

## The Strategies Employed by Ecowas in Promoting Democratic Government in Nigeria

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### ABSTRACT

The study examined the strategies employed by ECOWAS in promoting democratic government in Nigeria. To achieve a specific objective and research question was derived to guide the study. The structural functionalist theory was used for the study. The historical research design was adopted for the study to help analyze the historical trend of past events to account for the present. Secondary data was collected for the study. The qualitative research method of data analysis that relies on positive literature was used to analyze the research questions. The study discovered that ECOWAS has strategies outlined for the achievement of democratic consolidation in Africa, with emphasis on Nigeria. It further established that ECOWAS is faced with the challenges of funding that inhibit the achievement of the strategies for democratic consolidation. It was recommended that the challenges of funding and implementation of ECOWAS treaties within West Africa and Nigeria can be addressed, with the involvement of independent donors and sponsors within Africa and the diaspora. The study affirmed the need for ECOWAS to design strategies that are amenable to change and flexible due to the dynamic nature of society that is continuously evolving.

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## 1. INTRODUCTION

The Economic Community of West African States (ECOWAS) is a regional economic community of fifteen Members States located in West Africa. Its headquarter is in Abuja, Nigeria. As its name reveals, at its onset in 1975, ECOWAS was first envisioned an economic integration body (with some social and cultural impact) rather than a political body. When it becomes political, its main role was to amplify the voice of its Member States the international stage to face post-independence challenges jointly. From this mostly socioeconomic start, and despite the fact that it never changed its name, ECOWAS has

evolved over decades to become the most active regional economic community (REC) in the area of democratic governance (Khadiagala, 2018). This is visible in the level of attention dedicated to governance processes such as elections in community summits and decisions, in electoral and mediation missions deployed, programmes in place, etc., (Agboghu, 2021). It is also visible in the efforts ECOWAS deploys to foster more inclusive governance through structural engagement with civil society (Reinold, 2019; Orhero & Okolie, 2023).

When it comes to the governance agenda, the most important ECOWAS institutions are (1) the Authority (of heads of State) and (2) the Council of Ministers, which form together the political level where Member States provide the Community with directions, as well as (3) the ECOWAS Commission, the Community's executive arm in particular its department for Political Affairs, Peace and Security. Additionally, (4) the ECOWAS Community Court of Justice not only provides dispute resolution for Member States and advisory opinions, but it also grants remedies to Civil Society Organisations (CSOs), Non-Governmental Organisations (NGOs), and individuals for breaches of human rights, including digital rights that some countries in Africa are victims of (Musa, 2017; Etinagbedia, 2024).

The institutional governance structure in Nigeria has been on the threshold of palpable threat to the very existence of democracy in the country (Akpo, 2021). This is given the rate of internal insecurity, especially in the activities of terrorist groups such as the Islamic State West African Province (ISWAP), and Boko Haram, which has almost defied the security system in the country. This has brought a lot of concern about the ability of the democratic regime to guarantee the lives and property of the citizens in the country (Akpo, 2021). Since 2015 to date, there have been fears and worries among several stakeholders about the continuity of the democratic regime, given the inability of the government to protect the citizenry as guaranteed in the constitution. Added to this is the manner in which the executive and legislative arms of government amass wealth for themselves, which has left the masses highly impoverished and the country underdeveloped (Ochi, 2018; Ubiri & Babatunde, 2021).

Agbi (2020) states that when there are no proper regulations of the systems governance especially with the participation of stakeholders like civil society and ECOWAS and the African Union, through advocacy and acting as an external check with diplomatic dialogue forums, the country may wake to unforeseen realities that throw Nigeria back to the past, military regime. Agbi (2020) observes that the high level of poverty, unemployment, underdevelopment, high rate of inflation, insecurity, and the crises of cessation are indicators of weakness and exposure of the volatility of the present democratic system in Nigeria. ECOWAS in particular, has to rise to the challenge of engaging with government through dialogue to ensure that democratic institutions are strengthened to give confidence to the people (Onuoha, 2019). Every now and then, there is report of pensioners' fund embezzlement even within the security system.

