Treaty (See Bach, 1983). For context, Article 59 of the ECOWAS Treaty stated that: “Member States may be members of other regional or sub-regional associations, either with other member-states or non-member states, as long as this did not detract from the provisions of the ECOWAS. Bach’s concern re-emphasises my argument regarding the analysis of members’ behaviour, the elements that motivate the contestation process, and the specific context that drives congruence.

4.8. Conclusion

At the beginning of this chapter, I explained that its contribution to determining the circumstances when specific ECOWAS norms display diverse outcomes and to account for the variation was to uncover sequences within events in the West African region that link the potential causal mechanisms. Having earlier identified the two main necessary conditions for sovereignty variation and the concern over the obsolescence of conquest, this chapter explores their development and influence on the region’s norms, ideas, and beliefs, highlighting normative interactions between the various structures and agents to deepen necessary insights. The focus was on the historical causal framework and its outcomes from the era of pre-independent states, analysing the degree of influence exhibited by these necessary conditions to their continued presence in post-colonial West Africa. This analysis supports the intermediate hypothesis that an influential normative environment has an impact on the preferences of state actors during the norm-building process. The importance of engaging with historical evidence lies in developing a coherent and comprehensive understanding of the broader significance of events in their original context, thereby avoiding the superimposition of contemporary narratives. Tracing these events also helps to explore the causal patterns that can enhance causal suitability criteria in the cases under scrutiny. The sequence of events analysed within this chapter identified the contributing conditions earlier hypothesised to be responsible for the development of norms within the West African region.

This chapter's investigations demonstrate that the variations in sovereignty and the obsolescence of conquest remained influential throughout the colonial to the post-colonial period, significantly affecting norm challenges, agent preferences, and causation. For instance, pre-colonial West African society's challenge to Westphalian sovereignty began as a resistance to conquest, primarily developed from the diverse cognitive priors of their autonomous clans or communities. Although it has been identified that different colonial administrative patterns shaped the meaning and understanding of sovereignty among the francophone and anglophone communities, the shared normative environment demonstrates that

while state sovereignty had been internalised, it remained invalidated, especially during the post-colonial era. Since sovereign norms primarily constitute part of the normative environment, this conflict around what sovereignty represented meant that states approached international sovereignty-limiting norms with the residual caution of conquest. This fear as observed, significantly impacted, particularly, the relationship between francophone West African states and their metropole. For instance, the initial regionalism dynamics of the French colonies indicated that the recognition of their sovereignty relied substantially on the French, as did their security and economic concerns. In addition, most francophone states, even after independence, were integrated within a pseudo-federation defined by economic stability, a monetary and customs union, and unified tariffs, but also socially and culturally tied to the metropole, making them more reluctant to share sovereignty in ECOWAS.

However, the chapter also accounts for transformations within the normative environment, which are also facilitated by similar conditions. For instance, the material substratum in sovereign variation, tainted by the lack of political and economic authority, also underwent a socialisation process that led to the challenge of previously integrated interference norms, leading to member states from across the francophone and anglophone groups vigorously advocating for non-intervention. The socialisation process, which preceded regionalism negotiations, fostered a shared normative environment for sovereign recognition and the revalidation of norms and, most importantly, established a structure to transfer the burden of protection from conquest at the regional level. To emphasise the degrees of influence from the shared normative environment the francophone and anglophone groups focused on specific norm outcomes, particularly after realising the fundamentality of their shared norm of sovereignty in pursuing their rights to self-reliance and self-determination, as well as upholding the norm of non-interference. This is evident in instances where states challenged their international validation, for example, as observed with the resistance to security guarantees from France by the francophone states and their initial joint disagreement with the Lomé Convention Agreements. Another noteworthy influence of these cognitive priors was on the bifurcation of the region's organisational structure, stemming from the irreversible impact of diverse normative meanings around sovereignty and the uncertainty surrounding the obsolescence of conquest. These conditions persist within the region, including post-regionalism, and have characterised member state preferences for norms within the region to gravitate towards non-aggression, non-intervention, peaceful conflict resolution, and self-reliance. The prevalence of the discussed cognitive priors indicates a defining condition for social interactions within the region, having been developed from historical experiences and individual states' political cultures.

These cognitive priors, which I also argued guided the formation of ECOWAS, overemphasised norms such as non-intervention and non-aggression, amongst others investigated in Chapter Five. I note,

however, that these norms were initially neither established through protocols nor contested within the framework of ECOWAS regionalism – indeed, they were implied. Having engaged with the development of the region’s cognitive prior to the evolution of the ECOWAS normative environment, I proceed to the next chapter, where I examine the component of institutional rules.

Either we shall find what it is we are seeking or at least
we shall free ourselves from the persuasion that we know what we do not know.

Plato, *The Republic*²⁰

5. Chapter Five: Development of Norms and Mechanisms in ECOWAS

5.1. Introduction

In the previous chapter, this thesis explored the causal pathway relating to the unique cognitive priors that contribute to the specific outcomes under investigation. The evidence of influences from the normative environment component of cognitive prior around the pre- and post-colonial norm development constituted one part of the causal pathway. As observed during the analysis, the degree of influence exercised by sovereignty variation and the obsolescence of conquest shaped the norm preferences of member states, defining most of the macrohistorical changes witnessed in the region. This chapter contributes to explaining the circumstances under which specific ECOWAS norms display diverse outcomes and account for the variation by extending the analysis of the cognitive prior into the definition, development, and institutionalisation of the ECOWAS set of rules. As highlighted in Chapter Three and observed in Chapter Four, regional organisations rely on cognitive priors to encode causal inferences into routines that guide behaviour. Therefore, in this chapter, this thesis analyses the process of convergence around agreements on regional normative instruments. These instruments translate norms into law, and in ECOWAS's case, the earliest agreements centred around security to protect states from aggression, intervention and the fear of conquest. The importance of this analysis lies in understanding how the ECOWAS developed its norms into rules to establish habitual practices and procedures. Additionally, understanding the intricacies of this causal interaction provides this research with the opportunity to highlight and explain the specific process responsible for the diverse outcomes investigated. As applied in the previous chapter, the sections of this chapter adopt a sequential analysis of post-ECOWAS, focusing on the institution of the specific protocols, to critically review the process and junctions where contestations or events determine the trajectories of the norm's outcome.

The ECOWAS Treaty of 1975 effectively brought together blocks of various shapes into the ECOWAS community. On the one hand, the Francophone group had the numerical majority but had close ties to their former colonial powers. On the other hand, the Anglophone group, estranged from their former colonial state, had fewer member states but the most prominent economic prospects. However, common to all the 15 ECOWAS states was the absence of a democratic regime between them in the formation year. This context in the region's history is essential to the future norm-building process mainly because it can account for the measure of the influence of factors discussed in this chapter. Despite the absence

²⁰ *The Republic*: Plato Benjamin Jowett (1946). Cleveland, Ohio: The World Publishing Co.

of democracy, the region was also grappling with fundamental security challenges and external interference. This was a reality that Nigeria President Yakubu Gowon, a key figure in the region, contended with, as he saw ECOWAS as a platform to project Nigeria's regional, continental, and international strengths, particularly against France, who maintained significant influence on the continent through its former colonies (Gowon, 1984). While Gowon's concerns were valid, they were not unique and were shared by other states within and outside the region. However, this chapter focuses on the measure of the influence the normative environment had on the subsequent development of regional norms, underpinned by the previous chapter's sources of cognitive prior.

The 1975 ECOWAS normative environment was a complex landscape. The member states entered into regionalism with diverse normative meanings of sovereignty, each influenced by their unique post-colonial experiences. This diversity, coupled with a residual hesitancy to challenge their form of sovereignty, was a key concern for Gowon (Ibid., 1984). However, in the previous chapter, I unearthed cognitive priors that hold the key to analysing the member states' constraints, including those related to the challenge of regional independence, preserving colonial boundaries, and determining preferences in trade and economics. In relation, Gowon maintained that the initial advocacy for regionalism was geared towards securing the systemic assurances sought by member states for the obsolescence of conquest in the region's post-independence. Following ECOWAS, the West African normative environment remains diverse, exhibiting a distinct context for norm development. To emphasise, the internalised norm of external intervention continues to feature prominently in the influence of member states' behaviour. For Nigeria, its attention to the region's shared normative environment hinged on the inescapable norm of external intervention in the localised political order. It represented a blurred line between the internal and external relationship between a singular sovereign state and the sovereign authority of a system of states (Charbonneau, 2017). To emphasise this context, Hartmann (2013) notes that the ECOWAS initial agreement did not include any mechanism to diffuse proposed new norms within the region. Neither did the Treaty develop relevant structures within the normative environment to support the envisaged level of economic targets outside those maintained by individual member states. *Article 2. Aims of the Community, subsection 1 of the 1975 Lagos Treaty of ECOWAS states:*

It shall be the aim of the Community to promote cooperation and development in all fields of economic activity, particularly in the fields of industry, transport, telecommunications, energy, agriculture, natural resources, commerce, monetary and financial questions and in social and cultural matters to raise the standard of living of its peoples, of increasing and maintaining economic stability, of fostering closer relations among its members and of contributing to the progress and development of the African continent.

The treaty also did not address other primary concerns, including the initiation of trade barrier elimination, harmonisation of developing intra-regional political differences, and the mitigation of the region's security destabilisation. The region's security had been reeling from critical challenges associated with decades of military rule, a lack of governance standards, and deterioration in inter- and intra-state security. Despite these developing turbulences, the region's treaty effectively blindsided any responses, focusing instead on economic partnerships that were ranked low at the time of ECOWAS's formation. For instance, inter-trade between member states accounted for less than a 3% average in imports and exports between 1975 and 1979, indicating negligible mutual values of dependency among the region's states (Nsouli et al., 1982: 16-21). The International Monetary Fund (IMF) also released findings on regional trading patterns. The results reveal that trade exports are concentrated along traditional ties with former metropolitan nations (Ibid., 1982: 17). This concern regarding the post-ECOWAS normative environment, in Joel Ng's view, offers a similar normative argument. The author attributes this to the nature of the recently acquired but underdeveloped statehood, which is susceptible to internal and external threats; hence, they focus on external and judicial sovereignty, creating institutions only to preserve and promote them. Ng's analysis describes the observed normative development in ECOWAS, where non-intervention, non-interference and self-determination norms aim to revalidate internalised sovereignty.

Nevertheless, as we observe, by 1978, regional challenges forced changes to the ECOWAS normative trajectory following years of coups and other violent political transitions. ECOWAS soon began to develop a fully shared normative framework based on conflict management, conflict prevention, principles against unconstitutional changes in government, good governance, human rights, and the rule of law. The normative environment also initiated the process, leading to the erosion of some of its foundational norms, including the norm of external intervention, while promoting norms on internal interference. In the next section, I investigate the related contestation patterns and their impact on the behaviour of regional political actors following their decisions to adopt new ECOWAS norms.

5.2. Norm Building in a Changing Normative Environment

5.2.1 *Protocol on Non-Aggression 1978 (PNA)*

The French in West Africa maintained a security structure to provide aid when needed (The New York Times, 1978). France provided military aid to Niger, Togo, Benin, and Mauritania while maintaining military garrisons in countries such as Senegal and the Ivory Coast. As new states, the French, through bilateral defence agreements, played an influential role in shaping political actions that determined regional security structure preferences. The British, on the other hand, had lesser involvement in the security apparatus of its colonies. Across Africa, the last involvement of the British was in East Africa

in 1964, with nearly all its defence treaties elapsing after 1961. The French activities, however, raised concerns across the region due to the defeat of its backed government in Chad (DeVore, 2018; Rondos, 1985) and the subsequent withdrawal of its troops from Mauritania. Both Francophone and non-Francophone states were growing increasingly restless due to the potential wave of conflict envisaged to threaten the West African region by the late 1970s. Although the Francophone states benefited from French protection against threats from regional power centres, such as Ghana, at the time, they also discursively (objecting) or behaviourally (refusing membership in security organisations) resisted French interference, even in matters of defence, as observed in Chapter Four.

This growing resistance to external influence by states in the region coincided with the creation of regional organisations such as ECOWAS, which now acted as recipients of members' state transfers of the obsolescence of conquest assurances. The result was a change in the patterns of member states' challenges to norms as they became more outward. For example, on behalf of states, in 1963, a Charter of the Organisation of African Unity (OAU) on external and internal interferences reinforced the absolute conditions of non-interference norms while admonishing France to refrain from commitments in their international relations policies that threatened the use of force against the territorial integrity of member states (OAU Treaty, 1963). For context, Thomas Tieku (2018) notes that the non-interference and consolidation of the Westphalian state system were the main objectives of African leaders in accepting the OAU regime, adding that only institutions, rules, norms, and administrative mechanisms that promoted the sovereignty prerogatives and territorial integrity of African states were adopted. The charter also called for the respect of the member states sovereignty and territorial integrity. Although states could discursively contest the norm of interference through their regional organisations, tensions between Francophone states, the Nigerian Civil War, the Portuguese invasion of Guinea in 1970, and the short border conflict between Mali and the Upper Volta (which was mediated successfully by Togo and Guinea) meant that the peace witnessed in the region before the Treaty of ECOWAS in 1975 was not enough to influence the adoption of non-interference or non-aggression norms. In the late 1970s, renewed conflicts stemming from the Angolan civil war and external intervention by France and Belgium, with the technical support of the United States, drew the continents and region's concerns to the activities of external power structures operating independently and unchecked (Guimarães, 2001). Continentally, conflicts such as those in Somalia and Ethiopia in 1977 raised additional concerns about external interference.

Meanwhile, the Western region was contending with conflicts in Mauritania over the former Spanish Sahara in 1976, as well as the Nigeria and Niger conflicts in 1974, all of which threatened to escalate. Gowon noted that the general feeling among state actors was one of fear of conquest, which would have supported the forceful attempts by intervening actors to alter the continent's composite geographical structure (Gowon, 1984: 551). This residual concern, as demonstrated in Chapter Four, continued to

trigger transformations in the region's normative environment, with states renewing their consideration of a continental or regional security structure.

Historically, the search for a consensus on a form of security structure for the continent and its regions began in 1922 with an article published in the *Communist Review*, in which the writer called for native soldiers in colonial armies to secretly band together to form a great Pan-African Army. The proposal was projected to be similar in the development to Sinn Féin's establishment of the Irish Army. By 1958, at various Pan-African Conferences, Kwame Nkrumah, the first President of Ghana, called for the establishment of an African High Command (AHC). In several of these cases, the Ghanaian proposal lacked the support of a majority of the state representatives. Within the conversation, the aim was to protect the fragile sovereignty of the newly independent states (Franke, 2006). Franke also notes that the approach polarised the African states, which remained irreconcilable at both ends, even during the international intervention in the Congo and the war in Algeria. These running disparities were relieved when, in 1963, as discussed earlier, the OAU Charter created an organisational arm - the Defence Commission – although it was a far cry from the definitive military structure proposed by the Ghanaian delegates.

In 1965, Sierra Leone proposed a new organisation to act as a clearing house for the contingents of national armed forces, referred to as the African Defence Organisation (ADO). This proposal suffered a similar rejection to many others. However, after its civil war in 1970, Nigeria, a prominent critic of most proposed regional security outfits, reversed its position and became an advocate for Kwame Nkrumah's AHC (Fasehun, 1980; Imobighe, 1980). At the time, the OAU was incapacitated and failed to intervene during the Portuguese invasion of Guinea in 1970, having suffered yet another rejection of a Defence Commission with a centralised High Command. Instead, the commission returned the proposal to individual regions to create the security apparatus that would be at the disposal of the Organisation of African Unity (OAU). In 1978, the President of Senegal, Leopold Sedar Senghor, whose army had contributed to an externally led intervention referred to as the Pan-African Defence Force during the Angolan civil war, fearing similar eruptions within the West African region, demanded a French-backed African military structure called the *Force Africaine Communautaire*, based in the Ivory Coast. The proposal dominated the Fourth and Fifth Franco-African summits but ultimately resulted in only a communiqué. While still searching for a continental security structure to protect the region from international intervention, a 1978 communiqué supported by all 19 African countries in attendance declared that the only fight which deserves "to be fought" in Africa is the fight for development in peace and unity and cooperation. (Franco-African Summit, 1978). The summit called for an end to all direct and indirect aggression, as well as all attempts at subversion on the continent (Gowon, 1984: 552). The communiqué spearheaded by the Togolese President, General Gnassingbé Eyadéma, denounced the blind violence the brutal foreign interference in the affairs of sovereign states"

and claimed “the right to security, the only thing which can guarantee the continuation of development.” (Franco-African Summit, 1978). These challenges to the norm of interference were, however, overshadowed by a commitment to the protection offered by the then French President Valéry Giscard d’Estaing, who condemned the aggression and assured the states of his country’s assistance should any of the states find it self-threatened (Gowon, 1984: 552). However, having been significantly influenced by the war experiences, states like Guinea, which fought off the Portuguese, expressed strong reservations about joining any security pact with international elements. Consequently, the Malian President suggested a pact for the six Francophone West African Communities, a proposal referred to the CEAO for deliberation. In the May-June 1978 summit of the CEAO, the Francophone nations agreed to the region’s first normative framework for security. The member states indicated that protecting West Africa’s region’s inherited fragile sovereignty was the primary purpose (Gowon, 1984) and a display of behavioural contestation towards French interference as they declined membership with the French in the earlier proposed security agreements.

Within the larger ECOWAS, while normalcy seemed to have returned to the region (with the conflict between Liberia and Guinea resolved through a non-aggression and defence pact), internal strife had increased with successive forceful government changes. Nevertheless, the proposed non-aggression agreement introduced at the Lomé Summit of 1976 did not receive attention, as the final terms could not be agreed upon. Nigerian President Olusegun Obasanjo and Togolese President Eyadema were key proponents of the Protocol, and both were instrumental in achieving consensus on certain sections of the proposal. In April 1978, Ministers from Benin produced another document, fused with the earlier text to represent a final version of a Protocol of Non-Aggression. This version was approved, signed, and subsequently ratified, becoming an integral part of the normative environment’s institutional rules within the ECOWAS Treaty. The wording of the text offers insight into the normative framework adopted by ECOWAS. The Protocol outlines an obligation to resort to peaceful means in resolving conflicts between member states. It also provides for the escalation to the authority where members fail to settle differences within other committees of the ECOWAS. However, most importantly, in the case of external interventions, the Protocol strongly advised members against encouraging, committing or condoning any subversion, hostility or aggression against other member states. Additionally, the Protocol sought to prevent the use of member states as bases for committing any of such acts. Finally, the Protocol of Non-Aggression indicated a full convergence among member states on the norm of non-intervention in the region’s affairs by external parties (ECOWAS, 1978).

5.2.2 Protocol Relating to Mutual Assurance and Defence 1981

In the aftermath of the signing of the PNA, ECOWAS began intense discussions on the modalities of developing the Protocol's intentions into practical realities in the region. The intensity of these discussions was heightened by a report from the Senegalese, Togolese, and Ivorians on experiences with the Pan-African Defence Force during its engagement in the Shaba province in Zaire. These states led the clamour for a mutual defence proposal in the region to guard against future conflicts of such dimensions, as witnessed in the Shaba conflict. Therefore, the 1979 ECOWAS conference in Dakar had two separate proposals from Senegal and Togo, a testament to the member states unconditional convergence towards a framework based on the shared value proposition. Also, it seemed necessary to supplement the PNA with a defence pact to act as the operational response structure where member states' sovereignty or territorial integrity was breached (Gowon, 1984). However, some member states would oppose the proposal for a defence pact. Member states that opposed the Protocol wanted assurances that the ECOWAS would not deploy the proposed force in internal conflicts but would be reserved for cases with evidence of external military involvement. Apart from the opposition from states of the former Portuguese colony, including Cape Verde and Guinea Bissau, Mali's opposing argument was that forming a joint force was a step towards another effort at colonialism (Gowon, 1984).

These challenges to the norm of mutual defence support my earlier argument regarding motivation factors influencing the contestation patterns of the states. I have argued that the concerns over the obsolescence of conquest remained significantly influential in determining norm preferences. Mali's opposition arose as concerns about the application of the Protocol intensified following numerous incidents of political instability in many states, particularly between border states. Similar opposition came from sceptical states, which required more assurances before surrendering their security to opposing states. By 1980, the proposal was reconsidered and referred to state actors to choose a framework between the submissions of Senegal and Togo. In Nigeria's case, Gowon felt that it was premature to consider a single integrated regional army. Instead, providing the option for a military effort could be coordinated through the community headquarters. Therefore, to avoid the direct application of military forces, the region could develop a peacekeeping element to mediate and arbitrate disputes. The Nigerian state supported the recourse to ECOWAS forces only when external forces attacked member states (Gowon, 1984). Member states settled in May of 1981 during the Freetown Summit and signed the Protocol Relating to Mutual Assistance on Defence. In the aftermath, a Lagos Radio station had the following comments regarding the process of contestation and the importance of convergence on a standard of response to foreign aggression by member states:

Today, foreign troops are stationed in areas that should be manned by an African defence force. What has happened so far is that the difficulties in the way of the formation of such a defence force have been played down. What should be realised, however, is that the threat to the independence and sovereignty of each African nation is beyond the means of a single state to contain. The ECOWAS protocol on a mutual defence force must therefore be seen as a first step towards an attempt for a collective defence system for the West African sub-region. Whether or not the move will appeal to the rest of Africa is a question of time (Lagos Radio, Cited in Gowon, 1984).

Although Cape Verde, Guinea-Bissau, and Mali refused to sign the agreement and continued to oppose the formation of joint forces, the protocols of non-aggression and mutual assistance for defence are meta-norms, fundamentally designed to interact with the components of sovereignty and institutional rules, thereby maintaining a fear-free normative environment. Additionally, as observed, the earlier resistance to interference by the Francophone member states had begun to develop mainly due to the constitutive function of the regional organisation. Hence, as the states increased their internalisation of self-determination and non-interference, guaranteed by ECOWAS assurances of the obsolescence of conquest, the detachment from their dependence on France widened, and the state's norm contestation pattern changed. However, even with similarities in the outcomes resulting from changes to the regional normative environment, the Francophone and Anglophone member states still demonstrated a propensity towards contestation. The reason for this, as previously determined, was the impact of colonial regimes and other normative diversities, which were divergence factors mainly represented by the results of deficiencies in individual states' development and the growing internal security challenges (see Agyeman-Duah and Ojo, 1991). The impacts of such normative dynamics are focused mainly on sovereignty, which in developing normative environments reproduces particular social, economic and political orders and institutions (Jones, 2012: 31). Highlighting, therefore, the primary import of the analytical framework adopted within this thesis which emphasises the relationship between sovereignty and social facticity in determining the applicable social order in the region.

Furthermore, the choice by member states to adopt the international norms of Mutual Defence and Non-Intervention also brings into perspective the increasing agency of ECOWAS as a norm entrepreneur. This position translates to acquiring autonomy and exercising control over the choice of outcomes. In addition, it helps explain the persistent cycle of contestation, even for norms such as non-aggression, which is rooted in the existential fears of all member states stemming from their experiences of colonisation. I have previously considered this a residual effect from their normative understanding of sovereignty and its influence on the state's contribution to the contestation process. This conclusion is not arrived at by overlooking the condition that, although states may share similar values and beliefs, they are not unconstrained in expressing their political will to achieve norm outcomes. Instead,

ECOWAS is depicted as a centralised authority without consolidation and an attribute of states within regional organisations under the influence of an external party capable of using force (Lee, 2018). For instance, member states that recognised their normative agency within the ECOWAS still experienced external intrusions within their territories. France had its numerous military bases and defence agreements. With about 10,000 military personnel in bases across the continent and almost 30 unilateral interventions between 1960-1990 (most of which were in West Africa), significantly contrasting a meagre British Military Advisory Training Teams (BMTTs) (Chafer, 2013). In addition to the economic context of their sustained contestation, member states found themselves in precarious situations due to their dependency on external resources to address socioeconomic concerns. Any attempt at direct normative contestation outside the influence of the predominant cognitive priors was not feasible without risking the much-desired economic development (Jorgensen, 2020).

This section demonstrates the presence of cognitive priors outlined in the previous chapter, spanning the formative years of ECOWAS to the present, acting as primary factors during normative contestations over the region's initial norms. Two key indications marked the contestation process for non-intervention. They were the critical opposition to any form of interference, including from other member states. The other was the consensus on external interference, which significantly altered the composition of the normative environment. Thereby influencing the adoption of behavioural contestation by member states, especially the Francophone countries that applied the pattern to distance themselves from joint security agreements with France. In the subsequent section, I investigate similar influences on ECOWAS treaties and protocols between 1991 and 2001. This will enable this thesis to unravel the process through critical analysis of the varying circumstances associated with norm-building.

5.3. ECOWAS Treaties, Protocols, Standards and Principles 1991 to 2001

Since adopting the ECOWAS Treaty in 1975, the organisation has developed frameworks to enhance regional integration and cooperation. The ECOWAS revised its entire Treaty in 1993 and amended a selection of its articles in 2001. Although, with the perceived regional synergy and convergence in its numerous developed policy documents, it should be considered efficient however, as observed, these norms are accepted, only to be challenged through behavioural contestations, necessitating much-needed scrutiny. In the following sections, I examine the norms developed between 1999 and 2001, a critical period in the life of ECOWAS.

5.2.3 Protocol Relating to Free Movement of Persons, Residence and Establishment (1979)

The 1979 Protocol adopted a free movement norm to support the region's economic and developmental goal of integration. The Protocol, which sought the unhindered and unrestricted movement of citizens of member states within the region, could also be considered a limit or threat to member states' sovereignty. Although ECOWAS implemented this proposal by issuing regional passports, this proposed norm was still behaviourally contested.

In the initial stages of the norm's development, the Nigerian government led by President Shehu Shagari signed an executive order in January 1983 to expel immigrants. While the Nigerian government insisted that the order referred to the undocumented, the Ghanaians (mostly affected) felt they were unduly targeted due to earlier complaints within the Nigerian polity that the foreigners constituted a strain on the economy²¹. The contestation of this norm's meaning, validity, and applicability can be traced to the constraints within the agreement that Nigeria may have exploited. For instance, the Protocol did little to address the relationship between a state and its citizens—the right to free movement within a national territory—and certainly did not prescribe standards on the conferral of citizenship rights within member states. While two supplementary protocols mitigated the earlier omissions in more detail, the establishment of the Right of Residence (ECOWAS, 1986) and the Right of Establishment (ECOWAS, 1990) also fell short of prescribing economic rights for ECOWAS citizens. In addition, the Protocol contained excessive expulsion mandates and numerous provisions allowing member states to exempt themselves from applying the rules in cases of exigency affecting public order, security, or public health (Nwauche 2011).

Chapter 5 - Article 4 Protocol Relating to Free Movement of Persons, Residence and Establishment (1979)

- 1. A decision to expel any citizen of the Community from the territory of a Member State shall be notified to the citizen concerned, the government of which he is a citizen, and the Executive Secretary of ECOWAS.*
- 2. The expenses incurred in the expulsion of a citizen shall be borne by the Member State which expels him.*

²¹ Hardly an isolated case, the Policy Development and Evaluation Service under the UN Refugee Agency reports that mass expulsions were a common feature in West Africa, with states such as Côte d'Ivoire (1958, 1964), Senegal (1967), Ghana (1969), Sierra Leone (1968), and Guinea Conakry (1968, see A., Boulton, A., and Levin, M. (2007), Promoting Integration through Mobility: Free Movement and the ECOWAS Protocol Adepoju, [online]. Available at: <https://digitallibrary.un.org/record/627747/files/4c2325600.pdf>. [Accessed: April 25 2023].

3. In case of expulsion, the security of the citizen concerned, as well as that of his family, shall be guaranteed, and his property protected and returned to him without prejudice to his obligations to a third party.

4. In case of repatriation of a citizen of the Community from the territory of a Member State, that Member State shall notify the government of the state of origin of the citizen and the Executive Secretary.

5. The cost of repatriation of a citizen of the Community from the territory of a Member State shall be borne by the citizen himself or in the event that he is unable to do so by the country of which he is a citizen. (ECOWAS, 1979)

Regarding the norm outcome, the three protocols suggest that member states take all legislative and other measures necessary for their implementation. It should be noted, however, that the immigration admissions laws in ECOWAS member states continue to have supremacy over the ECOWAS protocols. As described,

In acknowledging state sovereignty over admissions in such unqualified terms, ECOWAS virtually invites national provisions more restrictive than and perhaps antipathetic to the non-discrimination, regional social cohesion and promotion and protection of human and peoples' rights objectives at the heart of the ECOWAS initiative (Adepoju et al., 2007: 8).

Therefore, member states' approach to the Protocol promised, according to the conventional logic of trade liberalisation, not to favour national persons and companies over those of other member states²²

5.2.4 Declaration of Political Principles (1991)

The ECOWAS heads of state adopted a non-legally binding agreement on July 6, 1991, to promote democracy and respect for human rights norms. The document, which contained shared norms with the African Charter of Human Rights and the "Universally" recognised international human rights instruments, was an adopted normative framework from the international and regional levels. Although the document was not legally binding and non-ratifiable, it marked the earliest recognition and transfer of the norm of human rights and democratic governance since the organisation's establishment (Hartmann, 2013). The eight norms in the declaration included reaffirming the 1978 protocol on non-aggression to maintain peace and stability, non-intervention by member states, peaceful settlement of

²² (Adepoju et al., 2007, pg. 8) ECOWAS set out a much more liberal legal basis for inter-state movement

disputes, and respect for all human rights. Principle 4 includes rights on sex, language, creed, religion, thought, conscience, association, and belief. Principle 5 includes the political, economic, social, cultural, and other rights inherent in the dignity of the human person and essential to his free and progressive development. In addition, the declaration included norms of political pluralism and a free democratic process, as well as the ECOWAS' unity of voice and political determination, while reinforcing the principle of non-interference by external forces.

However, while member states openly declared support for the norm in 1991, many of the parties to the agreement were simultaneously violating the same principles (Hartmann, 2013). Some of these contestations to the proposed norm of regional democracy during the decade disguised in political activities referred to as “guided democracy”, where the government consciously managed the electoral and democratic process to determine the choice of elected officials: sample cases include Nigeria (where the result was eventually annulled on June 12), and Ghana (Egbejule 2023; see also Adejumobi, 2000). The November 1992 elections in Ghana, won by Jerry Rawlings, evoked serious controversies and allegations of fraud and the election results were rejected by opposition parties (Adejumobi, 2000). In Nigeria, the military junta headed by Defence Minister Sani Abacha on November 17, 1993, forced out an interim civilian Head of State, Ernest Shonekan, to return the country to military rule after eight years of Major-General Ibrahim Babangida (Lewis, 1994; This Day, 2022). Additionally, in 1993, the February 21 and May 9 elections in Senegal, although marking an uninterrupted election cycle since the country's independence, failed to attract broad participation or meet the required democratic standards for legitimacy (Kante, 1994). There was also the stoking of ethnic divisions in Côte d'Ivoire's political climate during the 1995 electoral circle. Woods (1998) suggests that President Félix Houphouët-Boigny's regime attempted to redefine its relationship with several social groups to sway the future election after the administration came under pressure to end its political monopoly. In 1996, the United States State Department reported that Ghana's transition from a single-party authoritarian system to a constitutional democracy was marked by systemic manipulation to ensure the Jerry Rawling administration retained control of all branches of government (The U.S. Department of State 1997a).

Similarly, the 1996 Niger elections saw the coup leader-turned-civilian, Ibrahim Mainasra, dissolve the country's Independent Electoral Commission to manipulate the process and ensure his electoral victory. The main opposition parties eventually boycotted the presidential election (Osaghae, 1999; U.S. Department of State, 1997b). In 1997, Osaghae (1999) noted that the “kangaroo elections,” marred by irregularities, in Togo had sustained Gnassingbe Eyadema's rule for over 30 years (see also U.S. Department of State, 1998b; Amnesty International, 1999b). A similar situation occurred in Mali, where the Constitutional Court ruled to invalidate the parliamentary elections on April 13, 1997, due to significant malpractices and administrative flaws, as described by the U.S. State Department (Ibid, 1998a). In Guinea, the government dominated the 1998 electoral process, refusing to establish an

independent electoral commission and instead forming a High Council of Electoral Affairs (U.S. Department of State, 1999a). Guinea Bissau grappled with overthrowing its elected President João Bernardo “Nino” Vieira to the international community’s condemnation after the junta declared that they would remain even after the November 1999 elections (The U.S. Department of State, 1999b). These numerous and widespread behavioural contestations against introducing democratic norms within the ECOWAS region seem to have developed as a pattern. In Hartmann’s (2013) assessment, most ECOWAS heads of state were not committed to actively promoting reforms around democracy and good governance within the region.

