



The ECOWAS Standby Force and West Africa Security

Makanjuola Obembe

*Department of Peace Studies and Conflict Resolution, Faculty of Social Sciences,
National Open University of Nigeria, Jabi Abuja
E-mail: olaobembe@gmail.com*

Abstract

The study comprehensively explored the security implications of the withdrawal of Mali, Niger, and Burkina Faso from the ECOWAS and addressed how this withdrawal affects the operational capacity of the ECOWAS Standby Force (ESF), the stability of West African states, and the broader regional security architecture within ECOWAS. The research analysed the impact of the withdrawal, examined regional security dynamics, evaluated ECOWAS's adaptive strategies, as well as assessed the implications of the withdrawals from ECOWAS and proposed policy recommendations. This research employed a qualitative research design with a focus on secondary data analysis and adopted thematic analysis to identify key themes and patterns from the literature. The assessment discovered increased insecurity, erosion of trust, shift in alliances, and humanitarian impact as its findings. The Realism theory was employed to effectively analyze the complex motives and implications of the withdrawal of these West African nations. The research highlighted the fundamental risks of the withdrawal to stability and the capability of ECOWAS to respond to regional threats.

Keywords: *ECOWAS, Standby Force, Withdrawal, Security, West Africa*

Introduction

The West African region is currently confronted with a myriad of security challenges, including insurgency, political instability, and humanitarian crises. The Economic Community of West African States (ECOWAS) has historically positioned itself as a key player in addressing these issues through its regional security architecture, particularly the ECOWAS Standby Force (ESF). Established in response to the growing security threats, the ESF is intended to facilitate timely military intervention and peacekeeping operations within member states facing crises (Adekoya, 2019). However, the recent withdrawals of Mali, Niger, and Burkina Faso from the ESF represent a significant development that may have profound implications for the security landscape of West Africa.

The decision of these three nations to disengage from the ESF is indicative of shifting political dynamics, especially amidst a backdrop of military coups and increasing anti-Western sentiment (Mabirizi, 2023). These state actions

signal a potential erosion of collective security within ECOWAS and raise critical questions about the future efficacy and credibility of the organization in managing regional security challenges. The underlying causes of this withdrawal highlight deeper issues, including perceptions of national sovereignty, the effectiveness of ECOWAS interventions, and the influence of external powers in the region (Töndero, 2022).

The withdrawal of Mali, Niger, and Burkina Faso from the ECOWAS Standby Force (ESF) poses significant challenges to regional security in West Africa. The political instability in these nations, exemplified through recent military coups and rising extremism, raises questions about the effectiveness of ECOWAS in maintaining peace and security in the region. The research problem addresses how this withdrawal affects the operational capacity of the ESF, the stability of West African states, and the broader regional security architecture within ECOWAS. The thesis statement posits that the withdrawal of Mali, Niger, and Burkina Faso from the



ECOWAS Standby Force undermines collective security efforts in West Africa, exacerbates existing conflicts, and creates a vacuum that could foster further instability, necessitating a re-evaluation of ECOWAS's approach to regional security, governance, and collaboration among member states.

This research aims to analyze the security implications of the withdrawal of Mali, Niger, and Burkina Faso from the ECOWAS. It will assess the impact of withdrawal, examine regional security dynamics, evaluate ECOWAS's adaptation strategies, and propose policy recommendations. By exploring these dimensions, this research contributes to a more nuanced understanding of the evolving nature of security threats in West Africa and the challenges faced by ECOWAS in maintaining peace and stability in light of member states' changing alignments. Through a comprehensive review of relevant literature, this research will underscore the urgent need for ECOWAS to reassess its strategic partnerships and operational frameworks to adapt to the contemporary security landscape. In doing so, it aims to propose actionable recommendations for strengthening regional security cooperation while acknowledging the complexities introduced by the withdrawal of these key member states. The rapid evolution of security dynamics may outpace the research, making it challenging to provide an up-to-date analysis that remains relevant.

Conceptual Analysis

Concept of security

The concept of security is multifaceted and has evolved extensively over time. Traditionally rooted in military aspects, security now encompasses a broader range of concerns, including political, economic, environmental, societal, and human dimensions. Military Security is the most conventional understanding of security, focusing on the protection of a state against external threats. Scholars such as Kenneth Waltz in "Man, the State, and War" (1959) emphasize the importance of military capability and deterrence in ensuring national security. The Realism theory posits that security is primarily

about power and survival in an anarchic international system. Realists argue that states must rely on their military strength and strategic alliances to secure their interests (Morgenthau, 1948).