### **Statement of the Problem**

Some of the recent achievements of ECOWAS with respect to the application of regional instruments of enthrone democratic governance were the vehement rejection of an attempt to subvert constitutionalism by former President of Cote d'Ivoire, Laurent Gbagbo, and the threat by the Organization to use force as option in resolving the matter. ECOWAS has also applied sanctions on some of its member states. This includes the suspension of Niger, Togo, and Côte d'Ivoire for unconstitutional practices like the manipulation of the constitution, and Guinea and Mali for coup d' état. Consequently, zero

tolerance for power obtained or maintained by unconstitutional means (ECOWAS, 2011) is becoming a norm in ECOWAS. The consensus among the Member States is that democracy and democratic governance is not negotiable.

Despite these efforts by ECOWAS to enthrone democratic governance, West Africa is still threatened with ‘democratic recession’ (Garba, 2011) or reversals of democratic gains. This is evident in the recent crises that occupy the Community, which include, among others, general political instability, the recurrence of coup d’état in Guinea-Bissau and Mali and the recent coups in Niger and Gabon (Vanguard, 2023). These events are indications of the failure of democratic institutions and the seemingly inability of ECOWAS to intervene in forestalling these military interventions from taking place. Most of ECOWAS responses have been judged by observers to be in taking action only when there is a crisis rather than being preventive. The majority of the time, there are probable signs and features such as a high level of impoverishment of the masses, a low level of civil society participation in governance, mass unemployment, the ignoring of constitutional provisions by the government, seen in disobedience to the judiciary, as is common in Nigeria and electoral malpractice that result in the election of political actors that are anti-people.

### **Objectives of the Study**

The general objective of the study is to examine ECOWAS and the consolidation of democracy in Nigeria. The specific objectives are to:

- a) assess the strategies employed by ECOWAS in promoting democratic government in Nigeria.

### **Research Question**

- a) What are the strategies employed by ECOWAS in promoting democratic government in Nigeria?

## **Literature Review**

### **Democracy**

Democracy is, unarguably, one of the popular concepts in political science literature. Scholars have variously interrogated its evolution, operations and relevance to the organization of human societies. Democracy’ comes from the Greek terms ‘Demos’ (people) and ‘Kratia’ (rule), therefore its literal meaning is ‘rule of the people’ (Johari, 2013). At this point, involvement directly in the Gatherings of an Ancient Greek city is synonymous with democracy, except for women. Later on, though, the system continued to advance, albeit with adjustments as the complexity of human society increased. Thus, there is a consensus among scholars that it originated from the Greek city-states and it is people-oriented. It is believed to have emanated from the attempts in the Greek city-state of Athens to reform, organize, and manage its political community (polis) about two thousand five hundred years ago (Dunn, 1993, cited in Jega, 2007). According to Dunns (1993), the power and appeal of the idea of democracy comes from its promise to render the life of an apolitical community something willed and chosen. In a democracy, the people (the demos), its human members, decide what is to be done, and in so deciding, they take their destiny firmly into their own hands. The power and appeal of democracy come from the idea of autonomy of choosing freely for oneself (Dunns, 1993).

Democracy, as defined by Abraham Lincoln, the sixteenth president of the USA, is government of the people for the people and by the people (Applex, 2019; Etinagbedia, 2023). This presupposes that:

- i. A government that is not an embodiment of all the people (that is, the various tribes, social classes, the various professionals – middle class and working class, etc) that make up a nation is not democratic.

- ii. A government that does not stand for first and foremost the interest of the people is not democratic. That is, the interest of the people should superintend over even that of government officials. Therefore, government officials are called into service and not to be served. That is to say government officials cannot eat until the people have eaten. Government officials cannot live in comfort when the people are in misery. A country that has government officials enjoying at the expense of the people is undemocratic.
- iii. A government that is not elected by the people is not democratic. This is to indicate that a government can only be described as democratic if it comes into power through free and fair elections.