5.4. ECOWAS - Sovereignty Norm Revalidation and the Developing Norm of Interference

In my analysis of norm building in ECOWAS between 1991 and 2000, two critical events significantly contribute to our enhanced understanding of the changes to the region’s normative environment and the defined preference for contestation patterns in the challenge to norms by member states. The outcome of the Liberian and Sierra Leone Wars explains the erosion of the fundamental non-intervention norm. It provides a much more precise contrast in the member states’ preferences for the outcome of diffused norms, which challenge sovereignty in the region. Hence, the actions of member states transformed the normative environment and defined the dynamics of the norm-building process in subsequent protocols. In the following section, I analyse the patterns and outcomes of member states’ challenges to the introduced norm of intervention and the impacts on the future norm-building process.

5.2.5 *The Liberian Civil War of 1989 and Contested Legitimacy*

At the end of the Cold War, the two principal factions, the United States and the Soviet Union had both withdrawn their countries’ military involvement in the West African region. France, who had declared during the Cold War its responsibility to protect Africa from communism (Jorgensen, 2020), had also decreased its interference in potentially destabilising conflicts in the region. Hence, when the civil war in Liberia began, with neighbouring countries such as Sierra Leone and Guinea at risk of being engulfed, there was a wall of silence from the international community (Hartmann and Striebinger, 2015). On December 24, 1989, Charles Taylor, who opposed the presidency of Samuel Doe of Liberia, led an invasion into Liberia with his National Patriotic Front of Liberia (NPFL) from the Southeast across the border in Côte d’Ivoire. The insurgency comprised sympathetic Nimba County supporters, most of whom considered Samuel Doe’s presidency anti-Nimbadian (Darkwa and Attuquayefio, 2014). In

response, Samuel Doe carried out a brutal military engagement to quell what would seem to be a growing threat to his presidency.

Notwithstanding, the insurgency continued to advance, capturing significant portions of the Liberian state. As highlighted in my earlier discussion, Liberia had established a mutual defence pact with the United States, who, at that point, refused to be a party to the conflict. Darkwa and Attuquayefio (2014) contend that the reason America stood aloof may have either been due to the brutality of the government's initial response or Washington's preference instead to side with Ivory Coast for its continued support in the Gulf region at the UN Security Council. Following the intensity of the conflict, neighbouring countries began witnessing large movements of refugees across the border, creating a potentially sizable humanitarian disaster. Also, Doe's Presidency was all but certainly heading for a catastrophic defeat from a ferocious Taylor-led insurgency. The ECOWAS' initial response began with the Nigerian Head of State, General Ibrahim Babangida, who called for regional mediation in the conflict on May 28, 1990, at a community meeting in Banjul, Gambia. This proposal was accepted, and an ECOWAS Standing Mediation Committee (SMC) was established, comprising the Gambia, Ghana, Nigeria, Togo, Mali, and Niger, with Sierra Leone and Guinea joining at a later stage. The formation of the SMC was followed by a plea from the President of Liberia, Samuel Doe, to the Ministerial Meeting of the ECOWAS Standing Committee on July 14, 1990, requesting the support of the SMC and other member states in the region to end the conflict. In the letter, Doe pondered, "I cannot countenance Taylor's continued mission to destroy Liberia and its inhabitants only because of his inordinate greed to become president" (ECOWAS, 1990b, cited in Darkwa and Attuquayefio, 2014). The region was divided on the issue of supporting President Doe, with Nigeria backing an intervention to stem the tide, fearing that the chaos in Liberia could destabilise the region (Hartmann and Striebinger, 2015). The Nigerian state's interest in protecting Samuel Doe's regime from the armed challenge by Charles Taylor pitted it against its usual rivals - the Francophone states. The Francophone states seemed to favour the challenger, arguing that Nigeria's support for intervention was to maintain its alliance with Samuel Doe (Chafer, 2013). Hence, at Samuel Doe's request to the ECOWAS and member states for support, the Francophone member-states viewed the Nigerian government's response as usurping the powers of the ECOWAS without any legal basis except to protect an ally. In Nigeria's interpretation, the situation in Liberia was a dire warning to the region's stability, and a victory for the challenger could lead to the possible rise of challenger armies within the region, aiming to overthrow other constitutional governments. After its experience with a civil war, the Nigerian state considered itself duty-bound to dissuade would-be challengers to power in the region. In addition, Nigeria made a political play to give legitimacy to its actions by situating the argument within the provisions of the ECOWAS PNA (1978) and PMAD (1981).

During the contestation process, Nigeria claimed its actions were legitimate, triggering the security mechanisms that mandated the deployment of the Allied Armed Forces of the Community (AAFC) under PMAD 1981. However, PMAD provisions regarding the mandate to interfere in member states were previously drawn to avoid such an action. Nonetheless, Nigeria adopted the provision to its advantage and made its intention to interfere clear. First, although Article 15 (1) justifies the legitimate defence of territories within the Community in all cases, Article 15 (2) stipulates the process of activating the mechanism. The process is based on the provisions of Articles 16, 17, and 18. Article 16 provides that ECOWAS should receive a request for support from the Head of State for an external threat or aggression. Article 17 allows the Authority to debate the appropriate actions for mediation or, if necessary, interpose the AAFC between the two member states engaged in the conflict. Article 18 explicitly provides for conflicts within a member state sustained by outside influences; yet again, it references the process of activating the security mechanism as outlined in Articles 6, 9, and 16. Most notably, Article 18 reinforces the norm of non-intervention in the case of internal conflicts. However, Article 6 (3) provides for the authority to decide on the expediency of the military and entrust the same to the Force Commander of the AAFC, which is immediately enforceable. However, this is subject to the satisfaction of Article 9, which relates to the authority of the host state to intervene. The contestation's crux stemmed from the Protocol's two opposing provisions. Although arguably clear in its parameters for the deployment of the AAFC, the relevant provisions are contained in Articles 15 and 4. While Article 15 justifies legitimate defence of territories in all cases, it qualifies its actions subject to Articles 16, 17 and 18. Article 17 provides for the authority's function in conflict situations involving two member states, while Article 18 relates to cases of sustained external influence. Article 4, which forms the foundational premise for employing a joint regional security mechanism, identifies (1) the event of a breakdown in peace initiative that leads to the ineffectiveness of Article 5 of the PNA 1978. Interestingly, Article 4 (2) provides for a debate within the authority to decide on the situation in collaboration with the member states concerned. However, it stops short of guaranteeing an intervention even as the provision deals with outside influence.

Therefore, Nigeria, in this case, argued that the actions of Charles Taylor when attacking Samuel Doe from neighbouring Côte d'Ivoire rendered the PNA ineffective and contravened the provisions of the PMAD. By doing so, Nigeria suggested that the ECOWAS acknowledge Charles Taylor's act of aggression, as initiated technically outside Liberia's borders, constituting an external threat. To support Nigeria's argument, the SMC, provided for by the PMAD 1981, acted to secure a tentative ceasefire from the warring parties and followed up with the establishment and deployment of the ECOMOG forces to monitor the ceasefire. The proposal was adopted by the heads of state of SMC member states on August 7, 1990, without any consensus on the parameters for ECOWAS involvement, the goals, and the objectives of the peace plan. Nigeria's dominance of ECOMOG deployment only heightened the divide and distrust between the Francophone states and Nigeria. In opposition to the dispatching of

ECOMOG, the Francophone states interpreted the intervention of ECOWAS led by Nigeria as a violation of the norm of non-interference and respect for individual state sovereignty, independence, and territorial integrity. The contestation around the developing norm of intervention also deepened concerns about the perceived extension of the regional organisation into states' political and security regimes. In response to these unresolved ideological and political differences, the initial contingent of troops did not feature military contingents from any Francophone state. Outside the norm contestation engagements of the Francophone and Anglophone groups, external normative agents also feature in the process, contributing to the undermining of efforts to converge on normative frameworks, such as those in France and Libya (Darkwa and Attuquayefio 2014). Likewise, other political considerations include the indefensible application of the morality argument by predominantly military dictators lacking moral authority to intervene. It is not lost on analysts that regional cronyism is linked to the actions of the five-member Standing Mediation Group, which includes Ghana, Guinea, Sierra Leone, The Gambia, and Nigeria. All these states were under military dictatorships or civilian autocracies with similar histories of maintaining their respective regimes through national securitisation policies of subjugation, comparable to those of Charles Taylor (Birikorang, 2013). Although the interventionist group prevailed, the decision was criticised as the position of a small number of states within the Community and was, therefore, illegal. The tensions between the two groups only exacerbated from here on.

On their part, the intervening states also sought to address the seeming lack of external legitimacy. The group began with international campaigns, partnering with advocacy and civil society organisations involved in advocacy against human rights abuses and ultimately lobbying for the United Nations' support. They slowly garnered international attention by adapting to the unfolding humanitarian crisis and the growing refugee problem. Nigeria prioritised the protection of lives in what was to be an impending humanitarian catastrophe before the United Nations, citing it as the primary rationale for ECOWAS intervention. This argument better served the normative moral threshold of international actors and resonated with international politics in the post-Cold War era (Birikorang, 2013). On its part, the OAU recognised that military peacekeeping missions had to be consensual to be legitimate; unqualified consent, on the other hand, was impossible to obtain (Kaldor 2012). The OAU's Secretary-General, Salim Ahmed Salim, and its then-Chairman, Yoweri Museveni of Uganda, widely transmitted this position. The two leaders clamoured for the legitimisation of the intervention by ECOMOG.

However, most member states in the OAU opposed the norm of intervention, as they still regarded the Liberian conflict as an internal affair. President Museveni, at odds with this perspective, condemned their position in light of the growing humanitarian disaster and human rights abuses, including stating that 'the wanton killings going on in Liberia has made that country a slaughterhouse and the situation

could no longer be treated as an internal matter²³. Secretary-General Salim, on the other hand, maintaining the unqualified consensus argument, stated:

Before ECOWAS undertook its initiative many, including the African media, were condemning the indifference demonstrated by Africa. The most desirable thing would have been to have an agreement of all parties to the conflict and the convergence of views of all members of ECOWAS. But to argue that there is no legal basis for intervention is surprising. Should the countries in West Africa just leave Liberians to fight each other? Will that be more legitimate? Will that be more understandable? (...) I will rather make a mistake trying to solve the problem than to remain completely indifferent in such a situation²⁴ (Bah, 2013:94).

These contesting normative frames were morally relevant and coincided with the internationalist argument regarding rules for intervention at that time. These rules were predicated on conflicts that threatened humanitarian preservation, the collapse of the state, and the loss of border control and civil authority, amongst others. The popularity of the humanitarian argument led Nigeria to modify its previously contesting position regarding non-interventionist norms, anchoring this fundamental shift in protecting lives and regional stability.

On August 7, 1990, the SMC called for a ceasefire agreement from the warring parties, the scheduling of presidential elections within twelve months, and the creation of a Ceasefire Monitoring Group (ECOMOG) to oversee the peaceful and lasting settlement of the dispute (ECOWAS, 1990a). The war took a different turn when, on September 9, 1990, a breakaway faction of the Charles Taylor NPFL, referred to as the Independent-NPFL, abducted then-President Samuel Doe from the ECOMOG headquarters in Monrovia. Brigadier General Prince Johnson, the then-rebel leader, was said to have tortured and killed Samuel Doe and assumed the presidency of Liberia. Johnson's claim to the presidency was short-lived as the once-divided rebel army consolidated yet again under Charles Taylor. Recognising that neither warring party was prepared for a dialogue and peaceful settlement of the crisis, various political parties and interest groups met in the Gambia on November 22, 1990, to elect an interim government with Amos Sawyer as its President. However, the Liberian conflict did not end, despite various attempts to negotiate with the warring parties through peaceful means. On 28, 1990, the SMC, in agreement with the interim government of Sawyer, deployed ECOMOG with combative powers to enforce the peace agreement. Until the deployment of the ECOMOG, the norm of non-intervention had considered state security and responsibilities the exclusive preserve of the regime.

²³ West Africa Magazine, August 1990: 1085–7, cited in Bah, 2013: 94

²⁴ West Africa Magazine, 13-19 August 1990, cited in Aning, 2010, pg. 52-53.

However, recent attention has also been drawn to the loss of fundamental human rights that have been brought upon citizens. Hence partly crediting the erosion of the non-intervention norm with the protection of human rights. However, although the ECOWAS had responded with the deployment of ECOMOG troops, led by Nigeria, to minimise the destruction of lives and properties and restore political stability in Liberia, the mixed results from the endeavour fuelled further contestation of the intervention norm. For the Francophone states, this deepened their suspicion of Nigeria wielding and displaying such enormous power in the absence of any unanimously accepted principles, norms, rules, or structures (Rashid, 2013). Nonetheless, the Liberian conflict persisted until and after Charles Taylor's election in 1997. The conflict also endured numerous peace accords, including the 1995 Abuja Agreement and the 1996 Mechanism for Returning Liberia to the Abuja Agreement. Eventually, in 2003, Charles Taylor no longer commanded the respect of his insurgency group and the wider Liberian society. He resigned and went into exile in Nigeria.

The intensity of this contestation process is often less debated, but it illustrates a reaction to the challenge posed by well-established and fundamental principles of the Westphalia tradition (Aleman 2018). In hindsight, the ECOWAS interventionist norm developed outside the parameters of a conventional normative framework. The contestation process was pressured by the changing dynamics of the regional conflict, which fertilised the normative environment with shared values and principles. So, although the process of norm development indicated contestation between the norm takers, convergence on the outcome formed the basis of its validation. The outcome of the violation of Liberia's sovereignty, in this case, is the shared principle and values associated with the need to prevent the continued catastrophic disaster from the loss of life and abuse of human rights. This can also be argued as an originating norm within the context of the modern state, as defined by the framework of Westphalian sovereignty. An emerging norm localised by the ECOWAS to meet the region's unique objectives and common identity to West African states, forming the framework for the regional cooperative ethos and the dispute settlement and management of conflict.

5.2.6 The Sierra Leone Conflict of 1991 and International Acceptance

The conflict in Liberia split into the neighbouring state of Sierra Leone. On March 23, 1991, a combination of some disgruntled Sierra Leonean citizens joined by other mercenaries, including from Liberia and supported by Charles Taylor, launched a civil war in the state. The insurgency crossed the Liberian border, attacking and seizing control of the diamond-rich eastern town of Bomaru. The group, referred to as the Revolutionary United Front (RUF), claimed their purpose was to replace the All-People's Congress headed by Major-General Joseph Saidu Momoh, the country's president. President

Momoh responded with a counter-insurgency by supporting a new faction in the Liberian war, the United Liberian Movement for Democracy (ULIMO), against the Charles Taylor-led NPFL while also engaging the Revolutionary United Front (RUF) on his borders (Rashid, 2013). In response to what was seen as a potential escalation into a regional conflict, Nigeria again honoured a bilateral agreement with Sierra Leone by redeploying some of its ECOMOG soldiers, who were previously engaged in Liberia, to assist the Senegalese armed forces. On April 29, 1992, a young commander, Captain Valentine Strasser, a combatant from the government-led forces, staged a coup which ousted President Joseph Momoh and created a National Provisional Ruling Council (NPRC). The coup reverberated positively across most of the population, with the NPRC junta promising a swift end to the war and corruption. However, by March 1995, the NPRC was suffering from similar dissatisfaction among the populace as the previous junta, partly due to corruption and the disloyalty of officers colluding with the RUF fighters. Hence, despite the hiring of mercenaries from NEPAL and South Africa, the government was reeling from the offensives of the insurgency. However, in 1996, the Civil Defence Forces (CDF) and a government-backed band of militia groups repelled further attacks from the RUF after significant pressure.

Consequently, in conjunction with civil society organisations, an Abidjan Peace Accord was signed on November 26, and elections were held, ushering in a civilian government headed by Ahmad Tejan Kabbah. Nevertheless, RUF returned to the scene after the Sierra Leone conflict did not abate. In 1997, a new set of military officers headed by Major Johnny Paul Koroma staged another coup, forcing the elected President Kabbah into exile in Guinea. The new junta, The Armed Forces Redemption Council (AFRC), extended an olive branch to the RUF for a unity government. Eventually, and similar to the previous juntas, the state remained plagued by incidences of corruption, rape, and human rights abuses and teetered on the verge of collapse. The United Nations Security Council followed up its July 11 call for The Immediate and Unconditional Restoration of Constitutional Order in Sierra Leone (UN Press, 1997) with Resolution 1132 on October 8, 1997. The resolution, amongst others, instituted sanctions in areas of travel for the members of the military junta and their families. In addition, the UNSC also restricted the sale of petroleum products for vessels and aircraft, including arms, weapons, ammunition, military vehicles, and spare parts. To implement its decision, the UNSC authorised the ECOWAS to cooperate with the democratically elected government of Sierra Leone to ensure strict adherence (UNSC, 1997). Hartmann and Striebinger (2015) note that although the resolution fell short of mandating military intervention, the reality faced by ECOMOG and CDF fighters against AFRC and RUF fighters necessitated an *ex-post* authorisation by the UNSC to engage the group by ECOMOG in April 1998. In July 1999, the government of Sierra Leone and the RUF insurgency reached a peace agreement signed in Lomé, Togo. Initial attacks by disgruntled factions of the RUF and AFRC, referred to as the West Side Boys, attempting to derail the peace process, were summarily quelled by the United Nations Mission in Sierra Leone (UNAMSIL). The UNAMSIL comprised military forces from multiple

nations, including a fair share of ECOMOG troops. The UNAMASIL eventually facilitated the subsequent disarmament and reintegration of fighters into the national armed forces after the defeat of the RUF and AFRC forces.

Significant operational difficulties marred ECOMOG interventions, which also lacked a legal framework to justify their involvement or a consensus mandate from ECOWAS members. The involvement was thought to have contravened the Charter of the UN, which prohibits the use of force by regional bodies without authorisation by the UNSC for conflict resolution, except in cases of self-defence and collective security (UNSC, Articles 2: 3 and 4; Obi, 2019). The enforcement action by ECOMOG also contravened the principles of the OAU, which reinforces the non-interference in the internal affairs of states (OAU, 1963, Article 3) and several provisions in its PNA, which advocate for the nonviolent settlement of disputes (ECOWAS, 1978, Article 1). However, the crisis in Liberia and Sierra Leone immensely altered the hitherto most common and consensus norm of non-intervention through behavioural contestation. This essentially broadened the scope of ECOWAS functions and initiatives where the region's collective security is threatened.

However, the outcome around the protection and preservation of human rights amidst the carnage also explains the lack of outright condemnation from the UN or the OAU. Nor did the Francophone states, who were vehemently opposed to the intervention, challenge the retroactive permissions granted to the ECOMOG-led peace process in Liberia and Sierra Leone by the UN and OAU (Darkwa and Attuquayefio, 2014). Côte d'Ivoire and Togo eventually played vital roles in negotiating and hosting the first and second peace processes, which ended the civil war in Sierra Leone. At the same time, Burkina Faso facilitated the RUF's engagement in the Lomé peace process and played a mediating role in the Côte d'Ivoire civil war. On the other hand, Nigeria was commended for its commitment to pluralistic discourse, which accommodates other interests in decision-making and, most importantly, for accepting a position of limited influence in the Mediating Security Council, which could have seen its interests outvoted.

5.5. The Erosion of Non-Intervention and the Revised ECOWAS Treaty (1993)

The intervention of ECOWAS into Liberia and Sierra Leone was fraught with contested legality, norm validity and, by extension, the meaning of sovereignty. The dynamics of regional politics and cultural variations that contribute to the validation of these norms ideologically shape the differences between member states. Unsurprisingly, proposing and opposing member states maintained their historical positions based on their colonial affinities and interests, including during engagements for peace, negotiation of objectives and other political agreements. The security situations during the 1990s challenged ECOWAS norms, and the previous Treaty displayed an inadequacy of mechanisms within

its framework to protect these norms. This revelation in the regional norm dynamics eventually led to the member states agreeing on new norms for the ECOWAS in 1993. The 1993 Treaty of Cotonou represented a comprehensive overhaul of the 1975 Lagos Treaty, introducing new institutions, objectives, and clear authorities. Although earlier described as a peacekeeping force, the ECOWAS intervention in Liberia and Sierra Leone also defined the influence of international and regional norms on the West African region's norm-building process. Parties to the challenge against the norm of intervention, such as Burkina Faso, Togo, and Ivory Coast, had insisted that the intervention stretched and broke the ECOWAS norms to the extreme. The proposing countries referenced Article 1 of the Protocol on Non-Aggression of Lagos of 1978, where states agreed to "refrain from the threat or use of force or aggression or from employing any other means inconsistent with the Charters of the United Nations and the Organisation of African Unity against the territorial integrity or political independence of other Member-States" (ECOWAS, 1978). As observed, to mitigate this claim, Nigeria redirected the focus of the intervention to humanitarian aid. It assessed the conflict as a grave threat to the region's peace and stability, echoing the UN Charter, Chapter VII Article 42. At the regional level, most ECOWAS member states eventually intervened due to concerns surrounding the threats posed by the now common regional occurrence of attempts to overthrow neighbouring nations' military dictatorships (Wilén, 2021). This fear also drove support for developing a normative framework for conflict prevention and resolution between states, setting the tone for a transformation in the normative environment in ECOWAS.

Concerning the explanation of diverse norms investigated by this thesis, the Revised ECOWAS Treaty of 1993 provides the initial demonstration of these adopted norms within its institutional rules. Regarding security norms, although the normative environment recognised the norm of intervention based on the challenge to human rights and the dignity of citizens, the Treaty did little to internalise this norm. For instance, the agreement demonstrates the internalisation of the norms around human rights, for example, the Preamble - "Bears in mind, the African Charter on Human Rights, it is recognised as part of the regions Fundamental Principle -: "Recognition, promotion and protection of human and peoples' rights in accordance with the provisions of the African Charter on Human and Peoples' Rights"²⁵ while Article 4(e), sought the "maintenance of regional peace, stability and security through the promotion and strengthening of good neighbourliness", and acknowledges in Article 58 regional security, including three (3) key undertakings by member states:

1. *Member States undertake to work to safeguard and consolidate relations conducive to the maintenance of peace, stability and security within the region.*

²⁵ ECOWAS Revised Treaty Article 4(g)

2. *In pursuit of these objectives, Member States undertake to cooperate with the Community in establishing and strengthening appropriate mechanisms for the timely prevention and resolution of intra-state and inter-state conflicts, paying particular regard to the need to:*
 - a) *maintain periodic and regular consultations between national border administration authorities;*
 - b) *establish local or national joint commissions to examine any problems encountered in relations between neighbouring States;*
 - c) *encourage exchanges and cooperation between communities, townships and administrative regions;*
 - d) *organise meetings between relevant ministries on various aspects of inter-State relations;*
 - e) *employ where appropriate, good offices, conciliation, mediation and other methods of peaceful settlement of disputes;*
 - f) *establish a regional peace and security observation system and peacekeeping forces where appropriate;*
 - g) *provide, where necessary and at the request of Member States, assistance to Member States for the observation of democratic elections.*

3. *The detailed provisions governing political cooperation, regional peace and stability shall be defined in the relevant Protocols. (ECOWAS, 1993)*

Furthermore, it establishes an accompanying mechanism to integrate the security norm in the region in Article 22(f), relating to the establishment and composition of the Technical Commissions, which provides for committees on Political, Judicial and Legal Affairs, Regional Security, and Immigration. On democratic norms, the efforts were even more limited; the 1993 ECOWAS Treaty provided for in Article 4(j) the “promotion and consolidation of a democratic system of governance in each Member State as envisaged by the Declaration of Political Principles (DPP) adopted in Abuja on July 6, 1991”. As I explained previously, the DPP agreement is non-binding and non-ratifiable. Although Article 58, 2(g) grants powers to the ECOWAS to assist member states in observing elections at the state’s request, the initial concerns regarding standards and mechanisms plague the essentiality of that provision. Moreover, the Treaty did not provide a clear meaning or framework for applying democratic standards and values in either of the two documents. However, the ECOWAS 1993 Treaty makes recognisable attempts at imitating good governance structures by creating institutions such as the Community Parliament (Article 13) and the Court of Justice (Article 15). The ECOWAS normative environment at the time of member states’ agreement on the region’s Revised Treaty in 1993 demonstrated the

component of institutional rules. However, the provisions of the agreement were significantly aligned by member states around the influence of cognitive priors. This explains why it avoids any particular provision for developing specific mechanisms to integrate the adopted norms of democracy and intervention, even against the backdrop of heightened potential for wider regional conflict at the time. Hartmann's assessment, "ECOWAS in 1993 did not perceive itself as an organisation that should actively transfer governance to member states" (Ibid, 2013: 15). Even as the treaty provides for sanctions in Chapter XVI to facilitate the internalisation of the adopted norms. These sanctions range from suspension of membership, financial disbursement, and voting rights to outright expulsion for failure to fulfil obligations to the Community.

The ECOWAS Revised Treaty of 1993 represents an ambitious document that showcases the region's intention to expand its political, economic, and security structures, thereby fostering a stable and integrated region. However, this section's analysis does indicate that, while member states display a visual embrace of its new normative environment, where security and economic integration take centre stage, the planned outcome seems to be limited, particularly in areas such as collective security, but also greater hesitancy in areas such as democracy and good governance.

5.6. Shaping Member States Preference with Protocol on Security Mechanism (1999)

Adopting the Protocol Relating to the Mechanism for Conflict Prevention, Management, Resolution, Peacekeeping and Security (1999) is a trendsetter in many ways. The integration of this norm within the region's institutional rules garnered significant attention from external observers and changed the framework for developing regional norms. For instance, when the ECOWAS adopted the Protocol on Security, it appropriated the United Nations Security Council's (UNSC) powers as the sole organisation with the legitimate authority to approve intervention in any country. The institution also formally eroded its primary norm of non-intervention, which had influenced norm-building since the inception of its regionalism negotiations (Coe, 2019). For perspective, there has not been a repeat of such an intervention as was the case of Liberia outside the channels of the UNSC (Hartmann and Striebinger, 2015) and the ECOWAS remains the only organisation whose members face the possibility of an intervention in the case of a norm violation which threatens the stability and safety of the region. In the 1990s, border skirmishes and internal conflicts began to escalate into complex security and humanitarian disasters for the region. In response, the ECOWAS, for the first time, forayed into its security function and intervened militarily in affected member states. Apart from the intervention in the Liberian civil war, which began in 1989, the ECOWAS also carried out military missions in armed conflicts in Sierra Leone (1992), Guinea Bissau (1999), Côte d'Ivoire (2003) and a repeat of conflict in

Liberia (2003). The development of conflict management mechanisms in the region had, until the intervention, been almost non-existent. Although the PNA and PMAD of 1978 and 1981, respectively, had been the principles developed for security in the region and provided for an emergency Allied Armed Forces of the Community (AAFC), they created no standing army. They had also not been implemented since their ratification. Obi (2009) suggests that the doubts about Nigeria's real intentions among the Francophone states and the limited capacity of the ECOWAS secretariat at the time were important factors that effectively rendered the AAFC and its operationality moribund. However, as observed, this quickly changed with the intervention in Liberia, leading to a protracted normative contestation over security and sovereign norms among member states.

The reflection on the fallouts of these conflicts also provided the basis for analysing the change to the normative environment and its influence on the norm-building process, primarily in terms of collective security and the pattern of contestation adopted by member states. This thesis argues that variations in sovereignty and concerns about the obsolescence of conquest represent the most significant source of challenges to norms. As observed in the analysis of regional conflicts and the development of sovereign-limiting norms, these factors substantially influence the process. In most cases, these factors guided states' responses, driven by fear that the humanitarian crises would escalate into domestic security challenges that could attract international attention. Allain (2004) explains that the hesitancy of the international system and the suspicion of the UNSC's failure to restore peace could be considered primary factors in states' decisions to limit sovereignty (Allain, 2004). Secondary factors, such as sustained threats to regional security, the scale of devastation, the large number of casualties, and the general welfare of regional citizens, represent significant drivers for states to mend colonial rifts and willingly accept military intervention from previously considered adversaries but do not sufficiently stack up against influence for accepting an interventionist norm. So, although state actors initially engaged with discursive contestation, they eventually recognised that the normative environment had to be repurposed to alleviate their concerns of conquest.

Hence, by an act of permanent erosion, the ECOWAS Protocol for Security Mechanism 1999, Chapter 1 Article 2 (h) granted the regional organisation the power to "constitute and deploy a civilian and military force to maintain or restore peace within the sub-region, whenever the need arises". In line with the Revised Treaty Article 22(f), the ECOWAS 1999 Protocol reserved the function of granting intervention powers in future to an established security mechanism referred to as the Mediating Security Council. Article 10, 2(c) of the protocol "authorise (s) all forms of intervention and decide particularly on the deployment of political and military missions". This presents a significant normative and structural change within ECOWAS, which redefined its normative framework and enforced its new norms through mechanisms designed with very clear mandates. For instance, Article 25 provides for the political or military intervention by the Mediation and Security Council "in the event of serious and

massive violation of human rights and the rule of law" or if there is "an overthrow or attempted overthrow of a democratically elected government" (ECOWAS, 1999b). The protocol also reclassifies the non-aggression norms by qualifying them in terms of the attainment of shared supranational principles. Additionally, the experiences from the conflict contributed to the development of norms around preventive resolutions, the strengthening of regional peace and security architecture, humanitarian support, peacebuilding, the control of cross-border crime, and the reduction of small arms proliferation (Hartman 2013). This framework is derived from the belief that the document is also particularly concerned with the ways and means by which ECOWAS can intervene in member states in order to mitigate conflicts.

The importance of the 1999 Protocol is reasserted in direct contrast to the corresponding commitments to the consolidation of democratic governments and their institutions, the protection of human rights and freedoms, and international humanitarian law. The exact mechanism capable of supporting an interventionist norm fails to expand on the process, such as democracy and human rights, among others, nor does it cover norms to be protected by the mechanism (Aggad and Miyandazi, 2017). The 1999 protocol addresses democratic norms but provides a general mandate without specifying which ECOWAS organ should be responsible for this duty or which democratic institutions in the member states should be developed (Hartmann, 2013). Hence, the behaviour of state actors varies in their attachment to democracy and human rights norms due to the lack of convergence on a fine-grained, comprehensive strategy to promote these governance standards in member states. Instead, under the heading "Peace-Building," Chapter IX of the Protocol provides, "To stem social and political upheavals, ECOWAS shall be involved in the preparation, organisation, and supervision of elections in the Member States. ECOWAS shall also monitor and actively support the development of democratic institutions in the Member States" (ECOWAS, 1999a, Article 42-1).

Although the ECOWAS developed sets of norms to forestall similar situations in the future, the contestation over shared values as a normative framework changed. Convergence extended to institutionalising the decision-making mechanisms and defining its security norms unambiguously. The security framework of the regionalism process has developed a foremost supranational structure, which, at least for now, exists without imitation elsewhere. To achieve this, the Mediation Security Council and other relevant institutions within the mechanism provide a common platform to address members' concerns regarding legitimacy and representation. The section also discusses a broad range of issues that define the contestation process regarding the foremost security development across the region (Bah, 2013).

5.7. Challenges to the Protocol on Democracy and Good Governance (2001)

Protocol A/SP1/12/01 on Democracy and Good Governance is supplementary to the Protocol Relating to the Mechanism for Conflict Prevention, Management, Resolution, Peace-Keeping and Security (1999). The understanding of regional actors' preferences suggests that while the 1999 Protocol established the norm of intervention within the region, complementary norms related to regional stability and the protection of citizen rights, including democratic processes, the rule of law, and respect for human rights, were scarcely regarded (Hartmann, 2013). This is captured in its "Preamble", "that to become effective, the Protocol of December 10, 1999, needs to be complemented through the incorporation of provisions concerning issues such as prevention of internal crises, democracy and good governance, the rule of law, and human rights" (ECOWAS, 2001a). The Protocol on Democracy and Good Governance 2001 displays ECOWAS member-states foremost convergence on norms determined to represent proposed standardised regional practice by extending these perspicuous frameworks to most areas covered by governance architecture. Article 1 of the Protocol declares twelve (12) norms as "Constitutional Converging Principles", which, when taken in general, constitute the essential areas for interpreting governance standards. The Protocol also enhances the constituent frameworks of these norms throughout the document. Some of these include the Separation of Powers norms contained in (Article 1a), the Constitutional transfer of Power norm (Articles 1 - b, c, and e), the protection of Human Rights norm (Article 1h) and Democratic Process norms (Article 1I). The Protocol further addresses the region's bane of undemocratic practices by ensuring that the norms associated with the democratic process are protected. In Chapter II, Article Two (1-3) on "Elections", the provision states that "No substantial modification shall be made to the electoral laws in the last six months before the elections, except with the consent of a majority of political actors". Articles 2 -(2 and 3) protect election dates by constitutional recognition and equality of women's participation and their role in government. The normative framework for fair elections is outlined in Article 3, which requires member states to promote and maintain independent and neutral umpires represented by all parties. Furthermore, to avoid post-election conflicts and to support the smooth transition of power, Articles 9 and 10 provide for candidate concessions norms, where parties or candidates who lose the elections "concede defeat to the political party and/or candidate finally declared the winner" and for incumbents to refrain from targeting opponents following the assumption of power. While much of the Protocol addresses the development of norms around democracy and good governance, holistically, it concentrates on the region's predominant realisation of democratic ideals for a stable security situation.