The broader perspectives on security entail Human Security which was introduced prominently in the 1994 UN Human Development Report, the human security paradigm shifts the focus from state-centric security to individual security. It encompasses freedom from fear (violence and conflict) and freedom from want (poverty and deprivation) (United Nations Development Programme, 1994). There are other perspectives of security like environmental security, economic security, and societal security. There are also contemporary security issues such as cybersecurity, global health security, and climate change security. Security is a dynamic concept that transcends military considerations, encompassing a wide range of issues impacting individuals and states alike. The complexities of global interdependence necessitate a holistic approach to security that incorporates various dimensions, including human, economic, environmental, and societal aspects (Homer-Dixon, 1999). Recognizing these dimensions allows policymakers to develop more comprehensive strategies to address the multifaceted challenges facing individuals and nations.

The concept of security in West Africa is deeply intertwined with regional instability, political conflicts, and socio-economic challenges. The ECOWAS has emerged as a significant player in promoting peace and security in the region. One of its key mechanisms is the ECOWAS Standby Force (ESF), designed to address security challenges effectively. This discussion focuses on this concept in the context of West Africa, emphasizing the role and challenges of the ECOWAS Standby Force (ECOWAS, 2012). Many West African nations have faced a history of coups, civil wars, and authoritarian governance, which have led to widespread violence and humanitarian crises. For example,



the coups in Mali (2020, 2021) and the instability in Burkina Faso are recent illustrations of this. The rise of extremist groups, particularly in the Sahel region, poses a significant threat to security. Groups like Boko Haram and affiliates of al-Qaeda and ISIS have exploited local grievances to expand their influence, leading to increased violence and displacement (International Crisis Group, 2021).

The concept of security in West Africa is complex, and influenced by historical, political, and socio-economic factors. The ECOWAS Standby Force represents a regional effort to address these challenges through collective security mechanisms. While it has made significant strides in conflict resolution and peace enforcement, the ESF faces considerable challenges that require sustained political commitment, adequate resources, and effective coordination with international partners.

Methodology

This research employed qualitative research design with a focus on secondary data analysis from academic journals and books on international relations and security studies as well as policy papers and documents from international organizations like the UN, and AU and reports from NGOs dealing with security issues in West Africa. The research adopted thematic analysis to identify key themes and patterns from the literature.

Theoretical Framework

Realism Theory

Realism is one of the oldest and most influential theories in international relations (IR). It provides a lens through which scholars and practitioners understand power dynamics, state behavior, and security issues in the anarchic international system. The key tenets of realism are state-centrism, anarchy, power and security, human nature, national interest, and pessimism about cooperation. Realism emerged prominently in the aftermath of World War II, gaining traction with the onset of the Cold War. Classical realism can be traced back to early thinkers such as Thucydides, and Thomas Hobbes, and Post-

World War II scholars like Hans Morgenthau and Kenneth Waltz who further developed Realism.

Realism provides a vital perspective in understanding international relations, emphasizing the importance of state behavior, power politics, and national interest in shaping global dynamics (Buzan, 1991). As global politics evolves, the principles of Realism continue to be relevant, informing both scholarly analysis and practical policy-making. This theory focuses on the role of the state, national interests, and power in understanding international politics and security dynamics. Given the context of West African security and the changes brought about by the withdrawal of these nations, Realism theory provides a robust framework for analyzing the motivations and consequences of such actions.

The key elements of realism in this context are state-centric perspective, power and security, anarchy in the international system, and self-help. Realism posits that states are the primary actors in international relations. The withdrawal of Mali, Niger, and Burkina Faso from ECOWAS may be interpreted as an assertion of state sovereignty and national interest, as these nations may prioritize their internal security over regional cooperation. Realists argue that states seek power to ensure security. The decision by these countries to withdraw can be understood as a response to perceived threats or liability of relying on multilateral forces, potentially weakening ECOWAS' collective security framework. Realism also emphasizes the anarchic nature of the international system, where no overarching authority exists (Waltz, 1979). The withdrawal might indicate a shift in the regional balance of power, highlighting a trend where states act independently in pursuit of their security, and under Realism, states operate in a self-help system where they must rely on their capabilities. The states' withdrawal can point to a strategic move towards building their security strategies rather than relying on ECOWAS Forces, indicating a growing trend of self-determination among West African nations (Aning, & Osei-Tutu, 2018). By employing Realism, this research effectively analyzes the complex motives and



implications of the withdrawal of these West African nations, establishing a framework for both understanding and addressing the current security landscape in the region.