Despite substantial regions of accord among the researchers on the notion, an exact and generally accepted explanation for democracy is lacking. Although different academics have different takes on the notion, this can be due to regional and cultural differences. For example, Elaigwu, as referenced by Linus (2015), claims that democracy is foreign to Africa and must be adapted to its specific circumstances to address the continent's unique challenges. It is thus undeniable that the concept had genuinely evolved from the Ancient Greek City of Athens in the 5th century. Scholars have evaluated the significance of the concept variously.' Appadorai (2004) defines democracy as a form of government in which the people, either individually or through their representatives they elect regularly, wield sovereignty. He went on to say that the people will on fundamental matters of social orientation and policy, can only be expressed and deemed supreme in a democratic state, which requires specific institutional arrangements. Therefore, a state can be considered democratic if its citizens have the chance to participate in politics, enjoy political equality, and have the option of electing a different government.

To Saka and Dajo (2017), democracy involves the decentralization of power from the centre to the periphery in society. He believes that, power is solely concerned with resource determination and allocation. What this means is that, in a democracy, citizens are equally empowered to make far-reaching strategic decisions that could greatly influence fundamental policy matters. This shows that democracy provides the platform for finding solutions to the prevailing economic, social and political problems since it provides opportunity for mass participation in the social economic and political decisions making processes (Hembe, 2003).

According to Diamond (2013), cited by Muhammad (2018), the process of obtaining broad and deep legitimization such that all key political players believe that popular rule is preferable for their society than any other plausible alternative they can envisage is what is meant by democratic consolidation. This demonstrates that even though Nigeria has been a democracy since 1999, additional democratic consolidation is needed. There have been several difficulties in the political environment. Constant election postponements, inconclusive elections, insecurity, corruption, the problem of "godfatherism," inconsistent information, poverty, a lack of true federalism, violations of human rights, and the influence of ethnicity and religion are a few of the obstacles to Nigeria's democratic consolidation. Consolidation of democratic rule occurs when the actors in a system follow the formal rules of the democratic institution (Fayemi, 2012; Okpi, 2021; Etinagbedia, 2023).

### **Overview of ECOWAS Protocol on Democratic Consolidation and Good Governance**

To enhance its role in promoting democracy and good governance, which has been classified as a tool for socio-economic development in the West African sub-continent, ECOWAS introduced a new protocol in 2001. The Protocol on Democracy and Good Governance was signed on December 21, 2001, by the 14 Heads of the member states in Dakar, Senegal. This was to supplement the 1999 Protocol with provisions purposely for the

promotion of good governance and democracy. This justifies the name “Supplemental Protocol”. Although the Protocol was signed in 2001, it took effect in 2005 after the required nine (9) signatory states ratified it (Diallo, 2014). The protocol contains three areas, such as preamble, definitions, and main provisions: 3 chapters, 8 sections, and 50 articles. This was hailed as a step in the right direction because one cannot promote democracy and good governance without the needed protocols.

#### **(a) Major ECOWAS Provisions of 2001 Protocol on Democracy and Good Governance**

The main provisions of the 2001 Protocol relating to general principles, elections, the position of security forces in democratic governance, strategies for reducing poverty and promoting social dialogue, education, culture, and religion, the rule of law, human rights, and good governance. Others include the well-being of women, children, and adolescents, and terms of implementation, sanctions, and amendments.

First, the 2001 Protocol established general guidelines that all member states must comply with. Article 1 of the Protocol provides some guidelines for action by the member states. Some of the principles include separation of powers; free, fair, and transparent elections; and zero tolerance for power gained or held by unconstitutional means. The rest include the creation of legal nonpolitical troops, national secularism and neutrality in religious affairs, non-discrimination for all reasons; and compliance with the provisions of the African Union Charter and other international conventions. Others include a multi-party system of democracy and respect for press freedom (ECOWAS, 2011, Article 1).

The 2001 Protocol placed special emphasis on elections due to the concerns and spate of election-related violence in the sub-region. Security analysts were of the view that election-related violence could lead to religious, economic, and cultural violence with a possible spillover to other neighboring states. From the perspective of Adolfo, Kovacs, Nystrom and Utas (2012), elections remain the best, ideal, peaceful, and transparent way to select leaders within the sub-region. However, when not properly administered, elections can constitute a hindrance to the progress of States Omotola (2011) also reiterates that election-related violence could undermine stability, peace, security, and democratic sustainability.