To encapsulate this aim, ECOWAS recognises poor regional social infrastructure with a provision in Section V, Article 25-28, "*Poverty Alleviation and Social Dialogue and Education, Youth, Women, Culture and Religion*", which acknowledges that the absence of these factors constitutes the proximate causes of conflicts that had come to plague the region (Rashid, 2013). The Protocol appears to

demonstrate proportionate support for the diffusion of democratic and good governance norms, particularly through constitutional convergence of principles, which, at its core, triggers the security mechanism provided in the 1999 Protocol. This link to the security norm is provided for as an auto-response from the regional organisation in cases of breaches of democratic and human rights norms, as outlined in Chapter II, Article 45, which should act as a deterrent to the use of conflict or support for the illegitimate acquisition of power, including cases of coup d'état. Instances of this sanction mechanism coming into effect include Mali (2012), Guinea-Bissau (2012) and Côte d'Ivoire (2010). Other mechanisms agreed upon to sanction erring members include suspension of states from the Community or, in extreme cases, intervention.

However, in contrast to regional security norms, the Protocol on Democracy and Good Governance is subject to inconsistent application due to a lack of mandatory ambition (Rashid, 2013). Regional political actors have approached sovereign norms related to democratic and governance dynamics in a significantly different manner than those regarding security. For instance, some provisions relating to democracy have been restrictively formulated with coercive mechanisms dependent on the political circumstances of the violating state. A preview of the Modalities for the Implementation of Sanctions, Chapter II, Article 45, restricts responses to sanctions to only cases of the *end of democracy* and *massive human rights* violations without corresponding definitions or framework responsible for determining violations or provisions to detach the perpetuating government from participating in the investigations. In addition, member states engage in behavioural contestations aimed at limiting the enforcement mechanisms. For instance, as discussed earlier, the 2001 Protocol on Democracy and Good Governance fosters a normative environment that supports principles such as accountability, transparency, and professionalism, which are essential for the efficient implementation of democratic governance in the region to thrive (Winkler, 2011). However, a principal institution for oversight — the ECOWAS Parliament — still requires its full powers to operate effectively. The institution is listed in the constitutional converging principles, which requires all member states to empower, strengthen and guarantee immunity for national parliaments (ECOWAS, 2001a, Article 1). Nevertheless, member states have shown little urgency in strengthening the institution or unbridling the full potential of the ECOWAS Parliament.

Therefore, while the Protocol on Security necessitated limiting the sovereignty of member states, an equally essential and complementary protocol lacks similar enforcement powers. Since its establishment over three decades ago, various actors have consistently sought to align regional governance norms with the ECOWAS parliament's normative framework to unleash the development and implementation of regional democratic and governance principles enforceable by an enhanced parliament. The Community Parliament was listed as a part of the institutional structure of ECOWAS and was established in Article 6 of the 1993 Revised Treaty. The objective was to act as a forum for

dialogue, consultation, and consensus for representatives of the peoples of the Community (ECOWAS, 1994). Within Protocol A/P2/8/94 Relating to the Community Parliament signed in August 1994, member states still needed to agree on what the Community Parliament's Objectives, Principles or Aims constituted. Whereas the Protocol provides immunity to parliamentarians during sessions and recess, the document refrains from developing or promoting any regional norms, and neither is there any attempt to define or constitute convergence principles transferable from the region to the member states. In hindsight, these behavioural contestations in the Protocol relating to the Community Parliament indicate less an introduction of a norm than the establishment of an institution without the powers to enforce any shared norms. Similar contestations occurred with the Supplementary Act Relating to the Enhancement of the Powers of the ECOWAS Parliament 2016. Whereas the Protocol does bestow the ECOWAS parliament with objectives such as to "promote and defend principles of human rights, democracy, the rule of law, transparency, accountability and good governance" and "reinforcing the legitimacy of actions taken by the Community Executives in the field of regional integration" (ECOWAS Parliament, 2016a, E and J) neither norms are transferable nor sustained by any mechanisms. Hence, in recent years, the stability of democratic gains has continued to be threatened by the actions of regimes that disregard the constitutional principles agreed upon by the same states.

In the lead-up to the enhancement of ECOWAS Parliamentary powers, various high-profile officials of the Parliament expressed their positions on the ongoing contentions. In his speech at the plenary of the First Ordinary Session in 2013, Senator Ike Ekweremadu reassures that calls for enhanced powers are not "meant to diminish the relevance of other Community organs" but to support the development of the Community towards its outcome of "a more result-oriented and more people responsive Community". On her part, the Speaker of Ghana's national Parliament relates the enhancement to the survival of the Community by clarifying that;

.... unless the political leadership in the Sub-Region are willing and prepared to cede part of the sovereignty of their respective countries for what may be described as the "Greater Sovereignty" of the peoples within West Africa, all of these numerous efforts at sub-regional integration would come to nought (ECOWAS Parliament, 2013).

These concerns highlight a fundamental challenge within the normative framework, with significant emphasis placed on the need to adopt sovereign-limiting norms for an efficient contribution of the ECOWAS parliament to the progress of ECOWAS regionalism. Similar concerns were raised by the Nigerian Senate President Dr Abubakar Bukola Saraki, who stated, 'For as long as we are unable to, or fail to remit to this Parliament more powers, the dreams for greater integration will remain a myth' (Saraki, 2016). The Supplementary Act for the Enhancement of the Parliament's Powers was successfully passed through the adoption process but with a significant reduction in its most important

powers, including its oversight function and complete autonomy. Although the 2016 Act confers new functions and powers to the Parliament, it remains largely restrictive. A key accomplishment, however, is the compromise on the diverse interests regarding the rights of Parliament to co-legislate on monetary and economic policies, customs, the free movement of factors of production, and consultative budgetary power, although this is non-binding.

5.8. Conclusion

This chapter unpacked the complexity of the ECOWAS normative environment and the development of specific and related regional norms under investigation. As argued, cognitive priors such as the variation in sovereignty and concerns over the obsolescence of conquest prominently influenced the preferences of member states during norm contestation and building. Gowon's reflections alluded to the presence of these factors, considering that the former Nigerian President pointed to the absence of economic sovereignty as the factor which forced hesitancy amongst member states against challenging for complete national independence. During the analysis of the norm-building process in ECOWAS, I discussed the contest against the previously internalised norm of intervention, particularly the hesitancy of the Francophone states to avoid external interference. The norm contestation analysis also captured changes to the normative environment from the introduction of norms around self-determination and the transfer of assurances over the obsolescence of conquest to the regional organisation. These institutional rules were agreements that established protocols to resist and diminish external interference norms, including the PNA 1978 and the PMAD 1981. However, the norm-building process also reveals patterns in implementation, suggesting that although member states agree to norms within the region, their preference for the outcome remains aligned with the influences of the region's cognitive priors, as displayed by the ambiguity within these normative instruments.

I further investigate these factors in the initial analysis of ECOWAS protocols related to security and democratic governance. The results reveal a contrasting approach to adopting and strengthening these protocols on an individual basis. On the one hand, member states converged on the idea of sovereign limiting norms to promote regional stability and conflict management, aiming to control the insecurity plaguing the region. However, member states are hesitant to perform similar actions to support the development of a virile democratic and governance norm in the region. The evidence of high subjectivity described in Darkwa and Attuquayefio (2014) stems from the influence of the normative environment. Hence, this chapter determined that differences in member states stemming from the governing patterns of their former colonial states may have had an impact on their norm development outcomes. For example, although the protocol on democracy and good governance represents a fundamental shift in the normative ideological framework with a complementary focus on promoting democratic ideals within the region, the norm is yet to be institutionalised (Glas and Balogun, 2020)

6. Chapter Six: Implementing the Protocol on Security Mechanism

6.1. Introduction

I extensively discussed the ECOWAS norm-building process in the previous chapter, including a description of the normative environment that supported the development of the Protocol Relating to the Mechanism for Conflict Prevention, Management, Resolution, Peacekeeping, and Security (1999). Chapter Five's analysis centred around the variation in sovereignty norms, changing normative environment, and their influence on ECOWAS member states preferences during the regional norm-building process. In Chapter Three, I argued that research into the norm-building process cannot be considered complete without observing the outcomes of member state preference, the foundational premise of this thesis puzzle, which focuses on the implementation gap. Hence, as discussed in Chapter One, this thesis aims to close the implementation gap within norm-building literature to explain the paradoxical outcomes of integration or abandonment when member states implement specific sovereign-limiting norms. Chapters Four and Five demonstrate the presence of this theorised influence from the cognitive priors of sovereignty variation and the obsolescence of conquest in the region's norm-building process, both before and after ECOWAS formation. Additionally, this thesis examined the impact of member states' preferences on the analysis of various normative outcomes. Therefore, Chapters Six and Seven are dedicated to examining the specific contradictions within the norm agreement and implementation between regional security and democratic norms. The focus is on analysing norm outcomes from implementation evaluation, which emerge from my analysis of provisions within the institutional rules that support the integration of the norm. This analysis utilises evidence based on the data gathered during this research. These include records of meetings, ratified and drafted protocols, interviews, news articles and field notes.

Therefore, to empirically explain this thesis research question *-Under what circumstances do sovereignty-threatening or limiting norms in ECOWAS display varied outcomes, and how do we account for this variation?* The following section analyses the institutional rule or protocol dedicated to integrating and guiding the implementation of the collective security norm. In the subsequent sections, I analyse the data and correlating evidence surrounding the implementation of ECOWAS collective security norms. The casual pathway analyses throughout the investigation identify three causal mechanisms that sufficiently explain the outcome of full integration observed with the collective security norms in the ECOWAS region (See Figure 3.0). The first causal mechanism explains that ECOWAS member states accepted the sovereignty-limiting norms to preserve regional stability at all costs. This extends to related security concerns, including seeking an end to conflicts, addressing humanitarian concerns, maintaining domestic security, preserving regional influence and standing in the international community, ensuring self-preservation, and protecting democratic regimes. The second causal mechanism explains that ECOWAS security norms serve to deter external interference

and aggression, as well as protect economic sovereignty. The third causal mechanism explains that security norms are substituted for democratic norms.

6.2. Adapting and Implementing Regional Security Norms

The ECOWAS security architecture is arguably the most sophisticated within the African continent. For emphasis, the OAU extensively imitates the structure in its approach to the broader African continent's security protocol (Musah, 2011). The Protocol is based on the framework of the previously adopted Non-Aggression Agreement of 1978 and the Mutual Assistance in Defence Agreement of 1981, which aimed to protect West African states from external and engineered internal aggression, and pledges to come to the aid militarily of each other in the event of such a case arising. Hence, the regional security mechanism fulfilled part of the region's head of state's decision in 1998 —A/DEC.11/10/98, Article 2 stated, "*The Executive Secretariat, in collaboration with relevant individuals, organisations and institutions shall elaborate appropriate protocols and instruments for the effective application of the Mechanism...*". (ECOWAS, 1998a). This decision was also accompanied by instructions for all member states to publish the agreement in their national gazettes within the same timeframe. The intention of the community to notify all interested parties in the region that it had assumed the primary role in decisions regarding the security and stability architecture of the region was unmistakable, and critical provisions of the mechanism consolidated this role.

Some fundamental provisions in the 1999 regional security protocol include (see Table 6.1 below) Article 1, which reinforces the member states preference for a collective approach to security and peaceful resolution of regional disputes. Article 2 details the principles of the Protocol, which include:

- (a) that economic and social development and the security of peoples and States are inextricably linked;
- (b) promotion and reinforcement of the free movement of persons, the right of residence and establishment which contribute to the reinforcement of good neighbourliness;
- (c) promotion and consolidation of a democratic government as well as democratic institutions in each Member State;
- (d) protection of fundamental human rights and freedoms and the rules of international humanitarian laws;
- (e) equality of sovereign States;
- (d) territorial integrity and political independence of Member States (ECOWAS, 1999)

Article 3 outlines the objectives of the mechanism, reinforcing the interventionist normative framework. Article 3(b) relates to Article 58 of the Revised Treaty, which in part provides for establishing "a

regional peace and security observation system and peacekeeping forces where appropriate” (Article 58: 2f). Article 3(h) operationalises this decision by providing the member states authority “to constitute and deploy a civilian and military force to maintain or restore peace within the sub-region, whenever the need arises”. The community’s adaptive depth towards regional security norms is also observed in Chapter II, Article 4, which provides for the implementation of the mechanism. The responsibility of implementing and institutionalising the norm with the full engagement of member states in its internalisation and practice rests on the following:

- (a) The Authority
- (b) The Mediation and Security Council
- (c) The Executive Secretariat
- (d) Any other institution as may be established by the Authority (ECOWAS, 1999)

In addition, provided in Article 10(a) is a list of functions for the Mediation and Security Council, which further limits member states sovereignty, including Article 10(2), which states, “Pursuant to the provisions of Article 7 of this Protocol and Paragraph 1 above, the Mediation and Security Council shall:

- (a) decide on all matters relating to peace and security;
- (b) decide and implement all policies for conflict prevention, management and resolution, peacekeeping and security;
- (c) authorise all forms of intervention and decide particularly on the deployment of political and military missions;
- (d) approve mandates and terms of reference for such missions;
- (e) review the mandates and terms of reference periodically, on the basis of evolving situations;
- (f) on the recommendation of the Executive Secretary, appoint the Special Representative of the Executive Secretary and the Force Commander

(ECOWAS, 1999)

Article 17(a) and Article 19(1a) also add a layer of protection to the interventionist norm by deterring erosion, as did Article 21 and Article 22, which were applied particularly during the interventions in Liberia and Senegal. Article 25 provides extensive initiation power and guards the norm against erosion with a comprehensive list of circumstances that should trigger the mechanism’s application. They include:

- (a) In cases of aggression or conflict in any Member State or threat thereof;
- (b) In case of conflict between two or several Member States;
- (c) 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
- (d) in the event of serious and massive violation of human rights and the rule of law.
- (e) In the event of an overthrow or attempted overthrow of a democratically elected government;
- (f) Any other situation as may be decided by the Mediation and Security Council.

(ECOWAS, 1999)

The Protocol Relating to the Mechanism for Conflict Prevention, Management, Resolution, Peacekeeping, and Security (1999) remains a unique normative framework in the structure of global regionalism. As observed above, it is the foremost in the constitutionalising of an interventionist norm in terms of scale and depth. The ECOWAS has continued to maintain the framework by responding to numerous instances relating to threats to the peace and stability of the region. Therefore, in ECOWAS, security norms are accepted and wholly integrated into the region's institutional rules. Most importantly, the interventionist norm is not observed within the region's norm contestation process, and member states' preference for collective action towards regional peace and security is demonstrated with their full implementation of the regional security protocol. In the following sections, I discuss these findings within the framework of factors introduced at the beginning of this chapter: *Deterrence from External Aggression, Norm Substitution, and Preserving Regional Stability*.

Table 6.1

Protocol Relating to the Mechanism for Conflict Prevention, Management, Resolution, Peace– Keeping and Security (1999)			
Article	Section	Regional Security Norms	Notes
1	Establishment	Territorial Integrity	Absent in Protocols relating to DGG
2	Principles	Equality of Sovereignty, Political Independence	Linked to the Protocol Relating to DGG
3	Objectives	Interventionist	Reinforces the interventionist norm established in 1998 for Security stability
4	Institutions		
5	Composition and Meetings of the Authority		
6	Functions		
7	Delegation of Power	Interventionist	Enhances the acceptance of the Interventionist norm
8	Composition of the MSC		
9	Quorum and Decisions		
10	Functions	Interference	Evidence of state subjection to external Influence
11	Meetings of the MSC		
12	Meetings at the Heads of State Level		
13	Meeting at the Ministerial Level MSC		
14	Meeting at the Ambassadorial Levels		
15	Role and Functions of the Executive Secretary		
16	Deputy Exe. Secretary		
17	Organs		
18	Defence and Security Commission		
19	DASC Function	Deterrence	Additional layer of Emphasis on the Norm
20	Composition and Mandate - Council of Elders	Diplomacy	
21	Composition of ECOMOG	Deterrence/Interventionist	Provision to enforce norm
22	Role of ECOMOG	Interventionist	Preventative intervention

Table 6.1

Protocol Relating to the Mechanism for Conflict Prevention, Management, Resolution, Peace– Keeping and Security (1999)			
Article	Section	Regional Security Norms	Notes
23	Observation and Monitoring Centre	Credible Data and Information	In conjunction with international Agencies
24	Observation and Monitoring Zones		
25	Conditions for Application	Interference/Intervention	
26	Authority to initiate	Deterrence	Extensive Initiation Power, Defend the norm against erosion
27	Procedure		
28	Composite Stand-by Units		
29	Mandates of the Force and Mission of Units		
30	Training and Preparation		
31	Observation Mission		
32	Appointment and Functions of Special Rep.		
33	Appointment and Functions of ECOMOG Comm.		
34	Chain of Command		
35	Role of Member States		
36	Funding		
37	Pre-Financing		
38	Logistical Support		
39	Remuneration and Service Conditions		
40	Responsibilities of ECOWAS	Interventionist/Interference/Deterrence	ECOWAS displays its Authority
41	Cooperation with Other Organisations		International Recognition of the Norms
42	ECOWAS Institutional Capacity for Peace Building		Limited Provision including Mechanisms to Support the Proposal
43	Peace Building During Hostilities		
44	Peace Building at the End of Hostilities		
45	Restoration of Political Authority		
46	Control of Trans Border Crime		
47	Coordination of Policies		
48	Anti-Corruption Measures		

Table 6.1			
Protocol Relating to the Mechanism for Conflict Prevention, Management, Resolution, Peace– Keeping and Security (1999)			
Article	Section	Regional Security Norms	Notes
49	Measures Against Money Laundering		
50	Control of the Proliferation of Small Arms		
51	Preventative Measures		
52	Cooperation		
53	Abrogation		
54	Rationalisation		
55	Amendments		
56	Withdrawal		
57	Entry into Force		
58	Depository Authority		

6.3. Deterrence from External Aggression

The deterrence from external aggression is a contributing causal mechanism that explains the circumstances which lead member states to adopt regional security norms. The findings demonstrate that ECOWAS member states were committed to implementing the norm because it shielded member states from external interference and other attempts by internal parties to violently challenge their state governments, either acting independently or with the influence of outside interests. In describing this causal mechanism, I highlight evidence from related data sources that demonstrates ECOWAS's dedication to the causal interactions that produce the investigated outcome. This causal mechanism aligns with the conditions presented in Chapters Four and Five regarding the influence of cognitive priors relating to sovereignty variations and the transfer of the fear of conquest to the regional organisation.

For example, the Declaration of Principles 1991 agreement set the initial tone for cooperation between member states in ECOWAS. The agreement explicitly expressed the intentions of member states to collectively challenge any external interference in the region, fostering a sense of solidarity and cooperation. The agreement stated -

DEEPLY CONSCIOUS of the rapidly changing international political and economic landscape in favour of a resurgence of economic regionalism which imposes on the Members of ECOWAS a special awareness of the need to intensify and strengthen their integration efforts and to resist all forms of foreign interference aimed at undermining their solidarity and integration efforts (ECOWAS, 1991).

This causal interaction also aligns with earlier enhancements made to the security framework of the region, including the Non-Aggression Treaty of 1978, the Mutual Assistance on Defence Protocol of 1981, and the establishment of the Standing Mediation Committee in 1990 which aimed to protect member states' political and economic sovereignty. To illustrate, even after the crisis and conflicts that led to the loss of lives and properties due to the concluded presidential and legislative elections in Côte d'Ivoire in 2000, the visiting mediation team specifically recommitted to Côte d'Ivoire that their aim was not to interfere with or breach the state's sovereignty, but to reaffirm it. Hence, the ECOWAS mediation team appealed to the government,

....to see all mediation efforts made at the level of ECOWAS and the international community, not as interference in their internal affairs, but as a true demonstration of a collective will to see peace and stability restored in Côte d'Ivoire (ECOWAS, 2000b).

The causal mechanism of deterrence also explains the adoption of the interventionist norm, which by extension meant that not only did member states individually accept not to act as a conduit for political and economic sabotage in the region, but states could defend each other in such cases whether the conflicting state is acting on its own accord or influenced by external forces (Brown, 1999). This emphasises that the fear of conquest is hardly misplaced; as I described in Chapters Four and Five, it subtly yet significantly influences the normative environment. In theoretical terms, this is also reflected in Barry Buzan's view that even with nation-states, where one might expect to find a home territory defined by the settlement pattern of the national group, no permanent delimitation occurs because of the prospect of migration and conquest" (Buzan, 2016: 89). Kovsted and Tarp (1999) also reflects that the international responses in the aftermath of the Liberian civil war pointed to ECOWAS political actors that the international community was willing to accept extreme violence as a political tool²⁶. This reality included tolerating warlords such as Charles Taylor, who challenged the state government with sustained and suspiciously well-equipped military support to destabilise Liberia sufficiently enough, or at the very least, result in an election where these warlords had the liberty to participate. Buzan and Wæver (2003) show how links to outside commercial interests can sustain any armed group with the

²⁶ Ibid, 89 Cited in Yoroms, Gani Jones, and Emmanuel Kwesi Aning (1997) 'West African regional security in the post-Liberian conflict era: Issues and perspectives. CDR working paper 7. Copenhagen: Centre for Development Research

capacity to capture and hold valuable resources (in this case, diamonds and timber), exposing the weaknesses and difficulties of peacekeeping in failed states” (Ibid: 240). These concerns reinforce the reliance on the causal mechanism of deterrence as member states recognise the potential - having previously been colonies - for external interference capable of sustaining challenges to their regimes or fostering conflict. This commitment to the outcome of deterrence translates to the state’s commitment to the ECOWAS norm-building process. Evidence of this can be attributed to the significance of the ECOMOG interventions in Liberia and Sierra Leone (discussed in Chapter Five), which aimed to demonstrate the region’s security framework design in response to future security challenges within the region.

6.3.1 Regional Security Protocol: Lessons for Guinea Bissau 1998-1999

A critical juncture during the build-up to signing the agreement on the regional security protocol, which reinforces the causal mechanism of deterrence, is the outcome of events during the ECOWAS intervention in Guinea-Bissau in 1999. Although the conflict had its deep complexities and debates surrounding the success or failure of the ECOWAS mission persist, a renewed focus on the regional organisation’s actions shows that it explicitly engineered an outcome with its involvement. One of which was to strongly define its role as the default agent for resolving conflicts in the region, thereby deterring interference. However, the ECOWAS also demonstrated the gravity of its commitment to this role by implying that member states’ regimes can be protected, irrespective of the method by which they gained power.

Guinea Bissau had been a Portuguese colony until its independence in September 1974. However, in July 1997, Bissau’s leaders led the country into the Francophone group in the West African region. Guinea-Bissau joined the West African Economic and Monetary Union (WAEMU) and adopted the CFA franc. So, when the conflict between two former independence allies, President João Bernardo Vieira and Chief of Defence Staff General Ansumane Mané, began, Guinea Bissau was thrown into what Simon Massey describes as “rival mediation efforts whose polarisation mirrored that on the battlefield” (Massey, 2012: 76). General Mané had been arrested for illegally selling arms to the Casamance insurgency in neighbouring Senegal and put on house arrest on 6 June 1998. This arrest follows an initial arrest in 1996 for an explosion which claimed the lives of several children who were at the time reportedly forced to prepare shell casings for sale to the Casamance rebels (The U.S Department of State, 1999b). During the debacle, General Mané, who had been placed on house arrest, was later pardoned and reinstated, mainly because the government did not bring charges against Mané. However, in 1998, following General Mané’s replacement by the President with Brigadier General Humbert Gomes on the same day of his arrest, General Mané accused President Vieira of being a part of the smuggling operation. This accusation set the stage for the conflict on 7 June 1998, when around

400 soldiers loyal to General Mané deployed to the capital to demand his release. The rebel soldiers also called for the resignation of President Vieira to pave the way for a transitional government and elections. As fighting broke out, General Mané declared himself the interim head of a military council, seizing the Bra army barracks and threatening an advancement into Bissau. President Vieira, who reportedly had fewer allies within the nation's military, turned to Senegal and Guinea for support. Yabi (2010) observed that Vieira's foreign support exacerbated the situation as the Senegal and Guinea contingents were largely considered external aggressors. This perception fuelled national sentiments and led to the return of several former combatants to the rebel army.

Nonetheless, Senegal and Guinea, concerned about their borders and the activities of the Casamance insurgency - *Mouvement des forces démocratiques de Casamance (MFDC)* - responded immediately to President Vieira's request. The new regional conflict had attracted other parties with diverse interests. In the beginning, all parties, including the Organisation of African Unity (OAU), the Economic Community of West African States (ECOWAS), the Comunidade Países de Língua Portuguesa (CPLP) and the European Union (EU), condemned the activities of the rebels and called for a return to constitutional government. However, the interests of these parties were significantly diverse, affecting all parties' agreement on the mediator role (Massey, 2012). The CPLP and ECOWAS eventually emerged as the two primary mediators, representing the interests of the two parties in the conflict. The ECOWAS Ministers of Foreign Affairs meeting on 7 June mandated the ECOMOG²⁷ intervene in the Guinea-Bissau conflict while endorsing the Senegal-Guinea military intervention. Also, the ministers reaffirmed support for Vieira's democratic government. They demanded all hostilities by the rebel's end while indicating that the introduction of sanctions and the use of force were all being considered. The ECOWAS formed a committee comprising seven states, including Burkina Faso, Côte d'Ivoire, The Gambia, Ghana, Guinea, Nigeria, and Senegal, as well as representatives of the OAU, to oversee its mediation efforts.

Concurrently, Portugal, through the CPLP, supposedly acting in defence of the Lusophone group, also organised a summit between 13 and 17 July 1998 and effectively resolved to intervene militarily (Massey, 2012). The CPLP also facilitated a ceasefire between government forces and the army rebels during another summit between the 25 and 27 of July 1998, where "the ceasefire plan called for formal negotiations to start within eight days, a demilitarised zone around the strategically located town of Mansoa, north of Bissau, the deployment of peacekeeping troops from Portuguese speaking countries and the opening of corridors of humanitarian aid" (IRIN-West Africa, 1998). The intervention of the CPLP, considered outside the ECOWAS framework, drew the ire of Executive Secretary Lansana

²⁷ ECOWAS (1998b) 'Agreement Defining the Operations, Composition and Status of ECOMOG on the Territory of the Republic of Guinea Bissau Between the Economic Community of West African States (ECOWAS) and the Republic Of Guinea Bissau'. Bissau: Guinea Bissau.

Kouyate, who accused Portugal of ‘neo-colonial behaviour’²⁸. Hence, in response to what were considered intervention attempts by the CPLP, the ECOWAS committee on Guinea-Bissau held its first meeting on 4 August in Accra. The meeting invited the Ministers for Foreign Affairs of Guinea-Bissau, as a special guest, to brief the meeting on the situation within the country. After consideration of the minister’s briefing, the resolution of the Committee of Seven noted that the primary objective remained the “restoration of peace and restitution of the authority of the Government of the elected President João Bernardo Vieira” (The UN, 1998, item 6). In addition, although the ECOWAS recognised the “ongoing initiatives by the Community of Portuguese-Speaking Countries in that ECOWAS Member State”²⁹, the ECOWAS noted that Guinea Bissau could not achieve lasting peace outside the broader subregional context. Therefore, the ECOWAS highlighted the need for all external parties:

.....to support regional or sub-regional African initiatives to ensure peace and security, as repeatedly stated by the United Nations. They also recalled the unwavering support of the Organization of African Unity for conflict resolution efforts undertaken by ECOWAS³⁰.

While also reaffirming that:

ECOWAS must play a primordial role in the resolution of the crisis in Guinea-Bissau. They recalled that the mandate of the ministerial Committee of Seven was to closely monitor events as they unfolded in the crisis in Guinea-Bissau³¹.

Following the ECOWAS meeting and correspondence with the United Nations to reaffirm its place amongst parties mediating within the region, Kovsted and Tarp (1999) note that “Portugal accepted ECOWAS role as mediator and provider of peacekeeping forces” (ibid: 13). The harmonisation led to the formalisation of the 25 July ceasefire (Waddington, 1998).

Notwithstanding, the rebel army, which had built on its local support by developing a more robust force, continued its offensive and occupied most parts of the state. Through the ECOWAS initiative, the Gambia held several talks with the warring parties, during which the Junta had demanded that international forces leave the country. Senegal was adamant that its forces would not be withdrawn in the presence of the CPLP influence out of concerns for its borders (Massey, 2012). The negotiations

²⁸ Pan African News Agency, ‘Ecowas Briefs Security Council on Guinea-Bissau Situation’, 15 July 1998. Cited in Massey, S. (2012) ‘Multi-faceted Mediation in the Guinea-Bissau Civil War’, *Scientia Militaria - South African Journal of Military Studies*, 32(1). doi:10.5787/32-1-129.

²⁹ Ibid, item 8.

³⁰ Ibid, item 11.

³¹ Ibid, item 12.

culminated at the ECOWAS Foreign Ministers meeting in Abuja, where parties reached a peace agreement on 1 November 1998. Parts of the agreement included, “the two sides are committed to forming this Government in the soonest possible time-frame” and reaffirming “the necessity for the speedy deployment of the ECOWAS Monitoring Group in Guinea-Bissau and agree to cooperate to this effect” (UNSC, 1998).

By February 1999, a national unity government was established with Francisco Fadul, who was nominated as Guinea-Bissau’s new Prime Minister. Although all international forces had relinquished control of the situation to ECOMOG, the West African contingent was deployed without adequate resources. The ECOMOG mandate, which also included the security of the president and prime minister due to the disarmament of the former residential guards, was in peril. Yabi (2010) notes that, while soliciting resources to execute its mandate, on 6 May 1999, Mané’s forces carried out an offensive that disarmed Vieira’s soldiers. Vieira was sent into exile. The ECOWAS, visibly disappointed, condemned the activities of the rebels and, a little under five months later, withdrew the ECOMOG troops from the country altogether. As Alain Dejammt suggested while addressing the United Nations in the aftermath of the Guinea-Bissau crisis, the UN should increase the urgency of its response and adequately prepare for such conflicts in the future. Stressing that the Council “should invite regional representatives for consultations at key stages. Noting that what “had been done for the Economic Community of West African States’ Monitoring Observer Group (ECOMOG) in Sierra Leone and Guinea Bissau had not been enough. Preference should be given to peacekeeping organisations to make financing obligatory, rather than voluntary” (The UN, 1999).

The ECOWAS challenge to the Portuguese, even as far as labelling their actions post-colonial, was aimed at securing a withdrawal of their involvement in the crisis or, at the very least, to consider the ECOWAS the primary agent in the negotiations. The forceful rebel change in government was not a significant area of concern compared to the control over the perceived international interference. For emphasis, although the parties in the Guinea Bissau crisis were the country’s civilian President João Bernardo Vieira³² and a rebel leader, Brigadier-General Ansumane Mané, the ECOWAS ignored Mané’s overthrow of the civilian leader and even accepted to protect Mané’s government from future challenges with his signing and ratification of the regional security protocol immediately after his government consolidated power. Another evidence of this deterrence within a similar timeframe can also be found in the Report of the Inaugural Meeting of the Regional Defence and Security Commission, held on 19-20 July 2000 in Accra, Ghana. During the meeting, the Ghanaian Chief of Defence, Lt. General B. K. Akafia, while addressing the circumstances leading to the establishment of ECOMOG a decade ago, advised on the consolidation of the success of ECOMOG in the sub-region, stating that:

³² President João Bernardo Vieira of Guinea Bissau was a former military leader, and coup plotter turned civilian president after the 1994 elections

This is in response to the marginalisation of the African continent by Europe and other developed countries, leading to the imperativeness of the development of the region's own defence and security mechanism to protect its development (ECOWAS, 2000c: No. 7).