Operational Impact of Withdrawal

This section of the research assesses how the exit of these countries from the ESF has altered the operational dynamics of the force and its ability to respond to security challenges in West Africa. The exit of Mali, Niger, and Burkina Faso from the ECOWAS significantly alters the operational dynamics of the ESF and its capacity to respond to security challenges in West Africa. This assessment identifies key aspects of the operational impact stemming from their withdrawal, which has necessitated a re-evaluation of strategies, capability, and resource allocation within ECOWAS.

The withdrawal of these nations reduces the overall military capacity of the ESF. Mali, Niger, and Burkina Faso have historically contributed troops and resources to the force, especially given the security challenges posed by extremist groups like Boko Haram and Al-Qaeda affiliates in the Sahel region. According to M. A. Bello in "ECOWAS and the Challenge of Regional Security" (2021), the collective military presence is integral to deterring threats; losing significant troop contributors compromises the effectiveness of rapid deployment and operational readiness. The diminished numbers strain the available manpower needed for peacekeeping missions and increase reliance on other countries that may not be as prepared or equipped to handle regional security crises effectively (Bello, 2021).

Furthermore, the exit of the three nations has created a security vacuum in the region, exacerbating existing tensions and allowing for an uptick in insurgent activities. As noted by C. A. L. Jones in "The Rise of Extremism in West Africa" (2022), the withdrawal facilitates the proliferation of non-state actors who can exploit the reduced presence of formal military forces. The fragility of states like Burkina Faso and Mali creates an environment conducive to the recruitment and operation of extremist

organizations, undermining the peace that ECOWAS endeavours to foster.

The research observed that the vacuum left by these countries has led to shifts in the regional security landscape. The ESF's ability to coordinate multi-national operations is hampered, as highlighted by T. A. O. Fofana in "Regional Security and Collective Defence in West Africa" (2022). Without the participation of Mali, Niger, and Burkina Faso, joint missions to combat insurgencies, secure borders, and stabilize crises in neighbouring states become more complex. The remaining member states may lack the requisite operational synergy or resources to effectively counteract threats in the Sahel.

The ECOWAS's credibility as a regional security provider is called into question following these withdrawals. Historically, ECOWAS has positioned itself as a proactive institution in conflict resolution, but the pullout demonstrates a fracture in its collective security mechanism, as noted by Y. Koné in "The Future of ECOWAS in West African Security" (2023). The inability of ECOWAS to maintain unity among its member states in the face of regional threats undermines confidence in its capacity to foster peace and stability.

In response to these developments, ECOWAS must reassess its strategic posture. The organization may need to develop new partnerships with external actors and seek alternative troop contributions from less-impact nations on the continent or beyond. J. S. M. Souleymane, in "Challenges for ECOWAS in New Security Environments" (2023), discusses the need for adaptive strategies, including enhancing intelligence-sharing mechanisms and developing operational contingencies for humanitarian assistance in crisis zones. Moreover, the lack of engagement from these states may prompt ECOWAS to re-evaluate its diplomatic approach, emphasizing political dialogue and cohesion to ensure member states prioritize continental security over national interests.



The exit of Mali, Niger, and Burkina Faso from the ECOWAS Standby Force fundamentally alters the operational dynamics of the force, diminishing its capacity to respond to collective security challenges in West Africa. The resulting security vacuum altered regional dynamics, and challenges to ECOWAS's credibility underscore the need for innovative solutions to maintain stability in an increasingly turbulent environment. ECOWAS must pursue new strategic partnerships and revise its operational protocols to address these emerging challenges effectively.

Regional Security Dynamics

To understand the implications of this withdrawal on the overall security environment in West Africa, including the rise of extremist groups and internal conflicts, the research explores the regional security dynamics in this discussion. The security dynamics of West Africa are shaped by a complex interplay of historical, social, economic, and political factors. This region has seen a rise in extremist groups and internal conflicts that have significant implications for peace and stability. West Africa has a history marked by colonialism, post-colonial struggles, and the legacy of Cold War interventions. The arbitrary borders drawn during colonial rule often split ethnic groups and created tensions among communities. Nations like Nigeria, Côte d'Ivoire, and Mali have experienced significant internal strife rooted in these historical grievances. Also, weak governance is a pervasive issue, Corruption, lack of accountability, and ineffective state institutions have eroded public trust in governments. Countries like Nigeria and Mali exhibit governance challenges that hinder effective responses to security threats. The fragility of state structures often leads to a vacuum that extremist groups exploit.