Based on the above views, the Protocol motivates the member states and other organizations such as political parties, civil society organizations, citizens, and ECOWAS to play an active, transparent, and diverse role to ensure the smooth conduct of elections and change of power in the sub-region (Centre for Human Rights, 2012) The major role of the State, as described Articles 4 (1 and 2), is to ensure the establishment of collaboration and exchange of experiences. political parties and their leadership are urged to act within the limits of the Constitution (Council for the Development of Social Science Research in Africa (CODESRIA, 2011) The role of CSOs is to educate citizens on their constitutional rights to participate in free and fair elections, while ECOWAS plays a supervisory role in ensuring the conduct of transparent and credible elections.

The Protocol also makes provision for Election Management Bodies (EMBs) in Articles 3, 5, 6, and 7, as well as their nature and responsibilities (Bamidele & Ayodele, 2016). For example, Article 3 stipulates that the authorities with constitutional responsibilities for organizing elections must “be independent [and] neutral and enjoy the confidence of all political actors.” This encourages national consultations to determine the nature and structure of EMB if applicable (2001 Protocol, Article 3). According to Bamidele and Ayodele. (2016, p. 45), among the roles enshrined in Article 8 of the protocol for civil society organizations is to undertake civil education for the public and the need for violent-free elections. The conduct of political parties and electoral candidates in any member state

is described in Articles 9 and 10. The Protocol also stipulates that any candidate who loses an election must admit defeat and congratulate the winner and his officials and that any election-related disputes must be settled within the legal framework of the constitution (Ojewole, 2021). For instance, after the 2020 elections in Ghana, President Nana Akufo Addo's victory was challenged at the Supreme Court of Ghana by former president John Mahama after he lost. This was the critical role of the judiciary in consolidating democracy and good governance in West Africa.

Likewise, the bloc was required to guarantee the smooth conduct of elections in all member states. Articles 11 to 18 state that ECOWAS "may respond to assist in any election when requested Member State (2001 Protocol, Article 12) (Ojewole, 2021). This have as an important intervention mechanism because of the purported claim of intention to cheat by certain governments or take up pre-election manipulations that could not be visible to international election observers. The presence of international election observers will allay the fears of the citizens and other political parties that governments could perpetrate atrocities and go unnoticed (Human Rights Watch, 2023). Therefore, the Protocol mandates ECOWAS to establish and send an observation/supervision team to member states which are in the process of conducting. The team's mandate would be to assess the state's level of electoral preparation and 'e electoral reports for presentation to the Executive Secretary (2001 Protocol, Articles 15-18 (Human Rights Watch, 2023).

Further, there is the possibility of deployment of armed forces, police and other security agencies in the democratic process where necessary. Articles 19 to 24 emphasize that all armed forces and police forces must be neutral in all political activities and, above all, remain loyal to the state (Odigbo, 2019). The duties of the armed and police force, as stipulated in the constitution, include protecting the territorial integrity and independence of their states and participating in ECOMOG, AU, and UN peacekeeping missions (Article 19 Protocol 2001) (Ogunbiyi, 2018). The Protocol also prohibits the security forces from using violent attempts to disrupt nonviolent gatherings or demonstrations; and that where necessary, only minimal appropriate force should be used in situations where such gatherings turn violent. As such, the 2001 Protocol provides a perfect foundation for civilian control by the security forces in the region

To actualize these elements for the promotion of peace, security, and stability in West Africa, the Protocol subsequently outlines methods and mechanisms to achieve them. Article 34, paragraph 1, states that "the Member States and the Ministry of Labour shall endeavor to adopt practical methods for the application of the rule of law human rights, justice and good governance at the national and regional levels" (Sanni, 2019, p.52). However, the Protocol does not expand on what constitutes good governance, and what kind of practical steps are needed to improve good governance. The Protocol also describes the protection of the well-being of women, children, and youths (Ogunbiyi, 2018). In Articles 40 and 41, the Protocol requests member states to enact appropriate laws to eliminate all forms of discrimination, harmful and degrading practices against women, and to protect against practices harmful to children.