A recent report suggests that the causal mechanism of deterrence retains its potency, similar to that targeted during the 1990s. The 46th ECOWAS Mediation Security Council meeting at the ministerial level. The ECOWAS ministers, while operationalising the Defence and Security Committee to tame the widespread insecurity fuelled by transnational organised crime, stated that:

The situation is detrimental not only to the obligation to ensure national security and the capacity to preserve its independence but also to the need to protect the territory, its citizens, sovereignty, resources and its interests against any interference, danger or threat from within or abroad. This is even more relevant as the meaning of security has broadened beyond security and defence to include other sectors closely linked to the stability of a country, such as social, economic, political, environmental, cultural sectors, etc. (ECOWAS, 2021e: 2).

The ECOMOG deployment in Liberia, Senegal, and Guinea-Bissau shows member states willingness to accept an interventionist norm that limits their state's sovereignty but also transfers substantial powers to ECOWAS. These conflict conditions, which led up to the adoption of the 1999 regional security protocol, also reveal that irrespective of the outcome, ECOWAS member states considered the organisation a deterrent framework against internal and intra-regional aggression, external aggression and foreign interference, even in cases involving shared normative international systems, such as the UN, former colonial powers like France, and other powerful states, irrespective of the circumstances. Hence, to fulfil its commitment, member states deepened the implementation of the regional security norm to secure this fundamental role that ECOWAS discharges on behalf of the states.

6.3.2 Justifying External Intervention: ECOWAS modus operandi

Another extension to the causal mechanism of deterrence relates to post-regional security protocol considerations, which demonstrates that while ECOWAS provides a significant deterrent against interference, it also shows that ECOWAS can justify external actors breaching the sovereignty of its member states. In the analysis below, the ECOWAS counter-signals its singular responsibility to offer legitimacy to any interference, especially militarily, in member states where the need arises.

The analysis of subsequent interventions after the 1999 regional security protocol had similar conditions. Legitimacy was always granted retroactively, partly because ECOWAS always responded first to determine the direction of mediation efforts regardless of other parties' interests in the conflict. On 19 September 2002, a rebellion against the government of President Gbagbo began, with strategically executed military offences in three Ivorian cities, including the capital, Abidjan. The rebellion carried out by the group known as Patriotic Movement of Côte d'Ivoire (Mouvement Patriotique de Côte d'Ivoire, or MPC) was in response to recent attempts by President Gbagbo to demobilise a section of the military earlier recruited by the ex-president Guéi. The rebels cited mistreatment by the government, which they argued was ethnically motivated (El-Khawas and Anyu, 2014). France, who already had a military presence in the Ivory Coast, responded three days later with Operation Licorne at the request of the Ivorian President, successfully dispelling and stopping the rebels from reaching Abidjan (Ero, 2002). Nigeria immediately sent three warplanes to support the Ivorian military in fending off the rebel forces. Additionally, in conjunction with Ghana, they indicated their readiness to provide further military assistance. However, neither these regional responses nor military preparedness had been formally sanctioned by the ECOWAS (Carroll, 2002).

On the part of the French, the initial objective of their military incursion was to protect the large French community in the country, which was estimated to be 20,000. So, although the French were parties to the conflict at the initial invitation of President Gbagbo, they were very reluctant to be involved because they considered it an internal matter. However, most importantly, they required legitimacy. Hence, the French turned to the ECOWAS within days to "take the lead in political mediation efforts and work to swiftly deploy a regional peacekeeping force (Recchia, 2020: 272). The ECOWAS-led, French-supported efforts formed the primary framework which mediated the Ivorian crisis, with an agreement to deploy a peacekeeping force on 29 September 2002 (ECOWAS, 2002). By 17 October 2002, the parties had secured a ceasefire. At the behest of ECOWAS, the French agreed to temporarily undertake the preservation and enforcement of the ceasefire agreement until ECOWAS overcame its logistical challenges for deployment (Novosseloff, 2018). However, following the repeated delays from the ECOWAS's contingent made up of representatives from Benin, Ghana, Niger, Togo and Senegal, another wave of attacks from the rebels, disagreements with President Gbagbo and a nationalist backlash against foreign (mainly French) troops, France sought legitimacy for its Licorne forces from the United Nations. (Schiel et al., 2017; Charbonneau, 2008; Dobbins et al., 2008).

With an expanded force of nearly 4000 troops augmented by two mobile gendarmerie squadrons, vital air detachments, and naval support deployed at the Gulf of Guinea, Operation Licorne maintained the fragile peace and engaged the rebels and government forces throughout the rest of the year. The 1,500 ECOWAS forces arrived in January 2003 and continued operations alongside the French forces. However, the French search for legitimacy still met several bottlenecks, mainly due to its frosty

relationship with the USA at the time concerning their opposing stands on Iraq. Therefore, the French co-opted the ECOWAS and other African parties following the successful Linas-Marcoussis talk on 24 January to increase pressure on the UN for the legitimacy of the military operation. On 4 February 2003, the Security Council endorsed the Linas-Marcoussis Agreement in Resolution 1464 (UNSCR 1464, 2003), legitimising the ECOWAS and French troops and followed that with a 13 May Resolution 1479, establishing a UN Mission in Côte d'Ivoire (MINUCI) aimed at assuming complete control of the monitoring the execution of the peace agreement ((UNSCR 1479, 2003; Novosseloff, 2018).

Similarly, in Mali, ECOWAS maintained primary mediation during its crisis in March 2012. The regional organisation deployed diplomacy, the use of sanctions and military intervention in conjunction with the AU, to force talks and agreements between the warring parties ((Hagberg and Körling, 2012; Wing, 2013; Arieff, 2013; Bøås and Torheim, 2013)³³. As the conflict escalated, in July 2013, the UN Security Council deployed the Multidimensional Integrated Stabilization Mission in Mali (MINUSMA) (UN Press, 2013). The MINUSMA forces replaced the AFISMA, a predominantly ECOWAS-led African peacekeeping force, which had operated alongside the French forces deployed earlier in January 2013 to quell the rising violence. The intervention in the Gambia was a shorter exercise, but the intensity and execution displayed the full implementation capabilities of the regional security protocol. President Yahya Jammeh, who on 2 December 2016 accepted defeat after a tightly contested election, reversed the decision to step down on 9 December and proceeded to re-consolidate power. This resulted in a rise in tension within the Gambian political environment and led to condemnations from ECOWAS, the African Union (AU), and the United Nations (UN). In a surprising turn of events, the UNSC unanimously adopted the decision by the ECOWAS and AU to recognise Adama Barrow as President-Elect by resolution 2337. Barrow was sworn into office at the Gambian embassy in Dakar, Senegal, on 19 January 2017 (Williams, 2017). ECOWAS and the AU exerted significant coercive pressure on Jammeh, positioning almost 7000 personnel of the ECOWAS Military Intervention in the Gambia (ECOMIG) troops at the Gambian border (Akwei, 2019; DGAP, 2016). With the odds glaringly against Jammeh and the entire international and regional community aligned in support of his ouster, an exile agreement was reached with ECOWAS on 21 January 2017 (UN, 2017; Jones et al., 2017).

This related aspect to the causal mechanism of deterrence acknowledges ECOWAS as the primary institution for justifying any external intervention within its member states. This is also emphasised within the collective security agreement, recognising an extension beyond protecting member states from any form of interference to also being responsible for legitimising the action. This condition is ingrained in Article 3(h) part of the “objectives of the mechanism”, which states without qualification

³³ Isiguzo and Oyedele, 2013; BBC News, 2012; 2013

that ECOWAS shall “.... constitute and deploy a civilian and military force to maintain or restore peace within the sub-region, whenever the need arises;” (ECOWAS Protocol, 1999). Notwithstanding the recognition and commitment to the UN Charter Article 53(1), which states:

The Security Council shall, where appropriate, utilise such regional arrangements or agencies for enforcement action under its authority. But no enforcement action shall be taken under regional arrangements or by regional agencies without the authorisation of the Security Council, with the exception of measures against any enemy state (UN Charter, 1945).

The interventionist norm for ECOWAS fundamentally alters the sovereignty of member states. It is not limited to multinational or multilateral intervention, as it is inherently legitimate and cannot be considered an act of external aggression. This condition provides an enhanced understanding, particularly in the context of the Liberian intervention, which began with the decision of a singular country - Nigeria and occurred outside the UN mandate. It also demonstrates that protection from interference takes precedence, and states transfer sovereignty specifically for this reason, underscoring their full implementation of the norm.

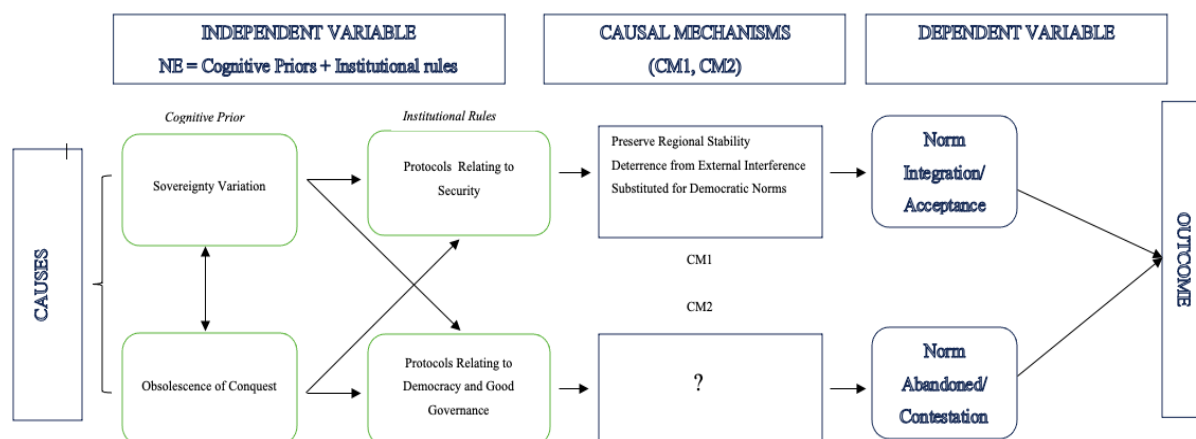


Figure 3.0 Causal Pathway for ECOWAS Regional Security Norms Outcomes

6.4. Norm Substitution

Since adopting interventionist norms for the West African region, the normative environment has operationalised the outcome by substituting security norms for those related to democracy and good governance. This contributing causal mechanism explains a circumstance where the ECOWAS integration of regional security norms serves as a substitute for other norms, some of which are primary norms but may have become entangled in the contestation process. In such instances, security norms are considered sufficient to extend towards the ECOWAS political environment, where the interventionist norm acts as a deterrent or the unchallenged authority of the regional organisation. Hence, member states' heads of state subject all institutions or normative mechanisms under its framework. This condition suggests that the actions of member states of ECOWAS demonstrate that the region's security architecture serves as a framework for maintaining peace and stability while also facilitating the rebuilding of democratic institutions, which are the primary sources of conflicts and the breakdown of governance processes. Therefore, the causal mechanism leads to the outcome of implementing security norms as a substitute for integrating democratic norms in the region. The observed impact is that member states engage in behavioural contestation without incurring reputational costs, primarily because norms surrounding democracy remain in contention, and the implementation of security norms overshadows the outcomes of violating democratic and good governance norms within the normative environment. This underlines the projection of regional insecurities, which is only a consequence; the proximate cause is the behavioural contestation to the norms of democracy and good governance.

This thesis investigation reveals a substantial amount of evidence on the substitution of norms within the pattern of agreements entered into by ECOWAS especially for managing conflicts. For example, the ECOWAS monitored agreements on ceasefire and cessation of hostilities between the Government of the Republic of Liberia, the Liberians United for Reconciliation and Democracy, and the Movement for Democracy in Liberia. Item (8) of the agreement on political reconciliation encompasses issues such as the restructuring of security forces (Security Sector Reforms), human rights concerns, humanitarian issues, socio-economic reforms, the creation of a democratic space, the formation of a transitional government, and elections, all of which form the basis for a ceasefire. However, while the agreement lists out actions to be considered ceasefire violations in item (9), including sabotage, hostage taking, harassment, attacks, seizure, importations and the resupply of arms, hostile propaganda, military movement within 20 kilometres of contact lines and recruitments of combatant, there is palpable silence within the document regarding the disruption of the democratic space. The agreement clearly expresses that the actions of parties which sabotage the democratic process are not considered a violation (ECOWAS, 2003a). This implies that security guarantees were substituted for the democratic process.

The Executive Secretary of ECOWAS echoes this pattern of norm substitution in the following statement:

...the ECOWAS has a protocol on the mechanism for conflict prevention, management and resolution, peacekeeping and security which defines the measures to adopt in order to prevent and manage conflicts like the one which occurred in Côte d'Ivoire (ECOWAS, 2003c).

This consolidation approach overshadows the implementation outcomes from previous engagement with the security protocol. For context, during this mediation in Côte d'Ivoire, several member states in ECOWAS had still not ratified the Protocol on Democracy and Good Governance, adopted in 2001 (ECOWAS, 2003c, item 19ix). Hence, ECOWAS relied solely on its security mechanism to mediate conflicts associated with the non-implementation of democratic norms in Côte d'Ivoire. This inevitably led to the deployment of ECOWAS troops due to the persistence of the disagreements. In hindsight, some ECOWAS representatives have criticised this act of norm substitution. For instance, in 2010, during the meeting of the mediation council at the ministerial level, Nigeria's Minister of Foreign Affairs and the then Chairperson of the Mediation Council, Ojo Maduekwe, lamented that:

... the resources meant for development and strengthening of governance institutions to consolidate democracy, were being diverted into conflict management because of the protracted crises in Member states, particularly in Guinea, Guinea Bissau and Niger. In this regard, he stressed the obligation of ECOWAS to assist Guinea and Niger conduct free, transparent and credible elections, and to ensure that Cote d'Ivoire organises the repeatedly postponed presidential elections before the end of 2010. He called for measures to build and strengthen governance institutions, legislative autonomy and internal party democracy in Member states (ECOWAS, 2010: Item 6).

Coincidentally, during the same engagement, the President of the ECOWAS Commission, Mohamed Ibn Chambas, had touted that no violent conflicts had occurred in the region since August 2009 and that there were also encouraging levels in the consolidation of democracy while simultaneously decrying "regrettable reversals in the democratisation process and worsening security environment particularly in Guinea Bissau and Niger" (ECOWAS, 2010: Item 16). Chambas's statement exemplifies the norm substitution impeccably in its quixotic transfusion of security gains as an outcome of the region's pattern of implementing democratic norms.

For emphasis, the causal mechanism of norm substitution relies mainly on the Mediation and Security Council. This is highlighted in H.E Jean-Claude Kassi Brou, President of the ECOWAS Commission,

remarks during the 48th meeting of the MSC at the Ministers' level. The ECOWAS President acknowledges the role of the MSC in promoting peace and security while recognising the failings of ECOWAS in deepening democratic and good governance norms, yet suggests that ECOWAS continues to rely on the MSC to improve the framework.

.... commended the strong political will of the Heads of State and Government, as well as the solidarity among member states which has contributed to the appreciable progress made in the peace and stability of the region. He however expressed concern that elections remain one of the causes of tension in the region, largely due to mistrust among political stakeholders and called on the Mediation and Security Council to proffer recommendations and appropriate measures to enhance stability in the region". (ECOWAS, 2018c: item 16).

The causal mechanism of norm substitution is less arbitrary when ECOWAS mediation leads to the transfer of regional security norms to the internal political situations in member states. For instance, when mediating to resolve a political situation such as coups or the scuttle of the democratic process. The initial assessment usually indicates behavioural contestation by the member state, resulting in the implementation of democratic and good governance norms in patterns that are prone to abandonment. However, ECOWAS responses consistently display explicit norm substitutions, which traditionally include calling for a sustained dialogue to reach agreements between the two sides to the conflict while advising against the further breakdown of law and order. Behind this traditional ECOWAS approach is the inordinate coercion from Article 45 of the Protocol on Security Mechanism, acting as a deterrent. More importantly, it overshadows any normative framework necessary to protect the erosion of democratic norms, which has been linked to two observable regional consequences.

First, the substitution of security norms for democratic norms outcome explains the protracted conflicts throughout the region. For instance, parties agreed to hold scheduled local and communal elections in the Inter-Guinean Political Agreement of 12 October 2016, which was monitored by the Economic Community of West African States (ECOWAS). By 2018, the election results were still being contested by the opposition, resulting in further violence. The substitution of democratic norms meant that negotiations, as in the case of Guinea (ECOWAS, 2018a, item 16), could be indefinite if ECOWAS maintained a bearable level of internal conflict through its deterrence with the interventionist norm. Hence, on the part of the member state actors who challenge the region's democratic and good governance norms, maintaining the resulting crisis below the threshold for invoking intervention can sustain their contestation. In Table 6.2 below, I present the consistent evidence of norm substitution within ECOWAS mediation outcomes, specifically in instances where there have been forceful changes in government between 1963 and 2023.

The second consequence of norm substitution that places more emphasis on implementing security norms as opposed to the democratic process within the state is evidence of ECOWAS maintaining its customary position, which involves engaging in multiple mediations with different member states simultaneously at any given time due to its substitution of a standardised normative framework for democratic and good governance norms. For example, in 2017, following the deterioration of the political and social situation in Togo, the Council of Ministers highlighted the instructions of the Authority that:

President of the commission to take all necessary measures to provide support for the H.E Nana Addo Dankwa Akufo-Addo and H.E Prof Alpha Conde and make recommendations to be submitted at the next summit of the ECOWAS Authority of Heads of State and Government. It further called on all Togolese political and civil society stakeholders to refrain from any act of violence or action that may threaten peace and stability in Togo and the region (ECOWAS, 2018b: Item 43).

However, the Authority's position had been prolonged and failed to mitigate against further breakdown of law and order. This protracted outcome indicated the overlapping of security norms over the implementation outcome of democratic norms in Togo. In addition, the ECOWAS approach meant that security norms could not be contravened amid mediation, but democratic norms did not receive such treatment. Simultaneously, ECOWAS responded to the Guinean conflict by supporting the negotiations and monitoring "... the political situation of the country to prevent the deterioration and encourage political party actors to embrace dialogue for peace and national cohesion (ECOWAS, 2018: Item 18ii)". At the same time, ECOWAS was also adopting a roadmap in Guinea-Bissau towards resolving the protracted political impasse with the appointment of Aristides Gomes as consensus Prime Minister on 18 April 2018. In addition to negotiating for elections to be held on 18 November 2018, after the Council had noted that there was a slow pace towards the implementation of the chronology of the electoral calendar (ECOWAS, 2018a: item 20-21).

Table 6.2						
Outcome of ECOWAS Mediation Following Forceful Change to Government						
S/N	Year/Month	Member State	Chronology of Events	Group	Regime	Transition Agreement
1	1963/01	Togo	Coup d'état	Mix	Civilian	Military
2	1966/01	Nigeria	Coup d'état	Anglophone	Civilian	Military
3	1966/02	Ghana	Coup d'état	Anglophone	Civilian	Military
4	1966/07	Nigeria	Coup d'état	Anglophone	Military	Military
5	1967/01	Togo	Coup d'état	Mix	Civilian	Military
6	1967/03	Sierra Leone	1st Coup d'état	Anglophone	Civilian	Military
7	1967/03	Sierra Leone	2nd Coup d'état	Anglophone	Military	Military
8	1968/11	Mali	Coup d'état	Francophone	Civilian	Military
9	1972/01	Ghana	Coup d'état	Anglophone	Civilian	Military
10	1974/04	Niger	Coup d'état	Francophone	Civilian	Military
11	1975/07	Nigeria	Coup d'état	Anglophone	Military	Military
12	1976/02	Nigeria	Failed Coup d'état	Anglophone	Military	Military
13	1977/01	Benin	Failed Coup d'état	Francophone	Civilian	Civilian
14	1980/04	Liberia	Coup d'état	American	Civilian	Military
15	1980/11	Guinea-Bissau	Coup d'état	Lusophone	Civilian	Military
16	1981/08	Gambia	Coup d'état	Anglophone	Civilian	Civilian
17	1981/12	Ghana	Coup d'état	Anglophone	Civilian	Military
18	1983/12	Nigeria	Coup d'état	Anglophone	Civilian	Military
19	1984/04	Guinea	Coup d'état	Francophone	Civilian	Military
20	1985/08	Nigeria	Coup d'état	Anglophone	Military	Military
21	1985/11	Liberia	Failed Coup d'état	American	Civilian	Civilian
22	1986/09	Togo	Failed Coup d'état	Mix	Military	Military
23	1987/03	Sierra Leone	Failed Coup d'état	Anglophone	Civilian	Civilian
24	1987/10	Burkina Faso	Coup d'état	Francophone	Military	Military
25	1989/09	Burkina Faso	Failed Coup d'état	Francophone	Military	Military
26	1990/04	Nigeria	Failed Coup d'état	Anglophone	Military	Military
27	1991/03	Mali	Coup d'état	Francophone	Military	Civilian
28	1992/04	Sierra Leone	Coup d'état	Anglophone	Civilian	Military
29	1993/11	Nigeria	Coup d'état	Anglophone	Civilian	Military
30	1994/07	Gambia	Coup d'état	Anglophone	Civilian	Military
31	1994/01	Niger	Coup d'état	Francophone	Civilian	Military
32	1999/04	Niger	Coup d'état	Francophone	Military	Military
33	1999/12	ivory Coast	Coup d'état	Francophone	Civilian	Military
34	2003/09	Guinea-Bissau	Coup d'état	Lusophone	Civilian	Military
35	2003/10	Burkina Faso	Failed Coup d'état	Francophone	Civilian	Civilian
36	2005/02	Togo	Coup d'état	Mix	Civilian	Civilian *

Table 6.2						
Outcome of ECOWAS Mediation Following Forceful Change to Government						
S/N	Year/Month	Member State	Chronology of Events	Group	Regime	Transition Agreement
37	2008/12	Guinea	Coup d'état	Francophone	Civilian	Military
38	2010/02	Niger	Coup d'état	Francophone	Civilian	Military
39	2011/07	Niger	Failed Coup d'état	Francophone	Civilian	Civilian
40	2012/03	Mali	Coup d'état	Francophone	Civilian	Military
41	2014/11	Burkina Faso	Uprising	Francophone	Civilian	Civilian
42	2014/12	Gambia	Failed Coup d'état	Anglophone	Civilian	Civilian
43	2015/09	Burkina Faso	Failed Coup d'état	Francophone	Civilian	Civilian
44	2020/08	Mali	Coup d'état	Francophone	Civilian	Military
45	2021/03	Niger	Failed Coup d'état	Francophone	Civilian	Civilian
46	2021/05	Mali	Coup d'état	Francophone	Civilian	Military
47	2021/09	Guinea	Coup d'état	Francophone	Civilian	Military
48	2022/01	Burkina Faso	Coup d'état	Francophone	Civilian	Military
49	2022/09	Burkina Faso	Coup d'état	Francophone	Military	Military
50	2023/07	Niger	Coup d'état	Francophone	Civilian	Military
51	2023/07	Sierra Leone	Failed Coup d'état	Anglophone	Civilian	Civilian
52	2023/09	Burkina Faso	Coup d'état	Francophone	Military	Military
53	2023/11	Sierra Leone	Failed Coup d'état	Anglophone	Civilian	Civilian
54	2023/12	Guinea-Bissau	Failed Coup d'état	Francophone	Civilian	Civilian
* Military incursion was aimed at installing a preferred civilian government						

The Guinean experience is better contextualised by a senior ECOWAS official who, while responding to the question about member states' norm substitution, recounted an incident to confirm this factor:

You have even seen the challenge in Guinea. Before the elections of Alpha Condé in 2020, the people were crying out, shouting that they did not want a third term; they did not want him back. ECOWAS visited; by then, there were dead bodies everywhere. The representatives of the Authority went into the presidential villa, met with Alpha Condé, came out, and conducted elections. They also came for an observer mission and declared the elections free and fair.

Some months later, Mamadu Dumbuya [*in a coup d'état*]³⁴ took over from his boss. The representatives of the ECOWAS Authority still revisited him. However, this time, even before

³⁴ Emphasis mine.

they could talk, Mamadu Dumbuya sent them packing. Mamadu Dumbuya accused the Authority of being the same group who came here, while citizens complained that they did not want a third term of Alpha Condé, saying, “We do not want this kind of a perpetual leader, yet you gave support to Alpha Condé because he was a component of ECOWAS. Now we have solved our problems ourselves; you are, in fact, the same people trying to make sure we return to our old ways” (Interviewee, 010A)³⁵.

In some cases, the consequence of transferring regional security norms to internal political situations reveals a discordant normative environment between the region and its member states. In Togo’s instance, the transfer of regional security norms to its internal conflicts did not hinder challenges to ECOWAS’s approach of substituting democratic norms. In response, the populace rejected the mediation, and the opposition coalition groups organised a series of anti-government demonstrations,

...demanding the restoration of the 1992 constitution, which has a presidential term limit and a two-round voting system, electoral reforms, voting rights for Togo nationals outside the country. The demonstrators have been met with repression by the security agencies, which led to the loss of lives and many injuries among both demonstrators and members of the security services in Lomé and Sokodé (ECOWAS, 2018b: Item 40).

Also, the opposition challenged ECOWAS for abandoning the implementation of democratic norms, as they

.... rejected a draft bill proposed by the Government arguing that it did not retroactively address the issue of the mandate of President Faure Gnassingbe, who is in his third term of presidency. They also argued that the proposed bill was not in line with the 2006 Global Political Agreement (GPA), nor the 1992 constitution that guarantees, among others, a two-term presidential term limit” (ECOWAS, 2018b: Item 41).

President Faure Gnassingbe prevailed in that contest, regardless of the government’s questionable implementation of democratic norms, but mainly because the security and stability of the region were preserved below the intervention threshold and qualified by ECOWAS as having maintained the required democratic outcome.

Other related consequences of norm substitution include the preservation of subtleties in the outcome, as the superficial integration of democratic and good governance norms is often flaunted rhetorically.

³⁵ Interview 01, Senior ECOWAS Official, October 2023, Abuja

For instance, H.E. Geoffrey Onyema, the Minister of Foreign Affairs for the Federal Republic of Nigeria, suggested that:

“.... despite the numerous challenges confronting the region since the last council meeting, significant milestones has been made in efforts to strengthen democracy, peace and stability in the region, including the continuous efforts to carry out political, constitutional and security reforms to improving governance, consolidate democracy and increase political participation in the spirit of tolerance and inclusivity” (ECOWAS, 2018c: Item 11).

In addition, as touted within the Council, “in all ECOWAS Member States, with the exception of the Gambia where a new constitution is yet to be adopted, the constitutional provision limit for presidential terms is two” (ECOWAS, 2021d: Item 29). These rhetorical claims of progress, often found within reports and other official correspondences, ensure that ECOWAS can continue to uphold the importance of security and stability within the region while accommodating the behavioural contestation, which assures the engaging member states of avoiding reputational costs.

Also, the consequence of norm substitution has inadvertently led to more stringent negotiating terms from parties with unconstitutional claiming power. Member states realise that ECOWAS intervention is exclusively tied to regional stability, and norm substitution guarantees their retention of power if stability is maintained. At the same time, member states can extend the period for returning to democratic governance. This has been a recent source of concern to ECOWAS, due in part because, with norm substitution, ECOWAS cannot individually detach either norm implementation outcome. For example, in Burkina Faso, the first military coup occurred in January 2022. In line with previous observations, the ECOWAS did ensure that the security and stability were maintained below the intervention threshold but also “.... reiterated its concern about the duration of the transition period set at 36 months in a communique issued on 25th March from the Burkinabé authorities (ECOWAS, 2022a: Item 19 and 21). Within a similar timeframe, in Mali, although the ECOWAS had achieved an acceptable level of stability in the security situation, “.... the Council recalled that the ECOWAS Authority of Heads of State and Government, after several attempts to find an agreement on the transition timetable, was left with no option but to impose additional and far-reaching sanctions on Mali on 9th January 2022 to ensure a swift return to constitutional order” (Ibid: Item 23). Simultaneously, in Guinea, the report indicates that,

Council was informed that the Transition Authorities of Guinea have adopted a 36-month transition timetable before restoring constitutional order. However, this adoption has not been without upheaval as the country’s political stakeholders have expressed their opposition to the 36-month timetable, in line with Article 77 of the Charter, which stipulates that the duration of

the transition shall be determined by consensus between the CNRD and the country's stakeholders (Ibid, Item 28).

In same year, the Burkina Faso coup perpetuated by the Patriotic Movement for the Restoration and Safeguard of the Nation (Mouvement Patriotique pour la Sauvegarde et la Restauration, MPSR) on 24th January 2022, under the leadership of Lieutenant-Colonel Paul-Henri Sandaogo Damiba, did not yield any agreement for the return to democratic Government after several initiatives by the ECOWAS including holding of five (5) Extraordinary Summits and numerous follow-up missions by the mediators to Burkina Faso.

The causal mechanism of norm substitution leads to the outcome of member states' preference for particular sovereignty-limiting norms - collective security. Hence, substituting security for democratic norms protects member states from interference, even in cases where the absence of democratic norms constitutes the proximate cause of conflicts. This has also led to the rhetorical platitudes of democratic and good governance norms, the prolongation of the region's conflicts, and the simultaneous maintenance of multiple mediations by ECOWAS within member states.

6.5. Perseverance of Regional Stability

The third contributing causal mechanism that explains the circumstances leading to the outcome of the complete integration of the security norm is the preservation of regional stability. By extension, this causal mechanism also explains the protection or aggression against a member state government, primarily to prevent a crisis from engulfing the region or to achieve the aims of ECOWAS. Although most emphasis on ECOWAS action has been related to regional stability, I maintain that member states' regimes also enjoy similar levels of protection, irrespective of their democratic status. However, ECOWAS coercion exists for and against these states. Hence, as member state governments are considered suitable by the ECOWAS, they receive protection, validity and recognition of compliance with standardised norms. However, ECOWAS has also acquired the power to act against any government's interest.

For example, the contention between Yahaya Jammeh of Gambia and the ECOWAS illustrates the profundity of this causal mechanism. This thesis investigation finds evidence of aggression against the Jammeh government at specific points during the crisis. First, the Gambia situation trended in uncharted territory, and ECOWAS utilised coercive diplomacy (Williams, 2017) to assert its interests in the Gambian regime. Following President Jammeh's decision to challenge the election results that saw his ouster, the ECOWAS, in a memorandum of the Thirty-Seventh Ordinary meeting of the Mediation Council at the Ministerial Level, adopted the following measures;

- a) Strongly condemn the attempt to subvert the will of the Gambian people and emphasise That President-Elect Adama Barrow must assume office on the 18 January 2017, in line with the Gambian constitution.
- b) Welcome the deployment of a high-level mission of ECOWAS Heads of State to engage all stakeholders in order to reach an agreement that would endure that President Jammeh is amenable to, a peaceful exit.
- g) In the event of a breakdown or, deadlock in finding an amicable solution, to invoke the application of Article 45 of the ECOWAS Protocol on Democracy and Good Governance and to convey to the African Union to invoke Article 23 (4) of the AU Charter on Democracy, Elections and Governance. (ECOWAS, 2016b: Item 65)

William (2017) introduces a fundamental analytical component that better demonstrates the preferences of heads of state regarding the implementation of such an unprecedented threat to a sitting president in ECOWAS, particularly for actions that fall well within the realm of expressing democratic norms. William acknowledges that the decisions by the ECOWAS Authority decision against Jammeh was also personal,

Jammeh was also widely despised by the national publics and the region's heads of state alike. The authorities in Senegal, Gambia's neighbour, were particularly critical of Jammeh, in part because of his long-standing support to rebels in that country's southern Casamance region. Senegal was probably, therefore, the leading proponent of threatening and using military force if required (Ibid).

Again, upon reflection of the position of the ECOWAS towards Jammeh, it reveals more than the protection of democratic norms. The ECOWAS also subdued the relevance of the democratic process in their opposition to Jammeh. For instance, although President Jammeh had earlier conceded the loss of the election the previous week when faced with new evidence of irregularities, he was still within his constitutional right to reject the results (BBC, 2016; Farge, 2016). While it is worth noting that the Independent Electoral Commission had reviewed the claims of irregularities and determined that they were not significant enough to sway the result, the ECOWAS had already determined beforehand for Jammeh to leave office by force if necessary. This ECOWAS approach of forceful eviction, even when it had recognised Jammeh's claims of irregularities as legitimate and stated that their intentions to "review the claim of the Government of the Gambia about alleged errors committed by the Independent Electoral Commission (IEC) in revising the results of the presidential election". (ECOWAS, 2016a: Item 65f). Hence, ECOWAS acted outside the framework of standard democratic norms. Having already diminished Jammeh's rights, curbing whatever support he may have had while sending unmistakable signals that he would not remain in office. ECOWAS's decision was validated and

commended by the AU and the UN Security Council on 21 December 2016 (UN Press, 2016), thereby enhancing ECOWAS's position and demonstrating international recognition of the entrenchment of its security norms. As mentioned above, the protection is not limited to democratic regimes. In other cases, similar patterns emerge for what can also be considered the preservation of undemocratic regime patterns. For example, during the March extraordinary session of the Community Parliament, H.E Mr Moustapha Cissé Lo explained that:

.... the extraordinary session was being held in a regional context marked by successful presidential elections in Nigeria and Senegal. The results of these elections have enshrined the re-election of H.E Muhammadu Buhari as the President of the Federal Republic of Nigeria and H.E Macky Sall as the President of the Federal Republic of Senegal. He congratulated them for their resounding victories, which strengthened democracy in our subregion. He said that the ECOWAS Parliament participated in the observation missions of the different elections. He then called on the political stakeholders to abide by the outcome of the elections in accordance with the provision of the ECOWAS Protocol on Democracy and Good Governance (Item 9) (ECOWAS Parliament, 2019).