The emergence of a violent crisis in West Africa is attributed to various factors including the rise of extremist religious groups, civil conflicts, and ethnic tensions, as well as the impact of climate change and resource scarcity. Boko Haram, based in north-eastern Nigeria, has become one of the most prominent extremist groups in the

region. Boko Haram's violence has spilled into neighboring countries like Cameroon, Chad, and Niger, contributing to a regional security crisis. The group's allegiance to the Islamic State faction has further complicated efforts to combat its Insurgency (Akinola, 2020).

Similarly, in the Sahel region, groups like Al-Qaeda in the Islamic Maghreb (AQIM) and ISGS have gained traction. The instability in Mali, particularly after the 2012 coup and subsequent conflict, has provided a fertile ground for these groups. They exploit local grievances, using violence and intimidation to recruit and maintain control over territories (International Crisis Group, 2021). Internal conflicts often intertwine with the rise of extremist groups. The Hausa-Fulani and Tiv ethnic conflicts in Nigeria, and the Tuareg rebellions in Mali, underscore the deep-seated ethnic grievances that can drive communities toward extremist ideologies. Such conflicts can create local grievances that extremist groups can capitalize on to foster recruitment (Osabuohien, 2019). Climate change has exacerbated socio-economic challenges in West Africa. As resources like arable land and water become scarcer, competition among communities intensifies. Pastoralists and farmers often clash over land access, leading to violent conflicts. Extremist groups exploit these tensions by positioning themselves as protectors of specific communities, offering security in exchange for loyalty (Steffen et al, 2020).

The regional and international responses to extremist threats in West Africa involve multiple stakeholders including the multinational Joint Task Force (MNJTF), G5 Sahel, and International Support. The MNJTF was established to combat Boko Haram in the Lake Tchad region, the MNJTF includes forces from Nigeria, Chad, Cameroon, Niger, and Benin. While it has achieved some successes, coordination challenges and resource limitations hinder its effectiveness (Peacekeeping Int, 2022), and the G5 Sahel was also established to combat the Islamic extremist in the Sahel including Burkina Faso, Mali, Mauritania, Niger, and Chad, aimed at enhancing regional security cooperation.



However, internal divisions and national interests often impede its operations (U.S. Department of State, 2021).

The Western nations, particularly the U.S. and France, and lately Russia have provided military assistance and training to regional forces. However, the long-term effectiveness of external assistance remains debatable, as it needs a comprehensive approach addressing the root causes of extremism and conflict which has humanitarian impact and displacement. The rise of extremism and internal conflicts has resulted in significant humanitarian crises, millions are displaced, with the UN estimating around 3.3 million internally displaced persons (IDPs) in Nigeria and millions more across the Sahel. Humanitarian aid is often hampered by security concerns, creating a vicious cycle of distress and instability (UNHCR, 2023).

The regional security dynamics of West Africa are profoundly affected by a combination of weak governance, historical grievances, rising extremist groups, and environmental challenges. Addressing these issues requires a multifaceted approach focused not just on military solutions but also on promoting good governance, development, and social cohesion.

Adaptative Strategies

This research investigates how ECOWAS can adapt its security frameworks to address the challenges posed by the withdrawal of key member states in this discussion. The community has long been central to regional security in West Africa, addressing issues such as conflict resolution, peacekeeping, and the fight against terrorism. However, recent trends in the withdrawal of member states from regional commitments present significant challenges. To ensure effective security frameworks, ECOWAS must adapt strategically to these changes by understanding the reasons for the withdrawal of member states. These withdrawals are often a result of military coups, disillusionment with ECOWAS's efficacy, or perceived national sovereignty threats. Such shifts not only destabilize the immediate region but can also lead

to a decrease in collective security capability (Adebajo, 2002).

The implications for ECOWAS Security Frameworks by the withdrawal of these states is that it reduces ECOWAS's collective capability to manage security challenges. It undermines the principle of mutual defense and complicates coordinated responses to transnational threats, such as terrorism, organized crime, and illegal migrations. The perceived lack of legitimacy of ECOWAS can also embolden non-compliant states. This research presents the following as adaptation Strategies for ECOWAS.