Lastly, procedures for enforcement and sanctions, as well as procedures for amending its provisions in the Protocol, were all taken into consideration. It is stated in Article 45 that the ECOWAS may impose sanctions on member states if democracy is obstructed in anyway if there is evidence of human rights abuses (Johnson, 2018). Recently, ECOWAS has suspended Mali, Burkina Faso, and Guinea for the unconstitutional overthrow of the government and ordered them to immediately return their countries to democratic rule. Some of the sanctions include; withdrawal of support to its candidate in international elections<sup>4</sup> loss of the opportunity of the state concerned to host the ECOWAS Summit; closure of all land borders with member states; and suspension of the state from participating

in decision making in ECOWAS. ECOWAS constantly monitors and ensures a return to normalcy (ECOWAS Protocol 2001, Article 45) (Bukarti, 2022)

Cowell (2017, p. 78) critically analyses the ECOWAS Good Governance and Democracy Protocol in his article “The Impact of the ECOWAS Protocol on Good Governance and Democracy”. He outlines the weaknesses and strengths of the Protocol’s provisions. He argues that the Protocol appears rather as an appropriate tool for coup prevention or reduction rather than a tool for promoting the ideals of good governance and democracy (Cowell, 2017). However, the recent coups in Mali and Guinea seem to refute the claims of Cowell that the Protocol was just good to prevent coup plotters rather than the promotion of democracy and good governance. The Protocol, in its material sense, is the most appropriate instrument for the needs of ECOWAS. However, it behoves all stakeholders in the region to make it more practical to the needs and aspirations of the sub-regional bloc and the attainment of total security and stability in West Africa. Cowell’s work highlights some of the key concerns in the 2001 Protocol. However, he does not consider how accurate the provisions of the Protocol would ensure the promotion of political security in the sub-region (Cowell & Webb, 2021).

Moreover, examining ECOWAS and the drive to promote good governance in West Africa, Aning (2014) asserts that, by promoting good governance and democratic processes in West Africa, ECOWAS makes an important contribution to the path of harmony and stability of Africa. Additionally, the appearance of vigilantes, other cell groups, and the fragmentation of political power in societies were security perplexity against which West Africa is struggling to deal. According to Aning, it is important to note that the factors contributing to security concerns in West Africa are the result of system failures. Thus, the failures of the state system have resulted in the formation of such groups. He concludes that ECOWAS mechanisms and arrangements serve as an appropriate tool to address many of the security concerns in the reforms needed to make West Africa a secure place. While its findings suggest reforms aimed at creating systems with the political security of citizens in mind, this study builds on them by suggesting practical improvements in the context of the Protocol. Therefore, the proposals by Aning (2004) reinforce the purpose of this study: a reappraisal of ECOWAS democracy protocols to determine their adequacy or otherwise.

According to Bamidele and Ayodele (2016), ECOWAS’s determination to deploy military interventions and election observation teams has yielded some positive results over the years. They deplore, however, that how ECOWAS conceptualizes the “unconstitutional change of government” was not clearly stated. All kinds of coups should not be encouraged irrespective of the conditions. There is nothing like a good and bad coup d’état. Bamidele and Ayodele (2016) further emphasize that the sanctions contained in the Protocol are not deterring enough and therefore propose stricter and more dissuasive systems of sanctions which will be reviewed periodically in the light of changing circumstances. However, they did not specify what should be the “detering sanctions” against state sovereignty. This study further proposes a periodic and situational review of the 2001 Protocol on good governance and democracy regarding changing security circumstances.

### **Theoretical Framework**

The structural functionalist theory by Almond (1968) was used for the study. The structural functionalist theory was used for this study. The theory has its root from the works of Emile Durkheim (1859-1917) but was later expanded by social scientist. However, it was Almond (1968) who provided a variant of it political science by providing a political analysis of the theory of Structural- Functionalism in the 1970s. In the words of Scott (n.d.) Structural-Functionalism represented a vast improvement over the then-prevailing

mechanistic theories of David Easton (1966), and others derived largely from international relations. He went further to posit that Structural-Functionalism is an approach to understanding political systems that took into account not only its structural components — its institutions — but also their functions within the system as a whole. Prior to structural functionalism, scholars had no way of systematically comparing different political systems beyond a rudimentary, and oftentimes inconclusive, analysis of their institutions.