Mr Moustapha's description of the democratic process that returned President Buhari and Sall to power was far from free and fair. Instead, irregularities marred them (see Human Rights Watch, 2019; BBC, 2019; Aljazeera, 2019; The Guardian, 2019). As observed in the evidence, ECOWAS, based on the importance of regional stability, grants recognition to member states for compliance with democratic norms that meet its accepted standards of fairness. Hence, H.E Mr Moustapha Cissé Lo's call for the international community and all parties to accept the election results following its certification as free and fair by the regional arbiter.

This thesis also identified other instances where the causal mechanism explains ECOWAS' defence of undemocratic governments. For instance, the standard of the previously conducted legislative elections held on 25 March and 19 April 2020, organised by the Malian government under President Ibrahim Boubacar Keita, was challenged by democratic norm agents. These agents included civil society associations and movements such as the Front for the Safeguard of Democracy (FSD) and the Movement Espoir Mali Koura (EMK), under an umbrella called "Mouvement du 5 juin-Rassemblement des Forces Patriotiques (M5-RFP). They jointly called for the resignation of President Ibrahim Boubacar Keita due to his alleged violation of democratic norms. In response, the ECOWAS ministerial mission proposed a government of national unity and the organisation of re-run elections for disputed legislative positions to defend President Keita's place in the government. The stakeholders rejected ECOWAS's attempts to validate the regime and its behaviour. Instead, the protesters sustained their calls for President Keita's resignation through further protests. These sustained differences led to other

consultations, including the delegation of a Special Envoy and Mediator from 15 to 19 July 2020, led by H.E. Goodluck Jonathan. During this period, stakeholders accepted a roadmap to end the crisis. However, the ECOWAS was forced to defend the undemocratic government of President Keita once again when the lingering political impasse was taken advantage of by the Malian military in a coup –

.... on 18 August 2020, President Ibrahim Keita and his government resigned after being taken by mutinous soldiers. ECOWAS issued two Communiqués calling for the restoration of constitutional order in Mali, in conformity with the ECOWAS Supplementary Protocol on Democracy on Good Governance. Furthermore, the Chair of the ECOWAS Authority convened a virtual Extraordinary Summit on the situation in Mali on 20 August 2020 (ECOWAS 2020, Items 28).

Realising after a thorough review that consultations did not improve the chances of returning Mali to its regime pattern, the Heads of State and Government triggered Article 45 of the Protocol on Democracy and Governance, given that the action related to the attempted overthrow of the democratically elected government of President Ibrahim Boubacar Keita (ECOWAS 2020, Items 29-31). However, following the release of the detained and deposed former president and member of parliament on the 27th and 28th of August 2020, respectively, and a review of the report from the Mediator, the Authority settled on some of the following decisions:

- (ii) The Authority decided that the transition period should be 12 months, and that general election should be held in October 2021, to allow smooth return to constitutional order".
- (iii) The Authority decided that the transition government should be led by a civilian President and Prime Minister;
- (iv) The Authority decided to uphold the sanctions pending the establishment of the transitional government"(ECOWAS, 2020, Item 34 – 35 ii-iv).

The decision signified that ECOWAS was willing to legitimise the current military regime if negotiations would lead to improvements towards returning to democratic governance in Mali. With the appointments of the civilian President and Prime Minister and the establishment of the National Transition Council (NTC), the ECOWAS lifted sanctions in Mali while still demanding the restoration of democratic order (Ibid, Item 32). However, while dealing with reconciliation efforts, on 24 May 2021, another section of the military arrested the Transition President and Prime Minister (BBC News, 2021). In response, ECOWAS Heads of state,

..... condemned the recent coup as it was a violation of the decisions taken at the Extraordinary Summit held in Ghana on 15 September 2020 and a violation of the Transition

Charter. The Heads of State in the communique equally condemned all actions that led to the recent instability in Mali and demanded the immediate release of the former President, the Prime Minister, and their collaborators kept under house arrest (ECOWAS, 2021a: Item 28).

Furthermore, the Heads of State took some of the following decisions,

- (a) Suspend Mali from the ECOWAS institution in line with ECOWAS provisions.
- (b) Stressed on the importance and necessity of respecting the democratic process of ascending to power in conformity with the 2001 ECOWAS Protocol on Democracy and Good Governance
- (c) Demanded the immediate nomination of new civilian Prime Minister
- (d) Demand the formation of a new inclusive government to proceed with the transition programme;
- (e) Stressed that the already announced date for the presidential election which is 27 February 2022 is to be maintained and that a monitoring mechanism should be put in place.
- (f) Reiterated the earlier decisions that the Heads of the Transition, the Vice President and the Prime Minister of the Transition should not, under any circumstances, be candidates for the forthcoming Presidential election.
- (g) Reaffirmed ECOWAS support to accompany the transition process in Mali.
- (h) Urged all international partners (the African Union, The United Nations and the European Union to continue to support Mali towards the successful implementation of the transition. (Ibid, Item 29)

The refusal by ECOWAS to further legitimise the actions of forceful changes in governments has culminated in the recent coup leaders seeking support elsewhere. The objective of adopting and implementing regional security norms to this extent reflects the full integration outcome, due in part to the protection states receive from ECOWAS, notwithstanding their democratic credentials. As summarised in Table 6.2, challengers are usually rewarded with time in office, which is frequently used to transform undemocratic regimes into questionable democracies.

6.6. Conclusion

The collective regional security norm of ECOWAS has completed the norm-building process, yielding far-reaching integration and constitutionalisation results. Several critical provisions clearly and unambiguously demonstrate this member state's preference, including Chapter II, Article 4, which outlines the implementation of the mechanism, and Article 25, which protects against norm erosion. This Chapter's findings demonstrate three causal mechanisms that explain the outcome of the Economic Community of West African States (ECOWAS) 's full adoption of sovereignty-threatening or limiting

norms. This thesis also established that the causal pathways influencing the process recognise cognitive priors, which include sovereignty variations and the obsolescence of conquest, as contributing conditions significantly impacting member state preferences towards achieving this extensive integration and internalisation of collective security norms.

The first causal mechanism investigated relates to the deterrence from aggression. ECOWAS member states realised with the international response to the Liberian Civil War that security outside the region's control would be at the mercy of international interests. Hence, ECOWAS challenged attempts by even former colonial states to engage in security mediations without recourse to its authority. This gives the organisation the sole authority to justify interference within its member states and the ability to engage in military missions outside the initial mandate of the United Nations. The second causal explanation describes norm substitution, which leverages the region's interventionist norm deterrence to subject all institutions or normative mechanisms within the Authority's sphere of influence. This includes democracy and good governance norms whose outcomes are significantly impacted by members' implementation preferences; however, these outcomes can only be validated by the ECOWAS. I also determined that the sustained conflicts surrounding governance structures and the multiple simultaneous mediations by member states and ECOWAS directly result from the prevalence of this causal mechanism. The third causal explanation is for the perseverance of regional stability, which also involves protecting member states' regimes irrespective of their democratic status. Member states' acceptance of security norms effectively translates to a token for the collective perseverance of their unique sovereignty variations and assurances over the regions' obsolescence of conquest. In hindsight, these findings support the observations of contradictory norm outcomes from social processes within a shared normative environment. In the next chapter, I discuss the findings from this thesis investigation regarding the diverse outcomes of democratic and good governance norms. I introduce two causal mechanisms to explain the Economic Community of West African States (ECOWAS)'s abandonment of sovereignty-threatening or limiting norms.

7. Chapter Seven: Implementing the Protocol on Democracy and Good Governance

7.1. Introduction

In the previous chapter, this thesis examined the Protocol Relating to the Mechanism for Conflict Prevention, Management, Resolution, Peacekeeping, and Security (1999). The analysis substantiates this thesis's intermediate hypothesis that the causal pathway—the region's normative environment—is uniquely influenced, in part, by cognitive priors such as the obsolescence of conquest and variations in sovereignty. This thesis's empirical evidence reveals that three contributory causal mechanisms explain the circumstances under which member states adopt sovereign-limiting or threatening norms, specifically in the realm of security. The investigation into the region's collective security norm outcome examined the region's accounts of implementation and provisions within the region's institutional rules. The findings are based on evidence from the extensive data gathered, which allowed for the assessment of variations in the extent of norm integration. The evidence establishes that implementation was largely consistent with the agreed-upon provisions of the protocol or institutional rules, resulting in the complete integration of the collective security norm in the region. The three causal mechanisms that explain the circumstances behind the complete diffusion of the security norm included preserving regional stability, acting as deterrence against internal and external intervention or aggression, and norm substitution, primarily for substituting security for democratic norms.

In this chapter, the case study examined relates to the normative outcome of democracy and good governance in the West African region. While the previous chapter explained the circumstances under which sovereignty-limiting or threatening norm outcomes, particularly in the domain of security, this chapter accounts for instances where variation exists and explains the underlying causes. The variation in the outcome of democracy and good governance norms is observed, even though these two norms were equally adopted by ECOWAS member states through individually agreed-upon normative instruments. These instruments define institutional rules for integrating democratic and good governance norms, particularly in the primary Protocol A/SP1/12/01 on Democracy and Good Governance. However, democracy and good governance norms are associated with other related regional normative instruments, which I examine in this chapter as well. This chapter's investigation into the diverse outcomes concludes that, although member states recognise the international preference for democratic regimes and have accepted the norm to satisfy this validation, they engage in behavioural contestation within the implementing process to influence their preferred outcome.

This thesis's empirical evidence is based on the data gathered during this research. These include records of meetings, the analysis of ratified or draft protocols, interviews, news articles and field notes. The findings reveal variations in outcomes related to democracy and good governance norms, which often

result in their abandonment during implementation by member states. To explain the circumstances that lead to these varied outcomes, this thesis's causal pathway analyses reveal two causal mechanisms (See Figure 4.0). First, member states subject the security and democratic norms to integrated outcomes, and second, there is a continuous contestation of the democratic and good governance norms in the region, mainly due to a revalidation process. The revalidation of a norm refers to the ongoing consultation with community mechanisms to determine its character (Wiener, 2007). Wiener notes that although norm contestation in the transnational arena eases the stability assumptions of the behavioural perspective, capturing long-term compliance remains problematic. This challenge is enhanced when the referred norm's validity is in contention within the domestic context. In Wiener's view, the outcome is an adaptation through strategic action to persuade norm followers, not the norm's change or revalidation. Second, contestation influences norm flexibility, and norm transfer enhances the possibility of contested normative meaning. Although an intended consequence of norm diffusion, contestation in such situations presents opportunities that include dialogue and disagreement. Hence, as I have argued in this thesis, the normative environment influences the preferences of member states, including during periods of contestation. This contestation process within the regional organisation typically influences the normative meaning and stems from the diversity of states' interests, distinct socio-cultural and cognitive priors, and historical experiences. These diverse recognitions inevitably lead to the constant renegotiation of norms in the policy process (Ibid., 53-54). Pratchett (1999) utilises the *Democratic Renewal* to explain the outcomes of local democracy's failings as an opportunity to revitalise the practice. The process the author observes demonstrates that differences in the debate occur at the level of interpretation and implementation rather than the overarching ambition. These understandings underscore norm revalidation in this case as the context for behavioural contestation, where member states adopt bureaucratic control to retain the acceptance of a norm while also not compromising its meaning or policy process, thereby guaranteeing limitations to the norm's implementation.

7.2. Adapting and implementing Democratic and Good Governance Norms

There have been several proposed changes to the Protocol A/SP1/12/01 on Democracy and Good Governance (2001), which is supplementary to the Protocol Relating to the Mechanism for Conflict Prevention, Management, Resolution, Peacekeeping and Security (1999). Over time, political activities within the region have necessitated the calls for this review to reflect the prevailing normative environment where norms such as democracy and good governance better represent regional preferences. The Protocol on Democracy and Good Governance was also derived from the Declaration of Principles (1991) and the Revised Treaty (1993). Since the acceptance of its normative instrument in 2001, it has undergone sustained validation challenges. A senior ECOWAS official reiterates this during an interview:

Now, that is where we have a challenge in implementing democratic norms equally or evenly in the subregion. We have a challenge in making sure that democracy is practised in the subregion (Interviewee, 0120E)³⁶

These variation issues have led to attempts to review the provisions within the institution's rules to account for loopholes exploited by actors when implementing these norms. Some proposed changes to the 2001 protocol, which remain unresolved and contained in drafts debated in 2021 and 2022, reflect this continuous contestation within the region. In hindsight, the protocol adopted in 2001 can be considered a shell document. Mainly because although the protocol proclaims democratic and good governance norms within the region, the instrument also falls short of instituting, promoting, or guaranteeing these norms (see Table 7.1). For example, Section 1 of the 2001 Protocol provides several constitutional convergence principles agreed upon by all member states, which house numerous normative positions regarding the region's preference for democratic tenets and practices. These include in Article 1(a), providing for the separation of powers and the autonomy of the parliamentary and justice institutions, the immunity and the strengthening of other arms of these institutions governance structure, especially for the need to "*Empowerment and strengthening of parliaments and guarantee of parliamentary immunity*" (ECOWAS, 2001a), in member states. Articles 1b and 1c relate to zero tolerance for attaining power through unconstitutional means other than free, fair and transparent elections. Other key provisions include decision-making by popular participation, decentralisation of governance, the apolitical nature of the state's military, state secularism, institutional discrimination, the guarantee of human rights and freedoms of association, protests, and the press. At the heart of the Protocol in Article 2(1) is the provision for fairness in member states elections by stating that:

No substantial modification shall be made to the electoral laws in the last six (6) months before the elections, except with the consent of a majority of Political actors (ECOWAS, 2001a)

In addition to respecting the timeframe provided for the elections in the member states' constitution, Article 2 provides for the equal participation of women in the election process. Articles 3 to 10 continue with elections, providing for the Independence of member states' electoral bodies, updating the voter list, ensuring equal access to the voter list, promoting transparency in the electoral process, guaranteeing the right to dispute or challenge, partnering with civil society, and prohibiting the intimidation of opponents. Article 11 on ECOWAS Institutional Capacity for Peacebuilding is linked to Article 42 on Conflict Management, Election Management, and Supervision, as well as Rebuilding Efforts, in the Protocol on Security Mechanisms. Articles 12 to 18 guide the ECOWAS election monitoring framework, while Articles 19 to 24 relate to the roles of the security forces in a democracy. Articles 25

³⁶ Interview 07: Senior ECOWAS Official, August 2024, Online

to 27 cover citizen welfare and trade, as well as workers' unions, and Articles 29 to 36 focus on education, culture, religion, the rule of law, human rights, and good governance, among others³⁷

As argued, in analysing the institutional rules which proclaim to promote democracy and good governance norms in the region, this thesis identifies two significant categories of behavioural contestations engaged in by member states to challenge the diffusion of the norm simultaneously. First, member states settled for an instrument that only diminutively hinders the likelihood of implementation variations. These ambiguities, spread across most of the protocol, coexist alongside provisions that suggest regional conformity with international normative contexts and standards and are consequential enough to ensure that member states and the region avoid reputational costs. For instance, Article 32 states, "Member States agree that good governance and press freedom are essential for preserving social justice, preventing conflict, guaranteeing political stability and peace and for strengthening democracy" (ECOWAS, 2001a). Article 34 also encourages that "Member States and Executive Secretariat shall endeavour to adopt at national and regional levels, practical modalities for the enforcement of the rule of law, human rights, justice and good governance" (Ibid). These provisions hardly align with the observations around member states' implementation of the agreed rules. As evidenced in Chapter Six, multiple instances of questionable outcomes from democratic practices across the states threaten this veil of compliance, as the ECOWAS is steadily forced to respond to simultaneously arising conflicts and crises within member states.

Second, member states behavioural contestation restricts the contextualisation of the adopted norm. As discussed, the challenge to contextualisation in the protocol hardly operationalises standardised provisions. For instance, Article 32 suggests that member states recognise the norms and their intended outcomes; however, absent any independent mechanism within the protocol to monitor or measure implementation, these provisions remain open to contending interpretations. These concerns have led to proposals for improving the application of these norms within the region. These otherwise deliberate procedural omissions in contextualising the norm support the explanation regarding contestations around the constitutionalisation of specific provisions within the proposed supplementary protocols, for example, for provisions prohibiting the extension of regime mandate. An interviewee explains member states preference over attempts at constitutionalising term limits within the ECOWAS:

³⁷ Excerpts from ECOWAS (2001a). *Protocol A/SP1/12/01 on Democracy and Good Governance*. [Online]. 2001. Electoral Institute for Sustainable Development in Africa. Available at: <https://www.eisa.org/pdf/ecowas2001protocol.pdf>.

This has not gone through because some member states still oppose this, even though these member states still have these term limits in their constitution, but they oppose it to have it reflected in the original regional instrument (Interviewee, 070E)³⁸

Another use of behavioural contestation by member states against the somewhat rhetorical provisions within the region's institutional rules is to demonstrate their acceptance of democracy and good governance norms, thereby satisfying international standards and presenting the protocol's provisions as evidence of constitutional convergence.

In the above analysis, which examines member states' support for a hollowed-out normative instrument, the explanation of the outcome is juxtaposed with these observed behavioural contestations that tend to guarantee preferred outcomes. This thesis investigation accounts for this relationship with the intermediate hypothesis that the normative environment, also shaped by regional cognitive priors, influences the relationship. The empirical findings also demonstrate that member state's reliance on a limited framework, mainly characterised by improper contextualisation, allows for implementation variations and rhetorical compliance with international standards. A senior ECOWAS official contextualises this analytical position:

I think that the concept of democracy is still really debatable. And the practice of democracy itself is really quite debatable. Every society, even within the United States of America, continuously engages in what democracy should be and how to practise democracy. At the member state level, take, for example, Nigeria; people have different views as to what democracy should be, whether you are talking about a Western type of democracy or you are talking about how democracy should be contextualised or should democracy have been incorporated in every aspect of the cultural nuances of the people or within the history and the tradition of the people (Interviewee, 030B)³⁹

The ECOWAS contestation circle on democracy and good governance norms has been ongoing for over two decades. In 2021, an initial revised draft was proposed, reviewed, and contested without reaching an agreement. This contest continues onto a recent draft proposed in 2022. It is important to note that the recent 2022 revised protocol has also yet to be adopted. However, meeting records and official communications provide ample evidence for analysing the norm contestation process.

³⁸ Interview 04: Senior ECOWAS Official, October 2023, Abuja

³⁹ Interview 03: Senior ECOWAS Official, October 2023, Abuja

Draft Proposal 2021

The 2021 Review of the Protocol on Democracy and Good Governance proposal included some essential modifications and changes. For instance, the objective for the review disclosed with the preamble maintained that the ECOWAS is

Aware that political, security, governance challenges and institutional crisis have continued to engender democratic reversals and generate lessons for enhancing the anticipatory responses and the need to rebuild the posture of the Community (ECOWAS, 2021k)⁴⁰.

In addition, several discussed abnormalities protected from repudiation, including below-the-radar contestation and the influence of member states' preferences on the outcome, received the required attention. For example, the states recognised the issue of a tenure limit for potential review; I asked a senior ECOWAS official their view as part of the questions during an interview:

Recently, after the coup d'état in Guinea, I think the authority realised that it was becoming one of the issues leading to this kind of destabilisation within member states and the region. So, it has requested that the supplementary Protocol be reviewed, so we should look at actually emphasising that no country can have more than two terms (Interviewee, 070E)⁴¹.

Hence, the Authority of Heads of State directed the Commission to revise the 2001 Supplementary Protocol on Democracy and Good Governance to bridge the current governance and security gaps. These have led to specific changes proposed to Article 1, one of which resides in Sub-Article 1(a), stating: No incumbent President of any Member State who has served for a maximum of two (2) terms in office shall be eligible to contest in any subsequent Presidential election (ECOWAS, 2021k). This provision, when considered in conjunction with the previously proposed limitation on changing election rules six months before the vote begins, aims to deepen the democratic tenets and curtail variations in implementation. It is also essential to note that these provisions remain among the primary points of contention within the revised protocol. Article 1(d) also expands on contextualising the provision's categories of unconstitutional power changes, framed as a zero-tolerance practice in the Community. They include,

⁴⁰ ECOWAS (2021k). Review of the 2001 Supplementary Protocol on Democracy and Good Governance Validation Meeting with Member States Ministers of Justice Representatives.

⁴¹ Interview 04: Senior ECOWAS Official, October 2023, Abuja

1. Any uprising or coup d'état against a democratically elected government.
2. Any intervention by mercenaries to replace a democratically elected government.
3. Any replacement of a democratically elected government by armed dissidents or rebels.
4. Any refusal by an incumbent government to relinquish power to the winning party or candidate after free, fair and regular elections; or
5. Any amendment or revision of the constitution or legal instruments to extend or remain in power beyond two-term limits; (ECOWAS, 2021k)⁴²

Article 1(e) also sought to strengthen the above provision, stating: “The perpetrators of unconstitutional change of government shall not be candidates in elections held to restore the democratic order or hold any political office in the new dispensation of their State” (Ibid). However, findings within the Commission’s records indicate contentions during the negotiations, including calls to modify Article 2(1) of the 2021 proposal. Opponents prefer the clause to reflect that “No substantial modification shall be made to the electoral laws of Member States at least six (6) months to the elections, except in a case of force majeure” (Ibid). This seems to be the only significant change proposed to the 2001 provisions. While the provisions surrounding elections remained unchanged, Article 3 was expanded to cover areas such as internal democracy of political parties, funding, transparency, the Inter-Party Advisory Committee (IPAC) in each member state, peaceful and credible media, and independent candidates. Also, Article 37(i) does introduce the provision of establishing a mechanism stating that “Member States and the Commission shall establish at national and regional levels, mechanisms for promoting respect for, and enforcement of the rule of law, human rights, justice and good governance” (Ibid). Article 39 proposes an expanded ECOWAS dialogue and mediation mechanism detailing institutions such as the Council of the Wise, Funding, and Gender Participation and granting authority to these missions. Another key proposal is outlined in Chapter 3, which discusses Modalities for Implementation and Sanctions. Article 46 complements the chapter of the Protocol on security mechanisms, while Article 47 proposes a list of sanctions in cases of breaches to the provision of the Protocol. These include:

- a) Refusal to support the qualified candidate(s) presented by the Member State
 - b) Refusal to hold ECOWAS meetings in the Member State concerned;
 - c) Suspension of the Member State concerned from all ECOWAS decision-making bodies.
- During the period of the suspension the Member State concerned shall be obliged to pay its dues for the period.

⁴² ECOWAS (2021i). 47th Ordinary Session of the ECOWAS Mediation and Security Council at the Ministerial Level: Memorandum on the Revised Supplementary Protocol on Democracy and Good Governance.

- d) Comprehensive arms embargo against the new regime/authorities;
- e) A travel ban on the leaders of the new regime, their family members, close associates and collaborators;
- f) A freeze on the financial assets of the leaders of the new regime and close associates that instigated or participated in the overthrow of constituted authority in the Member State. Such assets may be forfeited to the state;
- g) A freeze on all the accounts and other assets of the Member State and authorities in multilateral and commercial banks at home and in other Member States;
- h) If landlocked, the Member State shall be denied access to the ports of Member States;
- i) A sporting boycott of the Member State by ECOWAS Member States.

Additionally, the proposal expands into the hitherto absent implementation mechanism in Article 47(3), providing for continuous dialogue to return the affected member state to normalcy. However, Article 47(4) calls for military intervention on the advice of the Mediation and Security Council in cases of failure. In recognition of the earlier discussion on norm substitution in Chapter Five, Article 47(4) empowers the Mediation and Security Council to regularly consider reports on issues relating to human rights, including those regarding the rule of law and governance situations in member states.

From the preceding, the 2021 draft proposal would represent an improved document for the recognition, development, and integration of democratic and good governance norms within the region; however, it still makes a minimal attempt to address implementation bias within member states. The instrument in its current draft still fails to address specific policy areas considered the bane of practising democracy in the region.

6.3.3 Draft Proposal 2022

Further contestations have necessitated the continuous review of the 2021 draft proposal. Some fundamental changes proposed within the draft document were discussed in 2022, including Article 1 on Constitutional Converging Principles. The proposal sought to reformulate the wording around presidential term limits to:

Member States shall adopt such provisions in their respective Constitutions to ensure that no citizen of the Community elected president of the Republic serves more than two (2) terms in office or extends his or her term in office for any reason or in any form whatsoever (ECOWAS, 2022f).

The provision eliminates the “no incumbent” phrase, extends the subject to the provision to cater to violations during implementation, and proposes that all member states include this provision in their respective constitutions. To also cater in part to the deficiencies associated with the 2001 protocol, the member states have suggested the inclusion of a new section on Governance Principles, proposed for Article 2⁴³:

“Without prejudice to the provisions set forth in Article 1 of this Protocol, Member States agree that the other pillars of Good Governance are:

- Responsibility;
- Accountability;
- Respect for the rule of law and public freedoms;
- Promotion of freedom of expression, in particular freedom of the press and professionalism of the media;
- Inclusivity;

Furthermore, Article 40 also provides a specific mechanism to promote and assess good governance. Article 40(1) states:

On an annual basis, each national mechanism shall submit to the ECOWAS Commission a report on the state of governance in the country. The report and comments from the government, the opposition and civil society shall be widely disseminated through the most appropriate means (Ibid).

Chapter Four on Sanctions and Modalities for Implementation only contains a singular addition of the word ‘popular’ in Article 48(2a) to read: “Any popular uprising leading to a coup d’état against a democratically elected government” (Ibid).

Generally, except for changes proposed to define regionally accepted principles of good governance and attempts to create a framework for implementation, the proposed supplementary protocol remains unchanged from the original instrument. In addition, except for the proposed tenure limit, all other proposed changes may not be considered substantial enough to impact the levels of the implementation or contextualisation associated with the norms of democracy and good governance observed in the 2001 Protocol. For example, in Table 7.1, several critical provisions aimed at fostering a common

⁴³ Excerpts from ECOWAS (2022f). Forty-eighth Ordinary Meeting of the Ecowas Mediation and Security Council at the Ministerial Level: Memorandum on Draft Supplementary Act Relating to the Amendment of the Supplementary Protocol A/Sp1/12/01 On Democracy and Good Governance.

understanding of democracy in the region are outlined in the substantive protocol (2001) and the proposed drafts (2021 and 2022). However, these attempts can be considered superficial and, most importantly, may not effectively integrate democratic and good governance norms within states. For context, implementing the convergence principles is still largely impacted by cognitive priors within the normative environment. This observation is corroborated during the interviews conducted for this thesis. On the superficiality of the protocol and draft proposals' attempt to integrate the norms of democracy and good governance, *interviewee 01100* observes that the converging principles are not automatically institutionalised within member states. Instead, in some cases, heads of state create obstacles for themselves. These obstacles arise when the national parliament's interests do not align with those of the regions and constitutional amendments are rejected. The interviewee also points out that these failures can be attributed to the lack of an efficient ECOWAS administrative mechanism tailored to monitor and encourage individual states to adopt the convergence principles⁴⁴.

Second, the differences in histories, colonial and other social experiences, culture and perceptions maintain an overwhelming influence over the compliance and practice of the region's democratic norms. The interviewee elaborates on the differences between Anglophone and Francophone practices of democracy within the region. The Senior Official stated that while the anglophone states are credited with relatively adhering to democratic principles, the francophone states present the region with challenges. For instance, the francophones are mainly credited with manipulating the provisions of the convergence principles, which deal with changing the constitution six months before an election. The interviewee notes that in most instances, francophone states amend their constitutions before the stipulated restrictions take effect and particularly make the changes to the law retroactive. The impact is the usurping of the constitution to extend their tenure and the possibility of perpetuating themselves in power⁴⁵.

7.3. The ECOWAS Conflict Prevention Framework (ECPF) 2008

The ECPF represents another instrument in ECOWAS's search for solutions to its numerous conflicts and socio-political crises, which have been a significant part of its regional dynamics since its inception. As expressed in the framework's preamble, "the West African region has been afflicted by conflicts and sociopolitical crises whose causes are multiple and were not detected or identified at the appropriate time for prevention" (ECOWAS, 2008:3). The ECPF aimed to tackle the festering conflicts within the region by developing a framework capable of aggregating prevention frameworks, which target the source of the regional security challenges. Chapter Six findings demonstrated that the region's failures

⁴⁴ Interview 05, Senior ECOWAS Official, October 2023, Abuja

⁴⁵ See interview 03 excerpts with Senior ECOWAS Official, October 2023, Abuja pg. 144

in implementing democratic governance and good governance constituted a critical component of these lingering issues. Hence, the ECPF, in its context, reflects the region's intention to invest in alternative conflict resolution channels based on earlier identified norms that had previously been less active in the region's governance structure. Therefore, contained in the ECPF for the region, member states decision reflects that,

As the region repositions itself to prevent the recurrence of violent conflicts, ECOWAS Member States have a responsibility to ensure sustainable peace and security by implementing measures and initiatives that go beyond violence management. In other words, military intervention should constitute only a segment, and ideally a measure of last resort, within the broader peace and security architecture. Emphasis should now be placed on prevention and peacebuilding, including the strengthening of sustainable development, the promotion of region-wide humanitarian crisis prevention and preparedness strategy and the culture of democracy (ECOWAS, 2008: Item 26).

In analysing the regional security stability outcome driven by these norms, the ECOWAS still prioritises the development of security norms, which are then supported by democracy, good governance, and other specific norms fundamental to its partnership with the international system. Therefore, although the democratic and good governance norms are presented as an otherwise independent and vital normative component adapted to enhance the region's broader security objectives, its contributions to the regional security agenda remain, as discussed in Chapter Six, as a substitute. As discussed above, the member state continually leverages behavioural contestation to implement democratic and good governance norms, thereby maintaining preferred normative outcomes. These actions by member states have constituted the primary source of conflicts, as seen in Chapter Six, and the internalisation of the norms remains unchanged, which could have supported the target outcome with the adoption of the ECPF.

Notwithstanding, the ECPF develops relatively precise objectives of Democracy and Political Governance contributions including: "to create space and conditions for fair and equitable distribution and exercise of power and the establishment and reinforcement of governance institutions; [ii] to ensure the active participation by all citizens in the political life of Member States under common democratic, human rights and constitutional principles articulated in ECOWAS Protocols, the African Charter on Human and Peoples Rights, NEPAD principles and other international instruments" (ECOWAS, 2008: Item 52).

Furthermore, another key point of departure for the framework is the itemisation of activities necessary for ECOWAS member states to collaborate with the regional organisation in achieving the objectives set by the ECPF for democracy and political governance. These include,

- a. ECOWAS shall facilitate, and Member States shall ensure, the strengthening of the Executive, Legislature and Judiciary of Member States to promote efficient delivery, the enhancement of separation of powers and oversight responsibilities in governance.
- b. ECOWAS shall assist Member States in promoting the professionalisation of governance institutions by building and strengthening transparent, nonpartisan, efficient, and accountable national and local institutions, particularly the civil service.
- c. Member States, in cooperation with ECOWAS and with the full participation of civil society organisations, shall assist political parties with financial resources and know-how to strengthen internal party democracy and participation and to mobilise resources to assist political parties in the crafting of manifestos that promote national cohesion, consensus, participatory democracy and sustainable development.
- f. ECOWAS shall facilitate the provision of assistance to Member States and local constituencies in the preparations for credible elections, including technical and financial support for the conduct of census, voter education, enactment of credible electoral codes, compilation of voters' registers and training of electoral officials, monitors and observers.
- g. ECOWAS shall facilitate the enactment and enforcement of statutes in the Member States to strengthen the capacity of all political parties to compete effectively in elections and minimise the impact of the incumbency factor in elections.