- a. ECOWAS must enhance its diplomatic efforts to engage with withdrawing states. This includes opening channels for dialogue and negotiation to understand their grievances and address them constructively, and the implementation of more robust conflict resolution and preventive diplomacy initiatives can help maintain regional stability and decrease the likelihood of member withdrawals (Bassey, 2019).
- b. The regional body to create frameworks that account for the interests of both withdrawing states and compliant ones. This can be achieved through initiatives that clearly outline the benefits of remaining engaged with ECOWAS and ECOWAS could also explore tiered membership systems, which allow for varying degrees of commitment and participation based on individual states' political contexts. This could prevent full withdrawal while still addressing member-specific challenges (ECOWAS Revised Treaty, 1993).
- c. ECOWAS could foster partnerships with other regional organizations (like the African Union), and create coalitions beyond standard ECOWAS responses. Solidarity among member states can be encouraged through joint training and intelligence-sharing exercises. Also, The



community could implement localized security initiatives that empower community-level actors in conflict prevention and resolution. This would help mitigate challenges sooner, potentially reducing the likelihood of states feeling the need to withdraw (African Union Peace and Security Architecture, 2002).

- d. The community should align its security strategies with socio-economic development programs. Enhancing economic resilience can address the root causes of conflict (e.g., poverty, unemployment), thus reducing the propensity for political instability and involving youth and women in security matters (UN Development Programme, 2017).

Adapting its security frameworks is imperative for ECOWAS amidst the withdrawal of key member states. The organization's ability to address collective security challenges will hinge on its willingness to engage politically with member states, reform institutional approaches, enhance cooperation, and address socio-economic factors. By embracing these strategies, ECOWAS can build resilience against emerging threats and uphold regional stability.

Implications of the withdrawals for ECOWAS

The withdrawal of Mali, Niger, and Burkina Faso from the ECOWAS carries significant security implications for the region. This move stems primarily from growing discontent with the economic and political structures established within ECOWAS, alongside a backdrop of mounting security challenges, especially from jihadist groups. Mali, Niger, and Burkina Faso, located in the Sahel region, have faced unprecedented security challenges over the last decade, including the rise of Islamist militancy, inter-communal violence, and resource conflicts. These countries have struggled with governance issues, weak institutions, and a lack of effective responses to multifaceted security threats. The research presents the general implications of the withdrawal in this discussion.

- a. ECOWAS has historically played a vital role in fostering regional security through

collective action. The withdrawal signals a potential fragmentation of this cooperation, undermining joint efforts to combat terrorism and transnational crimes, making it easier for terrorist groups to operate across borders (Senghor, 2021).

- b. The coordination of intelligence sharing, training, and resource allocation could diminish, allowing jihadist groups like Al-Qaeda in the Islamic Maghreb (AQIM) and ISIS affiliates to exploit the security vacuum. The Sahel has become a hotbed for these groups, which thrive in areas with limited government presence (International Crisis Group, 2022).
- c. A lack of cohesion in addressing security issues may exacerbate violence among different ethnic groups, causing humanitarian crises and displacement within communities. The withdrawal can lead to a 'security vacuum' allowing groups to exploit local grievances (Bøås & Hatløy, 2023).
- d. The withdrawal raises concerns about increased influence from external states like Russia and China, who might seek to fill the void left by ECOWAS. This shift in foreign influence can lead to competing interests and increased tensions in regional geopolitics (Odedina & Mohammed, 2021).
- e. The economic ramifications are profound, as withdrawal could disrupt intra-regional trade and foster economic isolation. This may worsen existing socio-economic conditions, which are already contributing factors to unrest (African Development Bank, 2022).

The withdrawal of Mali, Niger, and Burkina Faso from ECOWAS poses multifaceted security challenges that could destabilize not only the



immediate region but also West Africa as a whole. The fragmentation of collective security efforts undermined counterterrorism initiatives, humanitarian crises, shifting geopolitical dynamics, and economic consequences collectively indicate a precarious future for these nations and the Sahel region. Enhanced attention to diplomatic engagement, support for governance reforms, and effective international collaboration are essential in mitigating these risks and restoring a degree of stability in West Africa.