(ECOWAS, 2008: Item 53)

Additionally, the ECPF outlines the features of democracy and good governance norms in more explicit terms than in other normative instruments. Although the foundation focuses on preventing and managing conflicts, the framework makes a significant attempt to propose a benchmark for assessing progress in promoting democratic and political governance norms. This also challenges the implementation mechanism deficiency observed within the protocol on democracy and good governance. Some include:

- a. adoption and/or enforcement of national constitutions that reflect the constitutional convergence principles contained in the Supplementary Protocol on Democracy and Good Governance, the African Charter on Peoples and Human Rights, and international norms and standards.

- b. Grassroots awareness of supranational and international norms and standards of democracy and good governance, and the determination of national stakeholders to defend and promote democratic gains.
 - g. Minimum regional norms and standards set and applied for elections and electoral administration.
 - i. The existence of a reliable and credible voters' register
 - j. Increased confidence in the electoral management bodies.
 - l. The holding of predictable and credible elections to determine the accession to, retention and exercise of power.
 - m. Reduced incidence of electoral fraud, disputes and violence.
 - n. Increased willingness to accept electoral verdicts and relinquish power peacefully
- (ECOWAS, 2008: Item 54).

The ECPF's benchmarks for assessing progress in promoting democratic norms are linked directly to the 2001 Democracy and Good Governance Protocol. The normative document joins the string of others adopted by member states, which primarily recognise features of democratic and good governance norms. However, in this case, it does associate member state implementation with specific outcomes but still fails to address the normative interpretation and validity of these norms. As maintained in the contending arguments, where the norm on democracy and good governance is in continuous contestation within the region, the measure of actual implementation based on the provision contained in protocols and frameworks against member state outcomes is still subject to member states' preferences.

7.4. ECOWAS Policy Framework for Security Sector Reform and Governance (SSRG) 2016

In 2016, the ECOWAS developed a policy instrument to define its regional framework for Security and Governance. The document aimed to address challenges faced in vital normative areas within West Africa, including "the lack of a culture of governance of the security sector, inadequacy of physical and institutional capacity, lack of/limited professionalism of security institutions and actors, insensitivity to gender issues, lack of relevant training, inadequate equipment, funding and other resources, and absence of effective democratic control" (ECOWAS, 2016b: 6). The SSRG, acknowledges that democratic governance and human security are at the core of the community strategy for maintaining regional security for public good, as an essential service for citizens, and as a vital component to achieving sustainable development (Ibid). In addition to adapting democratic and good governance norms to shore up regional stability, the document also states that "to materialise this new security approach which combines state security and human security requires profound changes to ensure democratic governance

and reform of the security sector at the regional and national levels” (Ibid). These highlighted foundational considerations to the development of the framework challenge my earlier categorisation of the norm substitution causal mechanism in Chapter Six. In my analysis, I determined that the norms of democracy and good governance have been subsumed under regional security norms, thereby extending the scope of interventionist norms. In this context, my initial assessment remains valid because, considering the norm of democracy and good governance’s contribution to the SSRG, and often in other normative instruments of the region, it is aimed at conferring validation subject entirely to security outcomes. For instance, as observed in the Justification and Scope:

“ECOWAS adopted two policy documents that put democratic governance at the core of its conflict prevention strategy and development agenda: the Supplementary Protocol on Democracy and Good Governance of 2001 and the ECOWAS Conflict Prevention Framework (ECPF) of 2008. Both documents recall core principles of democratic governance, which should be respected by security institutions in Member States. Article 72 of the ECPF highlights security governance as one of the components for conflict prevention to ensure the emergence and consolidation of accountable, transparent, and participatory security systems in Member States” (ECOWAS, 2016b: B7).

In addition, the vision and goals also state,

This Policy Framework aims to provide the ECOWAS Commission, Member States and other stakeholders with guidelines to design, implement, monitor and evaluate SSRG processes, programmes and projects. It is also intended to achieve the following:

a) Contribute to the democratisation process in the ECOWAS Member States by encouraging security institutions to comply with democratic governance principles such as accountability, transparency and the rule of law (ECOWAS, 2016b: 12a).

The West African region maintains cognitive priors, primarily influenced by its past military regimes and on the back of colonial conquest and regional conflicts. The connectedness of regional security mechanisms to democracy and good governance norms suggests that the region intends to protect its regimes at all costs, as seen in Chapter Five, including with a norm that guarantees intervention when security is threatened. Bearing that in mind, it is not unusual to observe that although the SSRG relies significantly on the norms of democracy and good governance to operationalise the regional security framework, the norm is only recognised in joint validation in the development of regional security norms, which maintains the ECOWAS primary focus. For instance, in the establishment of democratic control and oversight institutions, the SSRG suggests that,

“Member States shall commit human, material and financial resources to establish and support national institutions that will help uphold core principles of democratic governance, respect for human rights and the rule of law within the security sector. The name, nature, and functioning of those control and oversight institutions may vary from one state to another according to its history, culture, and political and legal system. In this regard, ECOWAS encourages Member States to establish and strengthen the following oversight and control mechanisms” (ECOWAS, 2016b: Item 39f).

Thus, while the security framework incorporates democratic and good governance norms to influence outcomes through the implementation procedure, these norms have yet to be validated, and outcomes remain at the discretion of member states.

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Table 7.1					
Protocol on Democracy and Good Governance and Norm Development					
2001 Protocol					
Article	Section	Notes	Article	Section	Amendments
1	Constitutional Converging Principles	Democratic Tenants (Separation of Powers, Independence of the Judiciary and Parliamentary Immunity and Freedom of the Bar, Guarantees for Human Right)	1	Constitutional Principles	Converging
2	Elections I	Fair Practice in Election, Gender Representation	2	Elections	Amend - 1a. Term Limit, 1d. iv (Against Coups, Armed Rebellions, Mercenaries, Constitutional Amendment for Term Limit, Refusal to Concede) Add - 2(1 & 2) Change only under Force Majeure and National Laws
3	Elections III	Independence of Electoral Body	3	Elections II	Political Parties Internal Democracy, Funding, Transparency, IPAC, Peaceful and Credible, Media, Independent Candidates
4	Voters List II	Updating Voters List	4	Election III	Independence of Electoral Body
5	Voters List II	Equal access to Voters List	5	Voters List I	Birth and Death Registry, Reliable Voters List
6	Election III	Transparency in Electoral Process	6	Voters List II	Inclusive, Transparent and Reliable
7	Elections IV	Right to Dispute Challenges	7	Election IV	Election Integrity
8	Elections V	Partnering with Civil Societies	8	Election V	Election Petition
9	Elections VI	Conceding	9	Election VI	Civil Societies Partnership
10	Elections VII	Intimidation of Opponent	10	Election VII	Conceding
11	ECOWAS Institutional Capacity Peacebuilding Elections VIII	Linked from Article 42 P99; Conflict Management, Election Management and Supervision; Rebuilding Efforts	11	Elections VIII	Intimidation of Opposition and Election Losers
12		Election Management and member State Supervision and member State request	12	ECOWAS Role in Member State Elections I	Linked from Article 42 P99; Conflict Management, Election Management and Supervision; Rebuilding Efforts
13	Election IX	Observing and Recording the Electoral Process	13	ECOWAS Role in Member State Elections II	Fact Finding Missions, Review of Election Process
14	Elections X	ECOWAS Observers Nomination Process	14	ECOWAS Role in Member State Elections III	Observer Missions and Process and Independence
2022 Draft protocol					
Article	Section	Notes	Article	Section	Amendments
1	Constitutional Principles	Democratic Tenants (Separation of Powers, Independence of the Judiciary and Parliamentary Immunity and Freedom of the Bar, Guarantees for Human Right)	1	Constitutional Principles	1a Change to (NO Incumbent), Wording - Such Provisions, 1d - Moved to 48, 1c-vii Religious Tolerance
2	Elections I	Fair Practice in Election, Gender Representation	2	Governance Principles	Accountability, Responsibility, Rule of Law, Public Freedom, Free Press, Welfare, Distribution of Wealth
3	Elections III	Independence of Electoral Body	3	Press and Media	Independence, , Regulatory Bodies, Professional Standards, Safety and Protection Guarantees, Press Freedom and External Interference
4	Voters List II	Updating Voters List	4	Rule of Law and Human Rights I	Credible Elections, Peace, Security, Political Stability, Press Freedom
5	Voters List II	Equal access to Voters List	5	Rule of Law and Human Rights II	Fundamental Human Rights, Independent Judiciary, Transparency
6	Election III	Transparency in Electoral Process	6	Rule of Law and Human Rights II	National Plan to Promote Rule of law, Impartiality of the Judiciary, Accountability in Public Assets
7	Elections IV	Right to Dispute Challenges	7	Rule of Law and Human Rights III	Institutions and Regional Network
8	Elections V	Partnering with Civil Societies	8	Elections I	Add - 8(1) Recognition of Role Election play in Regional Violence
9	Elections VI	Conceding	9	Elections II	Political Parties Internal Democracy, Funding, Transparency, IPAC, Peaceful and Credible, Media, Independent Candidates, Gender and Disabilities Representation
10	Elections VII	Intimidation of Opponent	10	Election III	Independence of Electoral Body
11	ECOWAS Institutional Capacity Peacebuilding Elections VIII	Linked from Article 42 P99; Conflict Management, Election Management and Supervision; Rebuilding Efforts	11	Voters List I	Birth and Death Registry, Reliable Voters List
12		Election Management and member State Supervision and member State request	12	Voters List II	Inclusive, Transparent and Reliable
13	Election IX	Observing and Recording the Electoral Process	13	Election IV	Election Integrity
14	Elections X	ECOWAS Observers Nomination Process	14	Election V	Election Petition

<i>Table 7.1</i>									
<i>Protocol on Democracy and Good Governance and Norm Development</i>									
<i>2001 Protocol</i>					<i>2021 Draft Protocol</i>				
<i>Article</i>	<i>Section</i>	<i>Notes</i>	<i>Article</i>	<i>Section</i>	<i>Amendments</i>	<i>Article</i>	<i>Section</i>	<i>Amendments</i>	
<i>31</i>	Education, Culture and Religion III	Exchange, Social Order and Regional Contribution	31	Culture and Religion I	Stability and Development	31	Education, Culture and Religion II	Exchange, Funding, Training and Gender Participation, Regional Harmonisation	
<i>32</i>	Rule of Law, Human Rights and Good Governance I	Press Freedom	32	Culture and Religion II	Exchange, Funding, Training and Gender Participation, Regional Harmonisation	32	Education, Culture and Religion III	Exchange, Social Order and Regional Contribution	
<i>33</i>	Rule of Law, Human Rights and Good Governance II	Human Right Laws and Societal Stability	33	Culture and Religion III	Exchange, Social Order and Regional Contribution	33	Education, Culture and Religion IV	Religious Tolerance, Regional Consultations	
<i>34</i>	Rule of Law, Human Rights and Good Governance III	Regional Enforcement, States Responsibilities	34	Culture and Religion IV	Religious Tolerance, Regional Consultations	34	Women, Youth, Children and People with Disabilities I	Welfare, Recognition and Protection from Discrimination	
<i>35</i>	Rule of Law, Human Rights and Good Governance IV	Institutions and Regional Network	35	Rule of Law, Human Rights and Good Governance I	Press Freedom	35	Women, Youth, Children and People with Disabilities II	Protection of Child Rights, and against Child Trafficking and Child Labour	
<i>36</i>	Rule of Law, Human Rights and Good Governance V	Institutions for Mediation	36	Rule of Law, Human Rights and Good Governance II	Rule of Law and the Independence of the Judiciary	36	Women, Youth, Children and People with Disabilities III	Child's Right to Education	
<i>37</i>	Press and Media	Diverse Media Outlets and Funding	37	Rule of Law, Human Rights and Good Governance III	Mechanism for Rule of law, Justice and Good Governance	37	Women, Youth, Children and People with Disabilities IV	Regional Mechanisms	
<i>38</i>	Corruption	Combat Corruption	38	Rule of Law, Human Rights and Good Governance IV	Institutions, Regional Network and Annual Report	38	Corruption	Combat Corruption, Assets Declaration, Anti-Corruption Agencies	
<i>39</i>	Community Court of Justice	Provisions to support Human Rights	39	ECOWAS Dialogue and Mediation mechanisms	Council of the Wise, Funding, Gender Participation, Authority of the Mission	39	Good Governance	Add - National and Regional Assessment Mechanisms	
<i>40</i>	Women, Children and the Youth	Protection of Women	40	Press and Media	Independence, and Diverse Media Outlets, Professional Standards, Safety and Protection Guarantees, External Interference and Training	40	Rule of Law, Human Rights and Good Governance I	Annual Reports, MSC Review	
<i>41</i>	Women, Children and the Youth I	Protection against Child Trafficking and Child Labour	41	Corruption	Combat Corruption, Assets Declaration, Anti-Corruption Agencies	41	Rule of Law, Human Rights and Good Governance I	Special Rapporteur on Good Governance, National Mechanism Capacity Building	
<i>42</i>	Women, Children and the Youth II	Youth training and Social Support	42	Women, Youth, Children and People with Disabilities I	Welfare, Recognition and Protection from Discrimination	42	ECOWAS Dialogue and Mediation mechanisms	Council of the Wise, Funding, Gender Participation, Authority of the Mission	
<i>43</i>	Women, Children and the Youth III	Regional Responsibilities	43	Women, Youth, Children and People with Disabilities II	Protection of Child Rights, and against Child Trafficking and Child Labour	43	Security Forces II	Roles, Peace Support Operation (PSO) - Funding, Deployment, Missions and Gender Participation	

Table 7.1 Protocol on Democracy and Good Governance and Norm Development									
2001 Protocol					2021 Draft Protocol				
Article	Section	Notes	Article	Section	Amendments	Article	Section	Amendments	
44	Sanctions	Foundational Legal Authority Link to P99	44	Women, Youth, Children and People with Disabilities III	Child's Right to Education	44	Security Forces III	Authority, Eligibility, Exercise of Political Power, Apolitical, prohibition and Statue of Coups	
45	Modalities for Implementations and Sanctions	Modalities for Implementations and Guidelines	45	Women, Youth, Children and People with Disabilities IV	Regional Mechanisms	45	Security Forces IV	Guidelines in Service	
46	Description	Link to P99	46	Sanctions II	Foundational Legal Authority Link to P99	46	Security Forces V	National and Regional Constitutional Training, Platform for Security Agents	
47	Amendments	Publishing	47	Sanctions II	Modalities for Implementations and Guidelines	47	Terrorism	Strengthening National and Regional Measures to Combat and Prevent Terrorism	
48	Withdrawal		48	Amendment Distribution	Publishing	48	Sanctions	Foundational Legal Authority Link to P99, Unconstitutional Power Ascension	
49	Entry into Force		49	Entry into Force		49	Sanctions II	Modalities for Implementations and Guidelines a. Political b. Economic	
50	Depository Authority		50	Depository Authority		50	Residential Restriction	Denial Asylum	
						51	Amendment Distribution	Publishing	
						52	Entry into Force		
						53	Depository Authority		

7.5. ECOWAS Parliament

Part of the related normative instruments examined in this thesis concerning democracy and good governance norms in ECOWAS include the institutional rules establishing the ECOWAS Parliament. This thesis acknowledges the critical role that Parliaments play in promoting and advancing democracy and good governance (UNECA, 2012). Hence, I have extensively examined these institutional rules and member states' implementation preferences regarding outcomes. Since establishing the parliamentary body for ECOWAS in 1994, the Community Parliament has displayed some recognition of norms found in democratic regimes, which could be considered standard in operationalising a similar institution. However, the depth of expression of these norms, which include democracy and good governance norms, by the ECOWAS parliamentary institution has been proportional to their internalisation in the region. To demonstrate this finding, I analyse the development of good governance and democratic norms within the framework of Protocol A/P2/8/94, Relating to the Community Parliament, which established the Community Parliament in 1994, and the Supplementary Protocol A/SP.3/06/06 Amending Protocol A/P.2/8/94 Relating to the ECOWAS Parliament 2006 and the Supplementary Act A/SA.1/12/16 Relating to the Enhancement of the Powers of the ECOWAS Parliament 2016 (see Table 7.2).

7.5.1 Protocol A/P2/8/94 Relating to the Community Parliament

The foremost consideration by the ECOWAS for establishing the Community Parliament described by the Revised Treaty 1993 was for the institution to act “as a forum for dialogue, consultation and consensus for representatives of the peoples of the Community, can effectively promote integration” (ECOWAS, 1994). The initial assessment reveals that member states did not support the creation of the Community Parliament as part of the regional framework to align the region with democratic norms. Instead, relating to the parliament’s competencies in Article 6, the scope covered provides that “The Parliament may consider any matter concerning the Community, in particular issues relating to Human Rights and Fundamental Freedoms and make recommendations to the Institutions and Organs of the Community” (Ibid)⁴⁶. This is unsurprising as the 1975 ECOWAS Treaty hardly recognises other democratic and good governance norms, focusing only on fundamental human rights and freedoms. Hence, the Community Parliament was mainly an initiative of the Revised Treaty in 1993, which was established in response to increasing regional security challenges and had little use among military dictators as heads of member states. The examination of the institution's initial rules, negotiated in 1994, reflected the extent of member states' democratic credentials during that time. As discussed in this thesis, member states aimed to maintain the region’s façade as a partner in the democratic process

⁴⁶ Article 6 (1). Protocol A/P2/8/94 Relating to the Community Parliament.

sweeping through the global political system at the end of the Cold War by the transforming of national governance structures overseen by military heads of state from single-party democracies to multiparty systems (see Chapter Five). The above analysis contrasts with the standard narrative that the ECOWAS Parliament was conceived primarily to deepen democracy in the region through the election or direct representation of its citizens. This is elaborated upon by an interviewee when asked about the circumstances surrounding the creation of the ECOWAS Parliament. While the interviewee, who is a senior ECOWAS official, acknowledged the turn of events, they disagreed with the motivation and clarified the objective:

Why was the idea conceived? It was conceived as part of the urge to have democracy. Now you realise that ECOWAS should handle more issues, beyond economic to social and political issues, because political issues are enablers; you need to democratise. How do you democratise? You need now to involve the people. How do you involve the people? Create a parliament to serve as a house where the people's interests can be articulated and aggregated. That is why I disagree with the theory. At that time, the idea was not just to create a parliament for the sake of it. The originators of the idea were serious, and they were genuine. They wanted a parliament, and the idea was to democratise the integration process. So that people will be able to participate in the integration process through their representatives. Of course, because democracy was not matured in West Africa at that time, it was difficult for anyone to think that the best entry point would have been the establishment of a directly elected parliament (Interviewee, 070k)⁴⁷.

This observed conflicting narratives in Community Parliament's history represent a common debate around the separation of rhetoric from implementation outcomes. These contradictions, I have argued, highlight the critical influence of the region's normative environment on behavioural contestation, an approach utilised by member states to achieve preferred outcomes in the presence of a continuously contested norm. To emphasise, the 1994 Protocol on the ECOWAS Community Parliament is not associated with regional democratic norms; neither does the instrument recognise the community parliament as a democratic mechanism established to grant legitimacy to the ECOWAS. The word '*democracy*' is entirely omitted from the document, which reinforces an isomorphic representation by most participating member states 'regimes in the 1990s within the supranational framework of the West African region. The history of the Community Parliament also provides context for the hesitancy in conferring democratic credentials to the Community Parliament. The Committee of Eminent Persons (CEP) made the original proposal for forming the Community Parliament while reviewing the ECOWAS Treaty. The CEPs aimed to establish a body comprising representatives of member states in the Community, whose role in the decision-making process would be advisory. In addition, The CEP

⁴⁷ Interview 06, Senior ECOWAS Official, October 2023, Abuja

proposed that the Community parliament examine legislative proposals from the perspective of citizens or the Community as a whole. The CEP further advised that the Community Parliament's opinion should be considered in matters politically relevant to the Community and their supervisory powers enforceable by subjecting actions of other community institutions to its scrutiny (Wilmot, 1993). Therefore, the CEP favoured the Community Parliament as a second party in the double responsibility approach to governance in the region's Community. One which affords the Community Parliament the role of making laws for the entire Community while holding other ECOWAS institutions accountable to the people.

Nonetheless, some provisions on democratic practices within the 1994 Community Parliament protocol include Article 7(i), which provides for the election of representatives by direct universal suffrage. However, this is qualified by Article 7(ii) with a transition period during which members of national assemblies could serve (Ibid). In Article 9, the protocol provides immunity from prosecution for representatives for opinions expressed or votes cast in the exercise of their duty and instances where such immunity can be waived. Article 11 relates to voting, which grants representatives the freedom to vote according to their convictions. Article 12 institutes a list of incompatible responsibilities that representatives were barred from holding concurrently with their roles as community parliamentarians. Article 18 deepens the autonomy of the Community Parliament with members' control over the Community Parliament budget.

The adopted protocol included mainly provisions to guide the functionality of the Community Parliament, and member states agreed to seek their opinion on a list of economic matters that affected the integration process. Some of these include⁴⁸

- (a) interconnection of the communications links between Member States so as to make free movement of persons and goods effective;
- (b) interconnection of telecommunications systems to form an effective Community network with the maximum possible number of extensions to the rural areas to make them more accessible;
- (c) interconnection of energy networks;
- (d) increased cooperation in the area of radio, television and other media links within the Community and between the Community and the rest of the world; development of national communications systems to form an integrated, effective Community system with its own programmes;
- (e) public health policies for the Community;

⁴⁸ Article 6 (2). Protocol A/P2/8/94 Relating to the Community Parliament.

- (f) common educational policy through harmonisation of existing systems and specialisation of existing universities; adjustment of education within the Community to international standards;
- (g) youth and sports;
- (h) scientific and technological research;
- (i) Community policy on environment;
- (j) Treaty review;
- (k) Community citizenship;
- (l) social integration;
- (m) respect for human rights and fundamental freedoms in all their plenitude.

The Community Parliament debuted, having diluted its relationship with citizens and other institutions or having no relationship with member states except for its composition. The Community Parliament protocol may have set the stage for the challenges envisioned in the ECOWAS Parliament's struggle towards its enhanced status as a co-decision-making body in the region's organisational structure. In the next section, I analyse the subsequent protocols aimed at realising this objective and the contestation associated with the process.

7.5.2 Supplementary Protocol A/SP.3/06/06 Amending Protocol A/P.2/8/94 Relating to Community Parliament

In the years that followed, the Community Parliament maintained an advisory role while also performing functions related to security mediation and election observation. However, in 2006, following a directive from the Authority for its restructuring, the ECOWAS passed a supplementary protocol. The intention expressed in the Preamble of the instrument expresses that the Authority decided to permit the now described "ECOWAS Parliament" to effectively participate in the decision-making and create the "necessary synergy and cooperation between it, member state assemblies and the institutions of the Community. Essentially, the Authority was apparent in its purpose for the restructuring, which aimed to establish the ECOWAS Parliament as a distinct political arm and create an administrative wing capable of providing the required administrative services for its members (ECOWAS Parliament, 2006). These superficial proposals to the fundamental constitution of the regional parliament meant that the initial member state's preference for the core features of the parliament remained significantly unchanged with this decision by the Authority. Instead, the supplementary protocol in 2006 focused on developing the institution's administrative capacity and had no evidence of enhancing the democracy and good governance role of the parliament in the ECOWAS.

Notwithstanding, some of the changes included a redefined Article 3, changing the designation of the "House of Representatives of the Peoples of the Community" to "the ECOWAS Parliament". A new

Article 4 provided for the “Life of Parliament”. At the same time, Article 7 (formerly 6) was also redrafted to include Article 7(2), “The powers of the ECOWAS Parliament shall be progressively enhanced from advisory to co-decision making and subsequently to a law-making role in areas to be defined by the Authority”⁴⁹. The Authority’s recognition that the ECOWAS Parliament could potentially assume the role of co-decision maker reinforces the influence of the present normative environment on the preference of member states and the norm contestation dynamics regarding the norms on democracy and good governance within the region. This preference, I argue, is responsible for the member states’ reluctance to deepen the integration of democratic and good governance norms by enhancing the powers of the ECOWAS Parliament. Evidence of this is demonstrated during the period of transition, which resided solely at the discretion of the Authority. In the opinion of a senior ECOWAS official in response to a question regarding the purpose of the ECOWAS Parliament in the region’s organisational structure. The official responded that:

Now, where did we go wrong? We went wrong because the transition lasted too long. The transition lasted too long. Because this parliament was established in 2000. Today, we are 23 years down the line. There was no reason why that transition should have lasted this long. Well, it is a bit difficult to say. But I know that ECOWAS has lost face. I would not say credibility, but face. As far as issues of democracy and rule governance are concerned (Interviewee, 070K)⁵⁰.

From the foregoing analysis of the patterns observed so far in the Authority’s approach, one would be hard-pressed to find possibilities or guarantees that the ECOWAS Parliament would be bestowed a role as a co-decision maker or independent law-making body when the parliamentary representatives are directly elected by universal suffrage. This is mainly because the thesis’s findings demonstrate that the 2006 supplementary protocol only expanded the administrative capacity of the Community Parliament and further conditioned the development of democratic and good governance norms, arguably to preserve the contestation process due to the sustained influence of the ECOWAS normative environment.

⁴⁹ ECOWAS Parliament (2006). *SUPPLEMENTARY PROTOCOL A/SP.3/06/06 AMENDING PROTOCOL A/P.2/8/94 RELATING TO THE COMMUNITY PARLIAMENT*. [Online]. 2006. Gazettes Africa. Available At: <https://archive.gazettes.africa/archive/Aa-Ecowas/2006/Aa-Ecowas-Official-Journal-Dated-2006-06-01-Vol-49.Pdf>.

⁵⁰ Interview 06, Senior ECOWAS Official, October 2023, Abuja

7.5.3 Supplementary Act A/SA.1/12/16 Relating to the Enhancement of the Powers of the ECOWAS Parliament

In the Supplementary Act to Enhance the Powers of the ECOWAS Parliament (2016), the region introduces to the normative environment proposed democratic and governance norms intended to synergies the mission of the region's parliament with parliamentarians worldwide in their duty to represent the people, oversight sectoral activities, including budget and to legislate for the good functioning of the society (ECOWAS Parliament, 2016). In addition, member states decided that the ECOWAS Parliament should be aligned with the realisation of the organisation's 2020 vision, which advocates for greater involvement of the people in the community's decision-making process. The Supplementary Act contains several key provisions that developed new integration functions for the ECOWAS Parliament and signified the infusion of democratic norms within the institution. Some of these crucial attempts at integrating the democratic and good governance norms are included in provisions in Article 4 on the "Objectives of the Parliament":

- b. Strengthen representative democracy in the Community;
- e. Promote and defend the principles of human rights, democracy, the rule of law, transparency, accountability and good governance;
- f. Promote the practice of accountability;
- j. Reinforce the legitimacy of the actions taken by the Community Executive in the field of regional integration;
- k. Participate in the process of enacting Community Acts pursuant to the goals of the Community and in areas defined under this Supplementary Act;
- l. Work towards harmonising sectoral policies and legislations of Member States;

Article 4b of the Act demonstrates that member states recognise and accept that the ECOWAS parliament is a conduit for representative democracy in the region. This recognition in 2016 contrasts with the 2006 provision on the Competence of the Community Parliament in the Field of Human Rights and Fundamental Freedoms. Articles 4e and 4f of the Supplementary Act also notably consider these proposed functions of the Parliament in more assertive terms, including expressing them as "to promote and defend". Additionally, the Act confers on the ECOWAS Parliament the power of "reinforcing the legitimacy of the actions taken by the Community Executive in regional integration in Article 4j, a fundamentally required provision for the ECOWAS authority.

However, the legitimacy function comes at the price of a semi-autonomous legislature operating under visibly no separation of powers. Instead, this provision reinforces the legitimacy of the Community

executive actions without the attendant traditional scrutiny. When questioned on the efficacy of the adopted Supplementary Act in 2016 after a long transition period, the interviewee responded:

“And then, at some point, the heads of state also said the transition should come to an end. So, you know, the then speaker, Senator Ekweremadu, who initiated it forcefully, did that because he felt the parliament was underutilised. For him, he was of the opinion that you cannot have a parliament that cannot make laws and then call it a parliament. So, let us move from where we are. That was the idea. But unfortunately, it was watered down. Watered down to what we have” (Interviewee, 070K)⁵¹.

This profound dilution of the powers of the ECOWAS Parliament can also be observed in other instances, such as Article 7(b) and (c) under Competence, where the Supplementary Act highlights new powers for oversight functions, including those related to the community budget and the activities of programme implementing bodies of the community. Although the mandatory referral of the community budget established some form of participation of the legislative arm in the budgeting process, their decision is limited to an opinion in Article 11(1). Furthermore, considering that the member state preferences have not shown any substantial deviations, the perceived participation of the legislative arm in the process is aimed explicitly at enhancing third-party confidence in the budgeting process. Article 16 retains the autonomy of parliament over its budget, and Article 18c provides for the inclusivity of gender participation in parliamentary elections. At the same time, Article 41 provides for the ECOWAS Parliament’s role in the region’s security structure and the promotion of elections.

For the most part, these proposed changes were deliberate and not intended to impact the region’s normative environment, as correlated in an interviewee’s response when describing the circumstances which guided the decision on capacities to enhance in the ECOWAS Parliament in 2016. The senior ECOWAS official explains the influence of the normative environment:

“.....honestly, 2016 that is when they had the last enhancement. We initially started with the idea of direct universal suffrage. Then, that was jettisoned when we realised that we may not be quite ready to do that. Member states are having problems with their own national parliaments. Then, you want them to now elect parliamentarians who would work at the regional level. So, we’ve realised that we had not quite gotten there at the time where it is very obvious that the people have not played by the rules” (Interviewee, 0080T)⁵².

⁵¹ Interview 06, Senior ECOWAS Official, October 2023, Abuja

⁵² Interview 08, Senior ECOWAS Official, August 2024, Online

This underlying consideration is supported by the observation that the changes introduced to indicate the acceptance of democratic and good governance norms were not backed by relevant mechanisms (see Tables 7.3). The finding demonstrates that, for example, the 20016 agreements specifically suppressed oversight functions, limiting their supervision to the activities of program bodies. This created a firmly established pattern of non-interference in the activities of the ECOWAS commission. The above analysis of the regional normative instruments reveals a normative framework that is at odds with the public assessment of the adopted norms on democracy and good governance in the region. The region's rhetoric of democratic and good governance downplays the behavioural contestation by member states during norm implementation and, therefore, misdiagnoses the outcomes more often than not. Although the norm on democracy and good governance has been accepted in the region, implementation reveals that member states have sustained their contestation for nearly half a century, mainly because the norm has not been validated. This nuanced understanding of democratic and good governance norm status within the norm-building dynamics is highlighted in an interview with a senior ECOWAS official, who explained that:

People talk about African democracy, which is not an end but a means to an end. In this case, there is continually the need for contestations and conversation as to how you can aggregate the different views of the people and come to a common understanding of what democracy is, should be, or should lead to. So, imagine that at the nation-state level, there is still a conversation about how we should organise ourselves and the meaning of democracy. Then take it to the larger regional context in which you have each state with different histories, different experiences, different colonial experiences, different understanding, different cultures, and different perceptions as to what democracy should be (Interviewee, 030B)⁵³

The empirical evidence found within the examined institutional rules facilitates the observed outcome of variations in democracy and good governance norms. As discussed in the introduction to this chapter, two causal mechanisms sufficiently explain the circumstances that account for these variations. They include when member states engage in integrating norm outcomes and norm revalidation through continuous contestation.

⁵³ Interview 03, Senior ECOWAS Official, October 2023, Abuja

Table 7.2.		DEVELOPMENT OF GOOD GOVERNANCE NORMS - ECOWAS PARLIAMENT				
Community Parliament 1994		Community/ECOWAS P		ECOWAS Parliament 2006		Supplementary Act 2016
Article	Section	Amendments/Norm Promoted	Article	Section	Article	Section
1	Definitions	Reclassification of Authority	1	Definition	1	Definition
2	Structure	Retained	2	Structure	2	Designation
3	Designation	Reformulated/ECOWAS Parliament	3	Designation	3	Structure
4	Seat of Parliament	Retained	4	Life of Legislature	4	Objectives of Parliament
5	Composition	Retained	5	Seat of Parliament	5	Life of Legislature
6	Competence	Reformulated	6	Composition	6	Composition
7	Election, Terms of Office and Vacancies	Align with National Assemblies	7	Competence	7	Competence
8	Written Declaration	Retained	8 (2)1	Terms of Office	8	Modalities for Participation
9	Immunity	Retained	9	Written Declaration	9	Mandatory Referrals
10	Allowance	Retained	10	Immunity	10	Non Mandatory Referrals
11	Voting	Retained	11	Allowance	11	Opinion
12	Incompatibility	Retained	12	Voting	12	Mandatory Assent of Parliament
13	Sessions of the Parliament	Retained	13	Incompatibility	13	Procedure for Opinion
14	First Session	Reclassification of Authority	14	Session of the Parliament	14	Procedure for Mandatory Assent
15	The Speaker	Reformulated	15(a, b, c)	First Session	15	Resolution of Parliament
16	Bureau	Reformulated	16 (1-6) (4 a-h)	Election of Speaker	16	Budget of Parliament
17	Public attendance	Retained	17 (1,2 A,B,C,D)	Structure of Parliament	17	Parliament Budgetary Powers
18	Budget of the Parliament	Retained	18	Public Attendance	18	Election, Terms of Office and Vacancies
19	Rules of Procedure	Legal Authority	19	Budget of Parliament	19	Incompatibility
20	Official languages	Retained	20	Rules of Procedure	20	Immunity
21	Amendments	State Authority	21	Official Languages	21	Waiver of Immunity
22	Entry into force	Reformulated	22 (1,2,3)	Amendments	22	Parliamentary Allowance
			23	Entry into Force	23	Voting
					24	Speaker

Table 7.2. DEVELOPMENT OF GOOD GOVERNANCE NORMS - ECOWAS PARLIAMENT					
Community Parliament 1994		ECOWAS Parliament 2006		Supplementary Act 2016	
<i>Article</i>	<i>Section</i>	<i>Amendments/Norm Promoted</i>	<i>Article</i>	<i>Section</i>	<i>Article</i>
					Decision Making Bodies and Organs
					General Secretariat
					Sessions of Parliament
					Convening Inaugural Session
					Affirmation
					Representation of ECOWAS Commission
					Strategic Plan of President of Commission
					Community Work Programme Report
					Questions to Council and Commission
					Public Attendance
					Interpellations
					Right of Parliamentary Initiative
					Relations with the Authority
					Relations with other Institutions
					External Relations and Parl. Diplomacy
					Conflict Resolution and Election Monitoring
					Rules of Procedure
					Official Working Languages
					Amendments and Revision
					Entry into Force
					Publication
					Repeal
					Depository of Authority

Table 7.3

Development of DGG Norms and ECOWAS Preliminary Powers Enhancement

	Articles	Norms on Democracy and Good Governance	Notes
<i>Community Parliament</i>	6, 7, 9, 11, 12, 18,	Human Rights and Fundamental Freedoms, Election; Right to Non-Prosecution; Right to Personal Opinion; Separation of Powers; Financial Autonomy	All norms reserved for the operations as a Community Parliament are absolute and accepted
<i>ECOWAS Parliament</i>	7, 8, 10, 12, 13, 19	Human Rights and Fundamental Freedoms, Co-Decision, Law-making; Election; Right to Non-Prosecution; Right to Personal Opinion; Separation of Powers; Financial Autonomy	Co-decision and Law-making - Indefinite Proposals. All other norms retained as above, absolute and accepted.
<i>Supplementary Act</i>	4, 7, 16, 18, 19, 20, 23, 39, 41	Strengthen Representative Democracy, Defend Principles of Human Rights, Democracy, the Rule of Law, Transparency, Accountability and Good Governance; Reinforce Legitimacy; Human Rights and Fundamental, Election Monitoring and Conflict Resolution Freedoms, Law-making; Financial Autonomy; Election, Gender Inclusivity in Elections; Community Budget Review; Separation of Power; Right to Non-Persecution; Right to Personal Opinion; Performance Oversight;	Mostly proposed without specific provisions, Oversight Function limited to Program Implementing; Budget Review limited to Opinion; Non-Interference Norms Prevalent; On invitation or exceptional circumstances

7.6. Integrated Norm Outcome

The causal mechanism of integrated outcome explains circumstances similar to those described in Chapter Six, such as norm substitution. However, the causal mechanism of integrated norm outcome applies to democracy and good governance norms, explaining ECOWAS's adoption of two norms, with shared validation and connected outcomes resulting from the deemphasising of one norm's independent implementation. For example, a commitment call, by Mohammed Chambas, the former Executive Secretary to ECOWAS member states, integrates democracy and good governance norms within the regions' security outcomes because independently, the implementation of democratic and good governance norms, as evidenced in the previous analysis of the related protocols, cannot achieve this objective without relying on the security norm. Chambas stated,

... for adherence to the principles enunciated in the Protocol on Democracy and Good Governance as a means of averting conflicts as well as establishing strategies that can be called upon to prevent or manage conflicts depending on the situation at hand (Chambas, 2002).

The investigation into this causal mechanism finds that the ECOWAS subsumes the norm outcome of democracy and good governance within the region's security mechanisms for two reasons: first, to maintain the potency of the interventionist and coercion norms previously adopted for regional stability, and second, to retain direct control over the interpretation of norm outcomes in the shared normative environment. The two normative instruments at the heart of this integrated norm outcome explanation are the ECOWAS Policy Framework for Security Sector Reform (2016) and the ECOWAS Conflict Prevention Framework (2008). These instruments, as observed, primarily emphasise norms that facilitate the region's security and stability objectives but also relate to the norm of democracy and good governance in more explicit terms.

The integration of security and democratic norms synthesis dates back to the prevalence of military regimes in the region and the results of their subsequent challenge by democratic norms. For instance, during the Foreign Affairs Ministers meeting of the Mediation Security Council, a report was discussed considering the overthrow of the democratically elected government led by Mr Henri Kanan Bedie of Côte d'Ivoire on 24 December 1999. The meeting resolved, relying on the ECOWAS Declaration of Principles 1991 and the Protocol on Security Mechanism 1999, to condemn the coup, but most importantly, reached a decision which effectively subsumed democratic norms within a military dictatorship. This decision saw the foreign ministers, who, rather than calling for the immediate return to power of the democratically elected government, legitimised the military regime by requesting that the military officers act democratically. The ministers requested that the coup plotters, exercising power under the National Salvation Council, establish an *independent body* to review the electoral code contained in the constitution, establish a transitional government, organise free and fair elections, and restore democratic institutions by June 2000 (ECOWAS, 1999).

This causal mechanism also addresses the challenge to democratic norms, including forceful transitions, which permeates similar outcomes across most instances. Table 6.1 illustrates this with the records of military coups and the evidence of integrated norm outcomes, where regional stability accommodates cases where the military regime's actions led to the truncation of a democratically elected government or the irregularities in the implementation of democratic and good governance norms. As observed in Chapter Six on norm substitution, the incentive for integrated outcomes lies in the crucial role of ECOWAS in choosing the outcome to align with, based on its regional prerogative to confer legitimacy and democratic credentials to member states. Hence, the ECOWAS primarily controls norm standards and can overlook the abandonment of democratic and good governance norms.

The causal mechanism of integrated outcome, as explained, does not rely on the independent implementation of democratic and good governance norms. Having been developed during the region's military era, this thesis investigation finds evidence within contemporary norm dynamics. For example, when questioned on the absence of standardised implementation of democratic and good governance norms in the region, a senior official admitted to discrepancies in implementing the laws:

That is the discrepancy. That is why we have a problem. However, this is not only at the level of the member states but also at the level of the institution itself. Sometimes, you can see that there is a variance in the way it implements its law. When it is a civilian head of state, they close their eyes. When it is a military head of state, they act. That is the problem. That is the challenge for ECOWAS. So, this is where we have a problem. But having a two-term or instituting two terms is not the problem. It is there already in the constitution, each constitution. But no, the implementation and respect of it are where the problem is. Now, that is why we are trying to revise it. No, they are not defined individually. No. There is no difference between the democracies. It is just implementing the law (Interviewee, 0120E)⁵⁴.

The vertical connectedness of democracy and good governance norms to regional security is reflected in all related normative instruments; however, the normative outcome is contingent upon member states' commitment to implementing the institutional rules governing regional security and stability. This not only affects the meaning and viability of democratic and good governance norms but also, as I highlighted when contextualising the causal mechanism, deemphasises the independence of implementing these norms. Eventually, relying on an integrated outcome to support the perseverance of a norm becomes counterproductive. Mainly because it hinders the development of democratic and good governance norms, and as observed in the region's normative environment, it also maintains the norm in a continuous contestation process. In this thesis investigation, I find that this relationship is maintained due to the behavioural contestation adopted by member states to achieve their preferred outcomes. This also illustrates ECOWAS' implementation bias and indicates a source of the region's democratic and governance deficiencies. For instance, as observed, forceful and unconstitutional changes in government, including military coups, sometimes elicit strong responses from ECOWAS due to excessive attention. The difference between these responses and those that go unanswered is the level of control over the outcome. This depends on two factors: first, whether regional stability is not compromised, and second, whether ECOWAS can legitimise the actions through its mediation without extra scrutiny of the conditions. During an interview, questions regarding the member states' pattern in the practice of democracy and ECOWAS bias were responded to as follows:

⁵⁴ Interview 07, Senior ECOWAS Official, August 2024, Online

And what you have just said is the popular view. That is the popular view. That, okay, when heads of states, you know, amend the constitution, and then increase time limits, and then ECOWAS does not react, and then when a coup emanates, as a result of that change, ECOWAS now imposes sanctions. Why wouldn't ECOWAS impose sanctions on heads of state who are tampering with democratic ideals? Because the tenure year limit is part of it, it is a fundamental democratic idea. It is difficult, and I will tell you why: ECOWAS is an association of free will (Interviewee, 070K)⁵⁵.

During this thesis investigation, instances where actors challenged the region's norm integration included, for instance, when the Foreign Ministers at the MSC noted that,

.....the 7 December 1997 decision by the heads of state and government to authorise the creation of the mechanism reflects their primary concern with conflict prevention. The fact remains, however, that more than fifteen months after the protocol entered into force, conflicts continue to take a heavy toll on human, material and financial terms and pose a constant serious threat to the development and integration of the States of the ECOWAS sub-region (ECOWAS, 2001b: Item 18).

Similarly, the MSC maintained that:

.....the observation system and its organs do not appear to be sufficient for the purpose of efficient conflict prevention. The prevention mechanism cannot be more productive unless the following fundamental issues are addressed: transparent elections, the issue of democracy in all of its ramifications, the status of the opposition, good governance, sharing of national wealth, the rule of law, the role of the army in a democratic state etc. (ECOWAS, 2001b: Item 19).

In addition, the council had envisioned that, conflicts within the region would persist and escalate in the subregion until the issues surrounding the independent implementation of democratic and good governance norms were resolved. In this view, the council stated that,

.....these are fundamental issues, and their resolution will go a long way to enhance the sub-region's conflict prevention capacity. It is important that the ECOWAS sub-region should be endowed with a set of guiding rules and principles governing the actions and conduct of partners in the interplay of politics. This body of rules and principles will be pivotal to the conflict

⁵⁵ Interview 06, Senior ECOWAS Official, October 2023, Abuja

prevention mechanism and could be embodied in a code of Conduct forming an integral part of the protocol (ECOWAS, 2001b: Item 22).

Although the ECOWAS has recognised democracy and good governance norms since 2001, the region has remained unsettled, and conflicts have persisted due to the agreed-upon normative instruments intentionally negotiated to produce integrated outcomes, especially considering that the interpretation of the democratic and good governance norm provisions are open to varied implementation. In most cases, for instance, when the Sixth Ministerial Meeting of the MSC called for restoring sustainable peace to the sub-region through the “strengthening of democracy and stability” (ECOWAS, 2001b: Item 1), these calls remained rhetorical on the part of implementing democratic and good governance norms. A view over two decades later espoused by an interviewee:

Now, that is where we are challenged to implement democratic norms equally or evenly in the subregion. We are challenged to ensure democracy is practised in the subregion (interviewee, 0120E)⁵⁶.

7.6.1 Integrated Outcome and the ECOWAS Parliament

This thesis investigation finds that the ECOWAS parliament’s relationship to the region's democratic and regional normative outcomes exists within this peculiar normative structure. This explains the behaviour of political elites towards the complete enhancement of the ECOWAS Parliament, which would transform it into a critical democratic institution. For instance, this thesis's findings indicate that the initial consideration during the First Ordinary session in 2003, geared towards empowering the ECOWAS parliament, aimed to enhance the presence of ECOWAS, which is an integrated outcome achieved by enhancing the democratic features of the institution. The meeting described The ECOWAS Parliament as:

.... young and it is indispensable to promote activities that will enable her [ECOWAS] to be better known and make people and the authorities in our countries to be better aware of her [ECOWAS] existence and operations since *she* [ECOWAS Parliament] represents the diplomatic image of the institution at the sub-regional level (ECOWAS Parliament, 2003)⁵⁷.

⁵⁶ Interview 07, Senior ECOWAS Official, August 2024, Online

⁵⁷ Additions in brackets are mine.

While the recommendation suggested that proposed changes promote the diplomatic image of the institution to the people and countries, the representatives of the ECOWAS during the meeting did not make any attempt to include or recognise the primary normative agency of democracy and good governance. This reliance on an integrated outcome implies that actors could propose superficial changes and enjoy the benefits of being recognised as a democratic institution.

In the analysis of the ECOWAS Parliament, the integrated approach explains that ECOWAS recognises the outcomes of democracy and good governance norms based on an ECOWAS Parliament whose institutional rules and independent implementation will not achieve similar outcomes. For instance, the conclusion to a 2003 harmonisation meeting organised to develop terms of reference for enhancing the ECOWAS Parliament's powers was unsurprising. The then Secretary of the Parliament, Mrs Halima Ahmed, reiterated that the meeting aimed to achieve the effective implementation of the provision of the protocol on the ECOWAS Parliament. At the end of the meeting, even the terms of reference still came short of the expectations for the enhanced powers of the ECOWAS Parliament. For emphasis, the negotiators failed to agree on any substantial changes, including direct universal suffrage or the deepening of democratic credentials amongst the ECOWAS and its institutions (ECOWAS, 2003d). The enhancement of the powers of the ECOWAS Parliament in 2016 was no different. To illustrate, when questioned on the member states' continued hesitancy to grant full powers to the ECOWAS Parliament, including co-decision authority, the interviewee offered an insightful opinion:

“I do not have any empirical evidence to support this, but I feel the heads of state also are comfortable with this. If you bring in dedicated members of parliament to clearly define powers, that means that they will be competing with you. Because right now, the legislative powers are with the heads of state. Council of Ministers and heads of states. Council, you know, issues regulations, which must be obeyed, even by Parliament. The heads of state do supplementary acts, which must be obeyed. If you have an empowered Parliament, that is a function of the Parliament. They make laws for the heads of state to endorse.

So, I think the heads of state are comfortable with this arrangement. They may not want to go beyond this arrangement because of the possibility of losing power over the community. But like I said, I do not have any empirical evidence to support this, my thinking. It is a hypothesis (Interviewee, 030B)⁵⁸.

It is essential to note that interviewees provided various explanations regarding the member states' hesitancy in empowering the ECOWAS Parliament. However, the common denominator among most

⁵⁸ Interview 03, Senior ECOWAS Official, October 2023, Abuja

responses' centres around the influence of the normative environment and the need for heads of state to control the implementation of sovereignty-limited or threatening norms. This includes democratic and good governance norms, which imply that considerable powers would be transferred to members of parliament, including balancing control over the diffusion of these norms. For instance, when the question is asked suggesting that disagreement over the redistribution of power could be the primary contestation point, the interviewee responds;

No, it was not a redistribution of power. It was more of, let us do the right thing. Okay. It was more of us having stayed in one area for too long. Okay. And that it was coming as a result of the lack of proper utilisation of the parliament. So, it was not a redistribution of power because if you are talking about redistribution of power, nobody will accept that, and nobody will agree to redistribute power easily. No, it was not so. It was rather, you know, the urge that, look, we have this parliament, we said, go into a transition. And then at some point, the heads of states also said, the transition should come to an end (Interviewee, 070K)⁵⁹.

In addition, while interviewee 020L⁶⁰ agrees that the contest is between the member states' representatives and the council of ministers who feel threatened of losing their power, the interviewee also maintains that fully empowering the ECOWAS Parliament would require changing to the ECOWAS Treaty. However, when questioned on why ECOWAS parliamentarians are not directly elected to fulfil the mandates of the ECOWAS and further integrate the norm on democracy and good governance in the regional organisation, another interviewee explains the official position:

The cost is the official answer. Because having direct elections, selecting just 115 people from a population of 400 million people costs a fortune. So, who will pay? So, this is the official excuse for not having direct elections. And to some extent, the community itself has not been validated (interviewee 010A)⁶¹.

Based on the foregoing findings, the causal mechanism of integrated norm outcomes remains one of the core determinants of the diverse outcomes in security and democratic norms. The integrated outcome of regional security and democratic norms relies on the implementation of collective security norms. However, in the case of democracy and good governance with the ECOWAS Parliament, an integrated outcome relies on the implementation of democratic norms, as the institutional rules of the ECOWAS Parliament cannot be implemented independently to achieve a similar outcome. In addition,

⁵⁹ Interview 06, Senior ECOWAS Official, October 2023, Abuja

⁶⁰ Interview 02, Senior ECOWAS Official, October 2023, Abuja

⁶¹ Interview 01, Senior ECOWAS Official, October 2023, Abuja

the impacts on the two norms are equal, albeit in opposite directions. While security norms are internalised and expanded, the reverse is observed for democratic and good governance norms. For instance, in 2005, the ministerial meeting report on the implementation of the security mechanism observed that “Elections are the most important barometer for democracy. However, they are also a potential source of conflict and threat to peace and security” (ECOWAS 2005b: Item 25). This demonstrated that, while commitment grew for regional security and stability, the opposite was the case for democracy and good governance norms. Particularly when the context is considered, this reflection was recorded four years after the adoption of the Protocol on Democracy and Good Governance in 2001, and only three countries had ratified the protocol at that time.

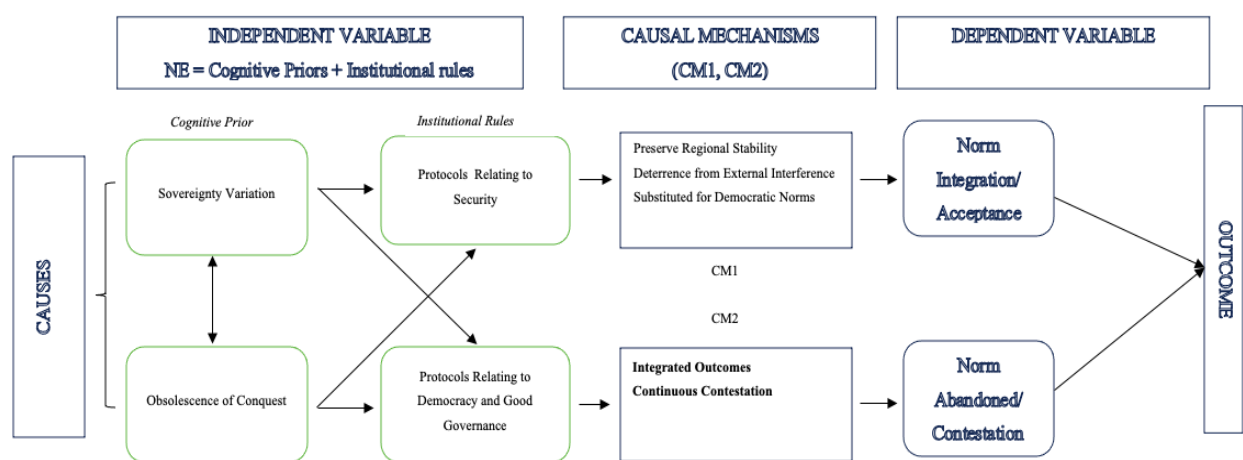


Figure 4.0 Causal Pathway for ECOWAS Regional Democracy and Good Governance Norms Outcomes

7.7. Norm Revalidation and Continuous Contestation

The second causal mechanism of this finding reveals that the sovereignty-limiting or threatening norm of democracy and good governance outcomes varies when contestation occurs following sustained attempts to revalidate the norms. In Chapter Five of this thesis, I discuss various conflicts, coups, rebellions, civil wars, and other domestic and regional security challenges. In most cases, the penultimate causes of these conflicts have been the breakdown of governance, the forcible change of governments, and other individual challenges to constituted authority based on race, ethnicity, and other cultural and linguistic differences, which can be related to the erosion of democratic and good governance norms. Recently, Dan Eizenga, while discussing the coups in the West African region, stated, “We largely saw civilian rule strengthening in Africa up until that moment, and I think that the Mali coup was a

critical juncture in the weakening of that norm”⁶². In retrospect, norm erosion or weakening had endured through behavioural contestations engineered to implement outcomes aligned with member state preferences. This analysis is supported by the findings that, within the West African region, democracy and good governance norms exist in a state of contestation and are yet to complete the norm-building process. Hence, nearly half a century after its formation, the revalidation of democratic and good governance norms is, in part, a circumstance that has led to ECOWAS sustaining diverse outcomes for sovereignty-limiting or threatening norms.

Despite the efforts to review the protocol on democracy and good governance, the normative environment’s influence on member states remains a significant factor. It continues to shape the preference of actors’ actions during implementation and often leads to contradictions between the agreed norms and outcomes. The causal mechanism explains the circumstances that lead to diverse norms resulting from the revalidation and continuous contestation undertaken by member states. For instance, a senior ECOWAS official, when asked why the democratic and good governance norms are yet to be fully integrated in the region, explained:

“.....from the beginning, we spoke about this colonial legacy and how the region cannot define one democratic system for everybody; you know, it is not happening. So long as it does not offend because when the original norm comes in confrontation with the national constitution, the national constitution will take precedence. Right? So, we do not want to have an original norm violating the constitutions of member states, No. So, the original norm is just to set a broader perspective regarding best practices and giving indications, but not drilling down to what you must do” (Interviewee, 070E)⁶³.

This nuanced analytical understanding emphasises the often-disregarded influence of the region’s normative environment, potentially observable during norm negotiations in member states’ forums. For instance, a review of the Protocol on Democracy and Good Governance, conducted by ministers of justice from member states in 2021, provides some evidence. In this speech, H.E Sylvia Adusu (Dr), on behalf of the Chair of Authority of Heads of State and Government and as Chair of the Council of Ministers, suggested that the review was:

⁶² Interview in Lawal, S. (2024). *West Africa’s ‘coup belt’: Did Mali’s 2020 army takeover change the region?* [Online]. 27 August 2024. Al Jazeera. Available at: <https://www.aljazeera.com/news/2024/8/27/west-africas-coup-belt-did-malis-2020-army-takeover-change-the-region>.

⁶³Interview 03, Senior ECOWAS Official, October 2023, Abuja

... timely given the evolving democratic concerns across the Member States, particularly with the incidents of Coup d'états in Guinea and Mali. She urged Member States' representatives to be mindful of these political exigencies in their efforts to provide concrete recommendations on the limit to the terms of Presidents of Member States and an effective sanction regime for ECOWAS (ECOWAS, 2001j: 3)

However, essential to the context of the contestation process above, the negotiations remained inconclusive, even with the recognition that the prevalence of coups d'états was due to the lack of an efficient democratic and good governance framework within the region. This means that, despite the threat to civilian administration in the region, member states still could not converge on vital components to strengthen the norm. At the end of the meeting, several critically related norm frameworks were and are still pending the inclusion of robust provisions and convergence among member states after nearly 50 years. Some of these areas include:

1. Human Rights and the Rule of Law
2. Inclusivity of youth, women and people with disabilities in political and development processes
3. Democratic control of the Armed and Security Forces
4. Sanction Regime for Unconstitutional Change of Government
5. Reinforcement of the integrity of election and electoral processes
6. Institutionalisation of Political and Social Dialogue
7. Poverty Alleviation Initiative
8. Term Limit for President
9. After Office engagement for Ex-President

In addition, other evidence of continuous contestation around the democratic and good governance norms can also be observed during regional norms revalidation meetings. For instance, although H.E Sylvia Adusu (Dr) commended contributions from the various technical and diplomatic sources for the proposed draft capable of addressing democratic decline in the region, multiple member states still considered the draft proposal to be a “document which constituted a challenge to their states’ sovereignty”⁶⁴:

⁶⁴ ECOWAS, 2021i: Item 11

Mr Delbe Constant, representing the Minister of Justice of Cote d'Ivoire, stressed that the review process boarded on key sensitive areas of political government in the Member States. In this regard, he made reservations and requested that the draft Revised supplementary Protocol be submitted, for comment and discussion by Heads of States and Government (ECOWAS, 2021i: Item20).

Also,

Mr Komlan Missite, representing the Minister of Justice of Togo, noted that the Supplementary Protocol is an important regional instrument, thus emphasised the need for more time for further engagement among national stakeholders. To this end, he made a reservation to allow for more engagement at the national level for the review of the Supplementary Protocol (Ibid: Item 21).

At the end of the negotiations, the draft proposal was submitted to the ministers' level of the MSC, acknowledging the reservations made by Cote d'Ivoire and Togo. Following the half-decade-long attempts to establish a shared regional normative framework for the internalisation of democratic and good governance norms, the evidence, besides any progress made on the attempt to review the Protocol on Democracy and Good Governance 2001, indicates that member states may have abandoned the implementation of these norms to preserve their preferred outcomes. These member states' preferences, executed through behavioural contestation, explain the sudden collapse of previously considered internalised democratic norms in the region. As noted in Dan Eizenga's interview, "I do not think you will find another four years that has seen so many coups and counter-coups since [that time]" (Lawal, 2024). In the ECOWAS official assessment:

...the reversals occur thorough coup d'états in some member states mainly because "progress towards the entrenchment of democratic culture and the respect for the institutionalised political governance processes has been slow and uneven across the Member States (ECOWAS, 2021i: Item 2).

However, on the backdrop of this evidence, I put forward the argument in an interview with a senior ECOWAS official. In my question, I explored the possibility that the review of the 2001 Protocol on Democracy and Good Governance was being negotiated within a framework that protected the incumbent rather than encouraged the integration of the norm in the region. I also questioned whether this practice explains the contextual challenges that influence the detachment of the norm from internalisation, in contrast to security norms. The interviewee explains thus:

I do not think that instrument protects the incumbent. It does not. Rather, member states are not properly domesticating the element of that particular supplementary protocol. Indeed, that protocol, more or less, I mean, is more general. It talks about principles of democracy, governance, and the need to be inclusive. It talks about decentralisation. So yes, if you look at it, the protocol means well, but it is the member states. There is so much in that article. It talks about respect for minority rights, women, persons with disabilities, youth, giving them space and others. It is just the implementation (Interviewee, 070E)⁶⁵.

The interviewee's response acknowledges the influence of member-state implementation preferences. However, it falls short of explaining the influence and the outcome of the recurrent erosion of the norm in the region. This prevailing consideration is espoused expansively in the following ECOWAS official record:

The major gaps in some of the Member States' democratic trajectory have been the lack of broad legitimacy and an unquestioned commitment of both parts of the political elite and the community citizens to democracy. Insufficient accountability of governments to the citizens and respect for the rule of law and human rights continue to prevail. Other visible negative trends include the unprofessionalism of some sections of civil society and the media supporting manipulations of many transitional and electoral processes (ECOWAS, 2021i: Item 3).

Moreover, the persistence of the norm contestation process is evident, with member states consistently pushing for their preferred norm outcome. The trajectory towards a non-standard protocol underscores the varied outcomes, and this ongoing contestation accounts for this. For instance, in 2021, the review process concluded with the draft protocol being submitted to the Authority twice, but it failed to garner convergence among member states. The document was initially returned to the Commission for *perfection* before signing and ratifying (ECOWAS, 2021i: Item 6). However, after being perfected to the character of a supplementary act, the Authority once again stepped down the draft protocol (ECOWAS, 2022c: Item 4). This persistence of the norm contestation process continued into 2022, despite efforts by the Chairperson of the ECOWAS Council of Ministers and Minister of Foreign Affairs of the Republic of Ghana, Hon. Shirley Ayorkor Botchwey, to emphasise the efficacy of developing the norm in the region and requesting delegates' cooperation in reaching an agreement. Member states maintained their disagreements:

Senegal made reservations on the methodology used by the Commission in carrying out the review process, noting that sufficient time was not given for internal consultations at the

⁶⁵ Interview 03, Senior ECOWAS Official, October 2023, Abuja

Member States level. It thereafter submitted a written objection to the review process (ECOWAS 2022e: Item 13).

In addition,

The Togolese delegation, while sharing Senegal's observations, also added that it would refrain from participating in substantive discussions on the subject given that it had not received the document ahead of time, as well as the observations made by other MS [*member state*]⁶⁶ and the matrix of contribution. This would have enabled the Togolese delegation to have a better understanding of the contributions and a better participation in the deliberation. The Togolese delegation considers that there is still a need to grant more time to enable MS to submit comments on the documents presented during the meeting (Ibid: Item 14).

Also crucial in the contestation process was an attempt at an article-by-article consensus of the draft protocol, which indicated that,

.....while Benin, Ghana, Gambia, Liberia, Niger, Nigeria, and Sierra Leone adopted Article I (i) as provided in the revised draft, Cote d'Ivoire expressed reservations. In this regard, Cote d'Ivoire holds that the issue of the presidential term limit is exclusively a matter of national sovereignty and the Constitutional provision of each Member State. Cote d'Ivoire proposed that Article 1(i) should read, "Member States shall respect presidential term limits as provided in their respective constitutions. They shall take the necessary measures aimed at promoting a democratic change of government (ibid, Item 15a).

These disagreements over the interpretation and application of Article 1(i) reflect the broader norm contestation process within ECOWAS, where member states assert their national sovereignty and challenge the Authority of the regional organisation in adopting certain norms. Additionally, the Togolese delegation made inputs that countered the initial presentation, providing written proposals from their government that expressed the same sentiments as the Ivorians on the provisions, particularly relating to Article 1(i) (Ibid: Item 15b). In contrast, "Cabo Verde and Guinea Bissau agreed with the content of Article 1 (i) but proposed that the word "consecutive" be included to read: "after two consecutive terms, an elected president shall not be eligible for a third term within five years immediately after the second term" (Ibid: Item 15c). Finally, "Benin made a reservation on the use in paragraph 8 of article 9 of the words "independent candidacies in elections" and proposed that these words be deleted" (Ibid: Item 15d).

⁶⁶ Addition mine

As observed, there is an emphasis on the provision for the presidential term, which can be explained by integrated norm outcome. To contextualise, the focus on the presidential term limit is mainly due to the external enforceability of that provision, as was the case with Jammeh in the Gambia. Presidential term limits are easily identified as breaches of the state constitution compared to behavioural contestations of democratic norms, which can be easily manipulated by heads of state within the country to appear legitimate. However, where member states engage in behavioural contestation during implementation, which transcends the bounds of avoiding reputational costs, in the extreme case of such outcomes, it could trigger the ECOWAS intervention norm.

7.8. Conclusion

In this chapter, I utilised two causal mechanisms to explain the diverse outcomes of democratic and good governance norms in the West African Region. This thesis examined Protocol A/SP1/12/01 on Democracy and Good Governance, as well as other related normative instruments. The findings demonstrate that the norm-building processes for democracy and good governance remain incomplete within the region. This is explained by two contributory causal mechanisms, reinforcing the argument that although ECOWAS and its member states have accepted the norm on democracy and good governance, actors engage in behavioural contestation during implementation to shape the norm's outcome. The chapter findings also demonstrated that the norm-building process is a quarter of a century behind that of the regional security protocol; member states have maintained a vague contextualisation, coupled with subjecting the norm to implementation variations. I found that this was responsible for the extended attempts to review a proposed supplementary protocol, which have continued for nearly five years. Other related instruments exhibit a similar treatment, except for the ECOWAS Conflict Prevention Framework (ECPF) of 2008, which is linked to the regional security mechanism. In the review of the ECOWAS Parliament, similar member-state preference is maintained. Member states continue to constrain the development of good governance norms, which are often associated with an enhanced parliament.

The causal mechanism involves states aiming to achieve integrated outcomes, primarily through subsuming the independent implementation of democratic and good governance norms within the regional and security outcome. The target is to safeguard the potency of the interventionist norm and, second, to maintain control over the interpretation of normative outcomes. These synthesising effects could explain the prevalence of challenges to democratic regimes, mainly because challengers are rewarded by the impact of an integrated outcome over time once former military rebels convert to democratic regimes. The other causal mechanism explains that democratic and good governance norms are maintained in continual contestation due to member states' sustained attempts at revalidation.

These dynamics relate to the differences in norm outcomes and represent the source of the region's variations, as agreed-upon norms do not align with the actual outcome.