Challenges

The research identifies several significant challenges posed by the withdrawals:

- a. ECOWAS faces logistical and operational challenges in mobilizing forces in response to emerging threats since the Standby Force is less effective without the full participation of regional partners.
- b. The political situation in the three withdrawing states is quite fragile, characterized by military coups and governance challenges, which complicate ECOWAS's ability to operate effectively in the region.
- c. The individual security and political interests of member states may diverge, leading to disagreements on the approach toward dealing with threats such as terrorism and organized crime.
- d. ECOWAS has limited financial and military resources, which makes sustaining military operations and securing adequate funding increasingly difficult.

Findings

The key findings of the assessments include:

- a. The withdrawal of these countries has weakened collective security efforts, leaving a vacuum that could lead to increased extremist threats and destabilization in the region.
- b. The decision of Mali, Niger, and Burkina Faso to withdraw signifies a breakdown of trust in ECOWAS leadership and conflict resolution mechanisms, potentially eroding the efficacy of the Standby Force.

- c. The countries withdrawing have increasingly turned towards non-ECOWAS partners for security, particularly Russia and private military companies, complicating the security landscape.
- d. There is rising violence and instability due to weakened security collaborations which have led to a surge in humanitarian crises, with increased displacement and disruption of basic services.

Policy Recommendations

This research presents the following recommendations:

- a. ECOWAS should create regional intelligence-sharing units that facilitate real-time information exchange among member states and invest in technology to develop secure communication platforms for member states to share intelligence efficiently and protect sensitive information.
- b. The community should develop a comprehensive counter-terrorism strategy that incorporates military, economic, and socio-political strategies and provide training sessions and resources for security forces across member states to improve their capabilities in combating terrorism and extremist activities.
- c. ECOWAS should convene regular high-level summits focused on security issues to foster dialogue, promote mutual understanding, create unified strategies among national leaders, and develop mechanisms for monitoring and evaluating the outcomes of discussions from summits, ensuring that agreements lead to actionable goals.
- d. The regional body should organize annual joint military drills that enhance interoperability among member states, allowing them to coordinate effectively during crisis situations and facilitate cross-border military training programs to ensure that armed forces are equipped with the latest tactics and strategies to respond to regional security challenges.



e. The community should accelerate the full operationalization of the ECOWAS Standby Force, ensuring that it is equipped, trained, and ready to deploy quickly in response to emerging conflicts and secure consistent financial and logistical support from ECOWAS member states for the Standby Force's operations.

f. ECOWAS should develop a civilian peacekeeping component that focuses on conflict resolution, human rights monitoring, and community engagement to complement military efforts and implement training programs for civilian peacekeepers, emphasizing conflict resolution, negotiation skills, and cultural sensitivity.

To enhance regional security measures, strengthen cooperation among ECOWAS members, and ensure effective peacekeeping efforts, it is crucial for ECOWAS to adopt a multi-dimensional approach. This includes improving intelligence sharing, fostering military cooperation, operationalizing peacekeeping forces, addressing socio-economic challenges, and advocating for good governance. By implementing these strategies, ECOWAS can bolster its security architecture and contribute significantly to regional stability.

Conclusion

The security implications of the withdrawal of Mali, Niger, and Burkina Faso from the ECOWAS were comprehensively discussed in this research. The withdrawal represents a critical juncture for West African security. The research analysed the impact of the withdrawal, examined regional security dynamics, evaluated ECOWAS's response mechanisms, as well as assessed the implications of the withdrawals from ECOWAS and proposed policy recommendations. The research employed the Realism theory to effectively analyse the complex motives and implications of the withdrawal of these West African nations, establishing a framework for both understanding and addressing the current security landscape in the region. The challenges of operational capacity, political fragility, diverging national interests, and resource limitations necessitate urgent action

and the recommended strategies aim to foster renewed engagement, enhance operational capabilities, and address the humanitarian crisis while reinforcing collective security efforts. Without these efforts, the threat of further destabilization in West Africa remains significant, and the efficacy of ECOWAS as a regional security institution will continue to be undermined.