8. Chapter Eight: Conclusion

8.1. Reflection and Research Questions

When I began researching this thesis, ECOWAS member states numbered 15. During the write-up of this conclusion, three have withdrawn, bringing the number down to 12. The member states which withdrew were Mali, Burkina Faso and Niger. The actions resulted from irreconcilable differences between the withdrawing states' governments, represented by coup leaders, and an ECOWAS of member states, mainly composed of civilian regimes. Since its inception, the ECOWAS has focused on regional economic development, security and improving welfare for its citizens. Hence, an assessment by the International Institute for Strategic Studies sums up the implications of the Sahel states withdrawing from economic and political cooperation upon their citizens:

The putative withdrawal threatens to further weaken economic development in these three Sahelian states – already among the poorest in the world – and could see them pivot further towards the Russian sphere of influence. It will also likely undermine efforts to counter Islamist violence across the region, given the withdrawal of Western soldiers, and could see violence spread further to littoral West African states (IISS, 2024).

The West African region has witnessed numerous and sustained unconstitutional and forceful changes to power amongst its states. In 2022, the region adopted the Accra Declaration on Unconstitutional Changes of Government in Africa to address this practice. This new instrument is in addition to the previous ECOWAS Constitutional Convergence Principles, as contained in its Protocol on Democracy and Good Governance (2001), and an interventionist norm agreed upon by all member states within the region's Protocol on Security Mechanism (1999). However, the contradictory norm outcomes, including sustained coups and frequently challenged democratic processes, are still common within the ECOWAS to any keen observer, irrespective of the regime, whether military or civilian. These challenges to ECOWAS norms reinforce this thesis's overarching research aim of investigating which, why and how ideas and practices take root and endure in the region. Although the study on norm research continues to grow, previous research interests have concentrated on institutionalisation, compliance, contestation, and, lately, implementation. This thesis focuses on implementation, specifically within the West African region, and contributes to the emerging literature investigating norm outcomes after acceptance or rejection. As detailed above, this study area becomes imperative when norm rhetoric is fundamentally at odds with reality and practice. In some scholarly accounts, these puzzles are attributable to the moral failings of politicians or the weak and inefficient institutions of the state. More commonly, in African studies and related debates, this dissonant culture is analysed through the prism of the perceived prevailing practice of neopatrimonialism or the weak institutions that have

become synonymous with the African state (Rotberg, 2004; Warner, 1999; Jackson, 1987; Clapham 1998).

Even so, these analytical frameworks still need to theorise the historical trajectories of this topic. Therefore, this thesis expanded its investigation to accommodate a measure of social interaction analysis. This thesis investigated variations in member states' sovereignty and cognitive priors as components of the normative environment, which can significantly influence member states' preferences and lead to the observed norm outcomes in the region. Hence, this investigation aimed to resolve the source of normative contradictions by revealing, through the implementation mechanisms, a vital and nuanced understanding of the internalisation of norms.

In the broader debate, ECOWAS presents a unique opportunity to study the impact of sovereignty on the region's normative environment. In addition, in focusing on member states' preferences, researchers can adapt sociological paradigms such as Hart's *Common Law* approach of separating the "core of certainty" from the "penumbra of doubt" when investigating norm compliance. For instance, within this thesis, Hart's separation aligns with this thesis's findings that ECOWAS norms are situated along a spectrum, extending from accepted norms that are validated to those that are accepted, not validated and continually contested. Hart maintains that this duality of the core of certainty and penumbra of doubt is inescapable when actors attempt to adopt situations under general rules. This duality is also a common feature for all rules as they bear a fringe of vagueness that may affect recognition. This potential research area for Hart offers better prospects for understanding society and its compliance with rules or norms than being stigmatised as "conceptualism" (Hart, 1994: 123). Having engaged with a substantial number of sociological theories within this thesis investigation, I present definitive results that have implications for future research.

Upon reflection investigating this thesis, in my opinion, the investigation into the region's normative environment in competing norm dynamics research offers a more compelling set of explanations in contrast to the overtly emphasised institutional, procedural or ethical deficiencies, which in most cases are framed either within neopatrimonialism or the modernity of state debates. Second, the broader inference of this thesis is the attempt to theorise regionalism, mainly in Africa, socio-politically and empirically. This framework encouraged a system-based analysis and opened the ECOWAS to better scrutiny of its regional outcomes. This approach is vital to future research as the politics of rhetoric plays a dominant role in guiding interest away from our understanding of the fundamental composition and overriding influence on member state actions or preferences. For instance, in explaining why the ECOWAS Parliament remained partially empowered, the response from an interviewee explained:

⁶⁷ Hart, H.L.A. (1994) *The Concept of Law*. 2nd ed. Oxford, Oxfordshire: Clarendon Press.

“Even the European Parliament did not begin as a directly elected parliament. It began with indirect membership. And so, they said, okay, the parliament will have its members directly elected from the member states. However, within the transition period, members will now be elected from parliaments” (Interviewee, 070K)⁶⁸.

This example is a common diversion, which can be enhanced by contextualisation. For instance, the ECOWAS Parliament lags behind the EU in terms of timescales for empowering parliaments. Additionally, the ECOWAS had the advantage of isomorphic diffusion, and the gradual approach advocated for in advancing political norms is not applied to economic norms. During the development of norms for economic regionalism, negotiations are considerably accelerated, at least in terms of the number of agreements reached. Therefore, restricting research to merely comparing related regionalism outcomes effectively deflects from the simple, recognisable, and analytically rigorous explanation. Similarly, this extends to the numbing of expectations, which heightens the ferocity of the rhetoric. This position is reflected by a senior ECOWAS official who, when asked why member states of the regional organisation lacked the political will to pool sovereignty, explained:

To me, the main problem of ECOWAS, when it comes to security and politics, is too much integration. So, ECOWAS has too much power. The sovereignty of the member states left is minor, but ECOWAS has no responsibility. If they give you power, in compensation, you have responsibility. It is extraordinary that you see the mentality and the feeling of ECOWAS staff. It is like we think we are not seeing that the members have been given too much already. And that we have too much responsibility. So, it is a problem (Interviewee, 0110O)⁶⁹.

Resolving these contradictions at the core of preference and implementing normative identities underpinned my approach to this thesis investigation. In the next section, I outline each chapter’s fundamental contributions and then present the overall conclusion of this thesis. Lastly, I discuss future research agendas.

⁶⁸ Interview 06, Senior ECOWAS Official, October 2023, Abuja

⁶⁹ Interview 05, Senior ECOWAS Official, October 2023, Abuja

8.2. Chapter Contributions

In Chapter One, I introduced the research puzzle and the thesis design. I highlighted the need to focus regionalism research on the norm-building process, specifically in ECOWAS. Regional organisations such as ECOWAS, which has metamorphosed from isomorphism and interregionalism, although with varied outcomes, are better suited for investigating member-state behaviour to establish the source of contradictory norm outcomes. This thesis focused on the norm implementation gap within the literature and highlighted the importance of developing this research area. Hence, the thesis puzzle investigated the circumstances that lead to sovereigns limiting or threatening regional norms, experiencing variations, and what accounts for these variations. This thesis employs the process tracing approach to examine how the normative environment influences the implementation of the norms under investigation. The normative environment is described as a crucial source of influence on implementation mechanisms used by actors when designing agreements to achieve targeted norm outcomes. The Chapter also examines the suitability of ECOWAS, which recognised that the regional organisation provides a sufficient comparative profile to measure the outcome investigated and to apply the explanations to other international organisations. The Protocol on Regional Security (1999) is also regarded as one of the most sophisticated frameworks within the African continent and globally, while the Protocol on Democracy and Good Governance represents the current normative instrument that establishes norm acceptance in the region. This thesis relies on the explain-outcome process-tracing approach to link causality to outcome. The significance of this study lies in recognising the increasingly fundamental role that, social interactions play in norm research. Additionally, the interrogation of norm implementation in regional organisations, specifically in West Africa, places the Westphalian state and its variations at the centre of the investigation. This study benefits from ethnographic research, given ECOWAS's connection to the broader field of regionalism studies. Most important is the adoption of a socio-political approach to adequately contextualise contemporary research challenges, such as the threat to the immutability of sovereignty and the decolonisation of regionalism study. Among the numerous authors who have shaped the thesis design are scholars such as Joel Ng (2021) on the sovereignty norm in Africa, Stimmer and Wisken (2019) on the influence of contestation on the implementation of norms, and Betts and Orchard (2014) on the influence of institutionalisation and implementation on the outcome of norms. These studies paved the way theoretically with the most recent literature contributing to contestation and implementation dynamics in norm building.

In Chapter Two, I examined the existing literature on regionalism, categorising the study by waves with varying epistemological assumptions. This chapter presents a comprehensive account of the dynamic evolution of the study, highlighting the key drivers and dominant theoretical frameworks, as well as the impact of global political and economic systems on its development. The first wave occurred between the 1940s and Early 1980s and was theorised within classic regionalism literature. Early research has

made immeasurable contributions to the study and formed some foundational theoretical assumptions, which are acknowledged in contemporary regionalism debates (e.g., Söderbaum, 2016; Fawcett, 2015; Haas, 1970; Mitrany, 1943; Mattli, 1999; Schmitter, 2004). These theories, such as Hoffman's intergovernmentalism criticism of neo-functionalism and its centralisation of power, presented defining research agendas, supporting the study's growth. However, these classical theories are largely monotonous in focus owing to their exclusive remit to map and explain the expansion of the EU. This singular focus on the translation of the EU experience also encouraged the blind spots in these studies. For example, functionalist theories excluded social processes and were tailored to the EU (Mitrany, 1943). Intergovernmentalism was state-centric (Hoffman, 1966; Moravcsik, 1998). During the second wave, from the late 1980s to the late 2000s, although theories such as post-structuralism initially recognised identity in regionalism studies, it relied on rational micro-foundations for its analytical frameworks (Hooghe and Marks, 2009). Others include the New Regionalism Approach, which was simultaneously developing with the expansion of globalisation and had a skewed focus on economic integration while fusing culture and security. These convergences of dimension also presented challenges, including determining key actors (Hettne and Söderbaum 1998; Börzel and Risse 2009). However, theoretical contributions of comparative regionalism offered a complementary understanding of the intensity of regionalism rather than attempting to isolate analytical components. Comparative regionalism for this thesis theoretical framework meant that I could emphasise the ECOWAS identity, adopt conceptual pluralism, and also recognise varying historical experiences and cognitive trajectories, given the complexity of the research undertaking (Acharya, 2012; Reiss, 2022; Söderbaum, 2016; Rüländ and Bechle, 2013; Acharya and Buzan, 2007).

The review of the rational theories examined in the first and second waves concluded that they were unsuitable for this thesis investigation. I highlighted some limitations to methodological individualism in investigating issues related to interest and identity, the importance of analysing cooperation outside material influences or incentives, and the social constructivist recognition of normative and ideational factors that affect outcomes. Hence, I situated the theoretical framework of this thesis within the social constructivist approach. I argue that the social constructivist theory emphasises the importance of understanding norm-building and the influence of ideational factors, widely regarded for their role in shaping actors' beliefs through intersubjectivity. This also extends the theoretical boundaries of my thesis beyond the constraints of collective understanding within the physical world, as outlined in historical institutionalist and rational theories (Finnemore and Sikkink, 1998, 2001; Checkel, 1999). In addition, the current adaptability of the social constructivist theory enables the study of norm contestation, implementation and outcome. These advancements in norm research also enabled me to reflect on the duality of flexibility and stability, thereby establishing instances of continuous contestation, varied interpretation, and reconstitution of norms, all of which enhance the analytical depth of this research (Winston 2017). Finally, essential theoretical and analytical development in Glas

and Balogun, 2020; Betts and Orchard, 2014; Wiener 2007, 2008, 2017; Checkel, 2005; Ng, 2015; Stimmer and Wisken, 2019 contributed to this thesis's main arguments at the end of the Chapter. This Chapter's core arguments include: (1) its member states' experiences shape ECOWAS normative environment, (2) member states' access to implementation determines the outcome of norms, and (3) ECOWAS and its member states actively engage in behavioural contestation via implementation to shape the outcomes.

In Chapter Three, I discuss this thesis framework for causation. I determined the foundational basis upon which this thesis's causal claim rests. First, I argued that the outcomes of causal mechanisms are not static but depend on the context within which they occur (Falleti & Lynch, 2009: 1152). Second, I highlighted that sufficient causal explanation in this thesis would benefit from an interaction between these relationships. Hence, as discussed in Chapter One, this thesis's intermediate causal pathway – the normative environment, links normative conditions that reinforce the validity of causal relations and account for the region's social system, which demonstrates the interactions of heterogeneous member states. To emphasise, this thesis's acknowledgement of ECOWAS's unique normative environment enabled it to observe and capture essential micro processes, including normative contestation, norm implementation, and compliance, and to identify and analyse the diverse norm outcomes (Checkel, 1988).

The normative environment in this thesis is described as NE= RS, CP, IR. RS relates to the region's states. CP represents cognitive priors, which include social identities, values and norms specific to the region, that determine and condition an individual or social group's receptivity to new norms. IRs are institutional sets of rules that translate norms into law, which influence the region states. These include ECOWAS treaties, protocols, and other agreed-upon policy documents (Acharya, 2009: 21; Rüland, 2018: 70). The Chapter elaborates on the importance of relying on the NE to establish a better understanding of what is observed and exposed and the real value of things (Mbembe, 2001: 148). This is in contrast to alternative explanations, particularly adopting neopatrimonialism and the modernity of the state, which account for a significant share of the literature on ECOWAS and the wider African region. This thesis reflected on the debates and determined that these factors maintained less dexterity in their features required to explain the rapid socialisation of the region, which led to this thesis's decision to limit their contribution to this thesis investigation. This Chapter also discusses the thesis sources of cognitive prior, one of which relates to variations in the sovereignty of West African states. These cognitive priors highlight distinctions in the region shaped by the experiences of member states, an important component of the region's normative environment. This contextualisation also shapes the basis for explaining the changes, including the discussed evolution in Chapter Four around Westphalia's sovereignty post-colonialism. Scholarly theories suggest that states, mainly in Africa since

the post-1945 era of statehood, are recognised significantly differently from their counterparts, for example, in Europe. These sovereign variations produce complex outcomes in international norms (Englebert 2009), validating this thesis's proposed theoretical proposition that sovereignty variation in ECOWAS was largely exogenous and constraining the state's policy choices, including the diffusion of democratic and good governance and security norms. A second source of the West African region's cognitive prior discussion is the obsolescence of conquest (Holsti, 2004). This Chapter highlighted that member states remained cautious regarding the fundamental structure of international politics remaining unchanged and the anarchic nature being non-substitutable. For example, the Chapter emphasised that the West African experience of civilisation, the bedrock of its normative orthodoxy, was advanced through war and conquest; these experiences have a residual impact on the state's decision to implement specific norms. The Chapter analysis emphasises that this thesis's adaptation of the normative environment serves as a much-needed analytical bridge for research into non-Western states that cannot create their normative environment, like powerful states, but recognise the peculiarity of the region's social interactions. The chapter's logical progression in identifying this thesis's intermediate causal pathway enhanced its transparency and provided the necessary context to identify the relevant causation. It also complements causation with deeper epistemological explanations around the relationship between cause and outcome. The adoption of the social constructivist approach in Chapter Two supports this comprehensive examination of human agency and social processes in identifying causal mechanisms.

In Chapter Four, I undertook a micro-analytical endeavour, beginning with the origins of the West African states. Having established that causality results from necessity in Chapter Three, this chapter focuses on the development of the region's normative environment by recognising critical junctures throughout the region's history which demonstrate this claim. The analysis demonstrated that the earliest accounts of contestation in pre-colonial West Africa involved local challenges to the norm of aggression and colonial coercion, which led to diplomatic tussles but also numerous conflicts. These conditions support the development of the cognitive priors in this thesis regarding variations in sovereignty and the incredulity regarding the obsolescence of conquest. In observing the West African norm-building process, from the creation of states to the establishment of a regional organisation, this chapter also accounts for the diffusion of varied sovereignty norms, especially among Francophone and Anglophone West African States. For instance, following independence, the substantial French influence on the francophone member states suggested that sovereignty transfer was incomplete, leading to uncertainty about the obsolescence of conquest for states such as Nigeria.

Part of the outcome concerning sovereignty variation observed was the account of francophone states' clamour to remain as an extension of French sovereignty even after independence. The French pseudo-supranational sovereignty over the economy and culture continued to shape, in large part, the

preferences of francophone states. This chapter analysis recognised the efficacy of this influence during negotiations to establish a regional organisation or during interventions in conflicts with the Anglophone states, specifically when it led to the bifurcation of regionalism in the region. However, several transformations within the normative environment, also evident in the region, indicate that member states, especially the francophone group, negotiated guarantees with their anglophone counterparts regarding the transfer of concerns over the obsolescence of colonial conquest. This signified the foremost shared normative environment, although also recognising variations in sovereignty, which saw the francophone retain their identities. This chapter concludes with an ECOWAS normative environment characterised by economic cooperation, the politics of non-interference norms shaped by the obsolescence of conquest, and the duality in its regional organisation influenced by variations in member states' sovereignty.

In Chapter Five, this thesis examines the regional norm-building process in the face of undemocratic governments, security challenges, and the significant external interference that has characterised the ECOWAS since its inception. This chapter demonstrates the enduring impact of the obsolescence of conquest and sovereignty variations, as outlined in Chapter Four, on the agreements and norm-building process that foster shared norms following the formation of ECOWAS. Despite these factors, this chapter also acknowledges member states' challenges to the norm of external interference as they resolved to rely on each other's guarantees over concerns with the obsolescence of conquest. The chapter also discussed circumstances concerning the development of regional norms, including the ECOWAS Treaty 1975, which focused on the regional economy but lacked adequate mechanisms to implement the decisions reached. This also mirrors the 1979 Protocol on Free Movement of Persons. However, unlike the treaty, the free movement protocol did have a level of implementation mechanism, albeit one that was significantly ambiguous within its provisions, leaving the protocol open to varying interpretations.

The PNA 1978 and PMAD 1981 demonstrated a progressive shift in the preferences of member states towards collective security, heralding a continuing movement towards a shared normative environment. The PNA 1978 agreed on an obligation for member states to settle their conflicts peacefully. Most importantly, in instances of external intervention, the Protocol encouraged member states to act against committing or condoning any subversion, hostility, or aggression against other member states. The PMAD 1981 had a similar collective security framework but also brought to perspective the increasing agency of member states as norm entrepreneurs. The process of adopting this norm was marred by persistent contestation rooted in the existential fears of all member states stemming from their experiences of colonisation. In addition, the Chapter accounts for the region's normative transformation, which was also impacted as the Francophone countries adopted behavioural contestation approaches to distance themselves from the proposed joint security agreements with

France. Other normative processes analysed in the Chapter include the Declaration of Principles 1991, which addressed areas related to political, economic, and cultural norms, particularly human rights and the dignity of the human person. The agreement also introduced fundamental norms around political pluralism and a free democratic process. The Chapter also introduces the norm-building process associated with the Protocol Relating to the Mechanism for Conflict Prevention, Management, Resolution, Peacekeeping, and Security (1999) and the Protocol on Democracy and Good Governance (2001). Although these norms are discussed extensively in Chapters Six and Seven, their analysis demonstrates the influence of this thesis's cognitive priors and the institutional rules within the context of contestation during negotiations. To emphasise, this chapter relied on the analysis and impact of the Liberian and Senegalese Civil Wars to explain the development of these norms and the complete transformation of the ECOWAS normative environment as a result. The Chapter's contribution was to unpack the complexity of the ECOWAS Normative environment comprehensively and lay bare the essential factors throughout the process.

Chapter Six contributed that the regional security norm had completed the norm-building process with far-reaching integration and constitutionalising. This is evidenced by several critical provisions of the Regional Security Protocol, which was agreed upon in 1999. For instance, Chapter II Articles 4 and 25 were unambiguous in their preference for implementation strictly according to the protocol's provisions and to protect the norm from erosion. I also highlighted the significant impact of the ECOWAS interventionist norm, which is considered a rare and uniquely sophisticated structure within international systems. Chapter Six, based on several empirical data sources, established three causal mechanisms within the causal pathway that created circumstances where the norm outcome represented ECOWAS member state preferences for sovereign-threatening or limiting norms. These are for deterrence purposes against external aggression, norm substitution, and the preservation of regional stability.

The causal mechanism of deterrence from aggression enhances member states protection from external and internal interferences but also grants the ECOWAS the sole authority to justify any external intervention into a member country. Within the discussion, instances such as the Liberian Civil War, where an immediate attempt at averting the crisis was not prioritised by the international community, including the UN, and the subsequent reaction by ECOWAS to Portugal's attempt at militarily intervening in Guinea-Bissau were extensively analysed to support the deterrence argument. At the same time, the French approach to Côte d'Ivoire's request for interference in its 2002 conflict was applied as supporting evidence for the intervention justification claim. The causal mechanism of norm substitution explains that the region substitutes norms, such as democracy and good governance, for security norms, primarily when these norms are being contested. The causal mechanism of regional stability perseverance appears to be a common assumption in the debate over regionalism styles in

previous scholarly literature. However, the regime patterns must meet a suitability threshold set by ECOWAS to receive the required validity and substance. The chapter discusses these themes extensively with corroborations from interviews with senior officials of the ECOWAS and other evidence from the commission's records.

In Chapter Seven, unlike the security norm outcome of complete compliance, I determined that democracy and good governance norms remain incomplete in the norm-building process. My findings also demonstrate that, although member states' behaviour is also guided by international standards, which require the validation and acceptance of the norm to avoid reputational costs, ECOWAS member states accept the norms yet engage in behavioural contestations during implementation to shape their preferred outcome. This preference is supported by almost a quarter of a century of contestation behind the adopted and internalised security norms. The chapter undertakes a critical examination of the normative instruments associated with these norms, including draft proposals to review the protocol on democracy and good governance. The analysis of the substantive 2001 protocol concluded that contextualisation of the norms and mechanism to protect and measure implementation needed to be included. In addition, as discussed in Chapter Six, the increasing simultaneous challenge to the norms has led to multiple regional governance crises, necessitating a review of the protocol, with the 2021 and 2022 drafts debated. The 2021 draft represents a slight improvement but still falls short of a comprehensive attempt to address the critical policy areas responsible for the poor integration of the norm within the region. The 2022 proposal does attempt to develop the essential implementation mechanisms. However, it has not been accepted, and the current draft may not be sufficient to make the desired changes. Chapter Seven also highlights concerns about the influence of variations in sovereignty and cognitive priors. These are observed in instances where a member state's national assembly is likely to challenge ECOWAS norms, such as term limits, particularly within the francophone states.

Further, other democratic and good governance norm instruments analysed were the ECOWAS Conflict Prevention Framework (ECPF) 2008, which attempts to measure implementation against the outcome but also fails to interpret the norms. This is similar to the ECOWAS Policy Framework for Security Sector Reform and Governance (SSRG) 2016, whose security framework recognises the norms but is mainly at the discretion of the member states. The ECOWAS Parliament's instrument and mechanism were also analysed and found to be gradually enhanced, but not at a pace that allows co-decision authority and supervision over the integration of democratic norms and principles within the region. Hence, the two causal mechanisms that account for the variations in the norm outcome in the ECOWAS region are the integrated norm outcome and the revalidation and continuous contestation of the norms. The integrated norm outcome describes sharing norm outcomes and deemphasising independent normative implementation. At the same time, revalidation and continuous contestation refer to the return of the norm to the institution for constant review and interpretation.

8.3. Main Conclusion

I began this thesis by arguing that the implementation of norms in ECOWAS was contradictory and that explaining the puzzle by considering it as one of the outcomes of neopatrimonial practice or the inadequacy of states to modernise was fundamentally flawed because these somewhat common approaches had been sufficiently criticised. In addition, I demonstrated through the analysis of scholarly literature that social constructivism theory provided the most compelling theoretical and analytical framework for investigating the puzzle presented in this thesis after outlining the unresolved gap within the literature that contributed to the study. Hence, this thesis research question sought to explain, "Under what circumstances do sovereignty-threatening or limiting norms ECOWAS display varied outcomes?"

In my overarching argument, I maintained that access to implementation determines the outcome irrespective of the norm's character or the challenger's strength. This meant that implementation would determine the impact irrespective of the norm's ability to mitigate member state sovereignty. Three sub-arguments supported these submissions. First, I argued that the obsolescence of conquest and the variation in sovereignty was critical to developing member states' preferences, which impact the outcome of sovereignty-threatening norms in ECOWAS regardless of whether they were accepted or rejected. In the preceding Chapters Four and Five, this thesis established that these sources of cognitive priors were ingrained and directly influenced pre-independence communities' challenge to colonialism and, during their struggle for independence, but most importantly, they subsist still in the region irrespective of the evolutions witnessed in the region's normative environment pre- and post-ECOWAS formation.

Second, member states use their access to implementation to achieve their preferred normative outcome. This finding explains why the political elites of the Economic Community of West African States accept sovereignty-limiting or threatening norms. In Chapter Five, this thesis discusses the evidence of this proposition within the 1975 Treaty, the PNA 1978, the Protocol on Free Movement, and the PMAD 1981. Similarly, the case study analysis in Chapter Six of this thesis, on the Protocol Relating to the Mechanism for Conflict Prevention, Management, Resolution, Peacekeeping, and Security (1999), indicates that ECOWAS demonstrated the region's security would be its sole preserve and moved on to bar any interference. The member states altered their normative environment through specific critical provisions within the 1999 regional security protocol, including Chapter II, Article 4 on implementation, and Article 25, which protects against the erosion of the interventionist norm. Most importantly, the finding also established that member state preferences were shaped by the regional cognitive priors of sovereignty variation and the obsolescence of conquest. Three *causa* mechanisms investigated across gathered primary data, including meeting reports, related protocols and interviews, support this explanation:

1. ECOWAS member states accepted the sovereignty-limiting norms to preserve regional stability at all costs. This also includes related incentives such as ending regional conflicts, maintaining the regional organisation's international influence, self-preservation, and protecting the region's democratic practice.
2. ECOWAS agreements on security norms aim to deter external interference and aggression, as well as protect the region's economic sovereignty.
3. ECOWAS security norms are substituted for democratic norms in the region.

Third, ECOWAS and its member states adopt behavioural contestation when implementing democratic and good governance norms to determine its outcome. This finding accounts for the variation from similar sovereignty-threatening or limiting norm outcomes, such as security norms. The thesis' case study in Chapter Seven found that, although ECOWAS has accepted democratic and good governance norms, member preferences have led to these norms being continually contested. Unlike the regional security norms integrated within a year, the norm on democracy and good governance has been subject to contestations. It has lacked a comprehensive normative instrument, including internalisation and mechanisms, for about a quarter of a century. Moreover, in contrast to the regional security protocol, the normative instrument on democratic norms demonstrates that member states agree to terms easily subject to implementation variation. The norms are also not contextualised to any measurement. During the investigation, I also found that this feature is extended to related instruments that integrate democratic and good governance norms, except for the ECOWAS Conflict Prevention Framework (ECPF) of 2008, which is related to regional security. The ECOWAS parliament, as analysed in this thesis, was established by member states to represent the expression of good governance norms in the region. The treatment of the ECOWAS parliament has remained unchanged since its establishment in 1994. The institution has been severely constrained in integrating good governance within the region. The findings conclude that two causal mechanisms explain this variation in norm outcomes: achieving an integrated norm outcome and norm revalidation due to continuous contestation.

8.4. Future Research Agenda

This thesis's findings raise several research agendas that are vital to enhancing researchers' understanding of African politics in the future. First in consideration is the importance of norm research and the need to develop a robust theoretical and methodological approach to investigate norm building, including compliance and implementation. Politics in Africa and its subregions would greatly benefit from this significant improvement, which would ensure that future literature on the research interest is diverse and largely empirical. A significant contribution of my thesis to the future research agenda is the in-depth criticism of the "catch-all concept" perpetuated by the neopatrimonialism theory

(Mkandawire, 2015). This is even more so as the metamorphosis within the African political arena occurs at a much faster turnaround rate than the theory of neopatrimonialism can address. My thesis highlights the need to re-theorise African agency, framed within sociologically modified norms research. Similar to Krook and True (2010) for understanding static or unitary conceptualisation in the norm-building process in a changing environment and Glas and Balogun (2020) for predicting norm fit for regional societies. In addition, scholars such as Finnemore and Sikkink (1998) warned early on of the vacuum created when focusing on social interaction, mostly within Western liberal democracies, in global norm research. Therefore, developing research interest in political norm research in the African region offers more opportunities to address some shared, challenging questions, such as why norms change across borders and the inconsistencies between state norms and the behaviour of political elites. In current research, methodological calibration, for example, of an agent-based model, has been applied to examine the evolution of large-scale and complex social patterns. However, because they are purposefully designed to reproduce data from behavioural experiments (Andrighetto and Vriens, 2022), in order to reflect the dynamism and diversity of African society, capturing the results of social interactions must play a significant role in future methodological designs.

The second future research agenda is based on the findings of this thesis and its suggested starting point for future investigations into the design, development and implementation of normative instruments in ECOWAS and the broader regionalism systems. This thesis's overarching contribution is that member states shape the outcome of norms mainly due to their access to its implementation. This understanding largely contributes to future research interest in designing normative instruments and their mechanisms. By extension, the influence of this thesis's normative environment comprising the region's cognitive prior (obsolescence of conquest) and sovereignty variation are also important future research interests not only towards normative research but also for theorising the reintegration of the African region into the international political systems.

Appendix: List of Interviews

S/No	PARTICIPANT ID	PARTICIPANT DESCRIPTION	LOCATION	DATE
1	010A	Senior Official, ECOWAS Parliament	Abuja, Nigeria	18-Oct-23
2	020U	Senior Official, ECOWAS Commission	Abuja, Nigeria	20-Oct-23
3	070D	Senior Official, ECOWAS Commission	Abuja, Nigeria	20-Oct-23
4	0110O	Senior Official, ECOWAS Parliament	Abuja, Nigeria	23-Oct-23
5	0700E	Senior Official, ECOWAS Parliament	Abuja, Nigeria	23-Oct-23
6	030I	Senior Official, ECOWAS Commission	Abuja, Nigeria	24-Oct-23
7	0080T	Retired Senior Official, ECOWAS Commission	Zoom	02-Aug-24
8	0120E	Senior Official, ECOWAS Commission	Phone Call	02-Aug-24
9	0130R	Senior Official, ECOWAS Commission	Zoom	12-Aug-24

Abbreviations

AAFC	Allied Armed Forces of the Community
ACP	African, Caribbean, and Pacific
ADB	African Development Bank
ADO	African Defence Organisation
AFISMA	African-led International Support Mission in Mali – AFISMA
AFRC	Armed Forces Redemption Council
AHC	African High Command
ANC	African National Congress
ASEAN	Association of Southeast Asian Nations
AU	African Union
BMTT	British Military Advisory Training Team
CEAO	Communauté économique de l'Afrique de l'ouest
CEP	Committee of Eminent Persons
CPLP	Comunidade Países de Língua Franca Portuguesa
ECOMIG	ECOWAS Military Intervention in the Gambia
ECOMOG	Economic Community of West African States Monitoring Group
ECOWAS	Economic Community of West African States
ECPF	ECOWAS Conflict Prevention Framework
ECSC	European Coal and Steel Community
EEC	Europe Economic Community
EU	European Union
GPA	Global Political Agreement
IMF	International Monetary Fund Report
M5-RFP	Mouvement du 5 juin-Rassemblement des Forces Patriotiques
MERCOSUR	Mercado Común del Sur (Southern Common Market)
MINUCI	UN Mission in Côte d'Ivoire
MINUSMA	Multidimensional Integrated Stabilization Mission in Mali

MPSR	Patriotic Movement for the Restoration and Safeguard of the Nation
NAFTA	North American Free Trade Area
NATO	North Atlantic Treaty Organization
NE	Normative Environment
NPFL	National Patriotic Front of Liberia
NPRC	National Provisional Ruling Council
NRA	New Regionalism Approach
NS	Normative State
NSAs	Non-State Actors
OAU	Organisation of African Unity
OCAM	African and Malagasy Common Organization
PMAD	Protocol Relating to Mutual Assurance and Defence
PNA	Protocol on Non-Aggression
REC	Regional Economic Councils
RUF	Revolutionary United Front
SADC	South African Development Commission
SEM	European Union - Single European Market
SMC	Standing Mediation Committee
SSRG	ECOWAS Policy Framework for Security Sector Reform and Governance
UAM	Union Africaine et Malgache (UAM)
UEMOA	Union Economique et Monétaire Ouest Africaine
ULMO	United Liberian Movement for Democracy
UN	United Nations
UNAMSIL	United Nations Mission in Sierra Leone
UNECA	UN Commission for Economic Cooperation in Africa
UNSC	United Nations Security Council
USSR	Soviet Union
WTO	World Trade Organisation

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