References

- Adekoya, A. (2019). An Analysis of the Roles and Effectiveness of ECOWAS Standby Force in Peacekeeping Missions. "African Security Review ", 28(3), 247-262.
- Adebajo, A. (2010). "Building Peace in West Africa: Liberia, Sierra Leone, and Guinea Bissau ". United Nations University Press.
- Adetula, V. (2021). "The Future of ECOWAS Standby Force: Challenges and Prospects." "Peace and Security Review ".
- Adebajo, A. (2002). "Building Peace in West Africa: Liberia, Sierra Leone, and Guinea Bissau".
- African Union (2013). "Report of the 19th Ordinary Session of the Assembly of the African Union."
- African Development Bank. (2022). The Economic Impact of Security Challenges in West Africa.
- Akinola, R. (2020). "The Rise and Fall of Boko Haram: An Assessment of the Nigerian Government's Counter Terrorism Strategies." "African Security Review ".
- Aning, K. & I Osei Tutu, J. (2018). "Reflections on Ghana's Peacekeeping Commitment to the ECOWAS Standby Force." In "African Security Review ", 27(3), 227-239.
- Bamfo, N. (2018). "The ECOWAS Standby Force: Challenges and Opportunities." "African Security Studies".



- Bassey, E. (2019). "ECOWAS and the Security Challenges in West Africa". African Union Peace and Security Architecture (2002)
- Bello, M. A. (2021). "ECOWAS and the Challenge of Regional Security ". Dakar: African Security Review.
- Bøås, M., & Hatløy, A. (2023). Governance and Security in the Sahel: The Role of Non-State Actors. "Conflict, Security & Development".
- Buzan, B. (1991). "People, States & Fear: An Agenda for International Security Studies in the Post Cold War Era ". Lynne Rienner. Buzan discusses security issues from a realistic viewpoint that can inform your analysis.
- ECOWAS Revised Treaty (1993)
- ECOWAS (2006). "ECOWAS Policy for Peacekeeping Operations."
- ECOWAS (2012). "Summary of the ECOWAS Intervention in Guinea Bissau."
- Fofana, T. A. O. (2022). "Regional Security and Collective Defense in West Africa ". Journal of African Security Studies.
- Homer Dixon, T. F. (1999). "Environment, Scarcity, and Violence ". Princeton University Press.
- International Crisis Group (2021). "The Impact of the Sahel Crisis on West African Stability."
- International Crisis Group. (2021). "The Sahel: A Long Term Perspective on Security and Stability ". <https://www.crisisgroup.org>
- International Crisis Group. (2022). The Sahel's Security Crisis: A Regional Challenge.
- Jones, C. A. L. (2022). "The Rise of Extremism in West Africa ". International Journal of Conflict Studies.
- Koné, Y. (2023). "The Future of ECOWAS in West African Security ". West African Peace and Security Review.
- Mabirizi, M. (2023). Historical Context and Implications of Military Coups in West Africa: A Focus on Mali, Niger, and Burkina Faso. "Journal of West African Studies", 11(1), 14 30.
- Morgenthau, H. J. (1948). "Politics Among Nations: The Struggle for Power and Peace". McGraw Hill. This seminal work lays out the foundations of classical realism.
- Odedina, D., & Mohammed, S. (2021). Geopolitical Dynamics in the Sahel Region. "African Affairs".
- Osabuohien, E. (2019). "Ethnic Conflicts and the Imperative of National Development in Nigeria." "Journal of African Economic Policy".
- Senghor, A. (2021). The Implications of the Sahel Crisis on Regional Security Frameworks. "African Security Review".
- Souleymane, J. S. M. (2023). "Challenges for ECOWAS in New Security Environments ". Security Studies Quarterly.
- Steffen, W., et al. (2020). "Climate Change and Security Risks in West Africa." "Environmental Research Letters".
- Töndero, P. (2022). Changing Alliances: The Geopolitical Shift in West Africa's Sahel Region and its Impact on ECOWAS. "Conflict and Security in Africa ", 15(2), 45 59.
- Thucydides. "The History of the Peloponnesian War ". This classic text provides foundational insights into the realist perspective, emphasizing power struggles and state self-interest.
- United Nations Development Programme. (1994). "Human Development Report 1994: New Dimensions of Human Security".
- U.S. Department of State. (2021). "Transnational Threats: The Sahel." <https://www.state.gov/transnational-threats>
- UNHCR. (2023). "Global Trends: Forced Displacement in 2022." <https://www.unhcr.org/globaltrends2022>.
- UN Development Programme. (2017). "Youth and Security in the Post Conflict Context".
- Waltz, K. (1979). "Theory of International Politics ". McGraw Hill. Waltz outlines the core principles of Realism and the importance of power dynamics.