At its most basic level, the model of structural functionalism posits that a political system is made up of institutions (structures), such as interest groups, political parties, the executive, legislative and judicial branches of government, and bureaucratic machinery. This information is not sufficient, however, to make a meaningful comparison between two political systems. Two countries may share many of the same political institutions, but what distinguishes the two systems are the ways in which these institutions function.

For Almond (1968) a fuller understanding emerges only when one begins to examine how institutions act within the political process. As he described it, interest groups serve to articulate political issues; parties then aggregate and express them in a coherent and meaningful way; government in turn enacts public policies to address them; and bureaucracies finally regulate and adjudicate them. It is so called structural functionalism because Almond has explained his views keeping these structures of political system in mind. He has, in fact, stressed that every political system has some structures and these structures perform certain functions meant for it. Nitisha (cited by [www.politicalsciencenotes.com](http://www.politicalsciencenotes.com)) submitted that in his noted work “*The Politics of the Developing Area*”, Almond has drawn our attention to an interesting issue. He says that between developed and developing countries so far as structures are structures, they perform almost similar functions.

### **Application of the theory to the Study**

The theory posits that society is made up of structures that perform various functions and within the comity of nations especially in Africa, ECOWAS as a structure within Africa serves different functions of providing guides that will not only help to integrate countries and chart a path of progress but also serves a body to regulate the activities of countries in order to build on the gains of democracy. ECOWAS acts as a watch dog and offers services of advocacy and external pressure on erring countries through sanctions that are collectively upheld by member states. This is to serve the function of preserving democratic governance in West Africa and forestall crises of war between member states and internal conflicts also. These functions according to the traditional functionalist perspective when applied to the political sphere help to provide stability and some level of equilibrium. ECOWAS therefore as an institution has the responsibility as a regional organization to offer services that bring about socio-economic cum political growth in West Africa. These functions within the structural functionalist perspective help to strengthen the social institutions of governance within democratic regimes and consolidate on democratic tenets and thereby bequeath to citizens the very benefits of democracy.

## **2. METHOD**

The study adopted the historical research design to explain the role of ECOWAS in tconsolidation of democracy in Nigeria. The study made use of the qualitative research method and these are data that are in non-numerical form. The collection of data for this study was obtained from secondary sources and this had to do with data in the qualitative form. The collection of secondary data of this nature has to do with data that have been used before now and were sourced from dissertations, school libraries, government libraries and institutions such as ECOWAS Head Office in Abuja, and government ministries that have

dealings with ECOWAS in Nigeria. The study made use of content analysis that involve the analysis and discussion of literature both positive and negative to present a balanced picture of the analysis based on their content. The content analysis makes use of the research questions that were answered in the study with the use of secondary data. The researcher used the literature in the study to answer the research questions.

### 3. RESULTS AND DISCUSSION

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#### RESULT AND DISCUSSION

##### **What are the strategies employed by ECOWAS in promoting democratic government in West Africa and Nigeria in particular?**

The second research question looks at the strategies utilized by ECOWAS in promoting democratic governance in West Africa and Nigeria. One of the notable strategies is to ensure that democracy is restored to war-torn and conflict-ridden areas. This is done through working for elections to be conducted in such countries in West Africa. This it has done in collaboration with international and other regional partners such as the UN, AU, EU and individual countries like France, the United States (individually or clustered as International Contact Groups), and local civil society groups, initiating the processes of democratic rule through the organization of elections. It happened in Liberia, for example, where political parties and local civil society groups assisted in transition to democratic rule after the war (ECOWAS, 2014; ECOWAS: 2019; Human Rights Watch, 2021). This pattern has become the dominant strategy even in countries where coup d'etat occurred or constitutionalism broke down due to some circumstances like the death of a Head of State.

Another strategy of ECOWAS in relation to promotion of democratic governance is its engagement with democratic institutions such as political parties and civil society organizations. These institutions had proven invaluable partners to ECOWAS in its peace-making and peace- building in Liberia and Sierra Leone. It was also the case with the attempted effort of former President Tandja Mamadou of Niger to extend his tenure. Opposition political parties and CSOs protested in Niamey and mobilized themselves to address their grievances and recommendations to ECOWAS Heads of State and Government extraordinary meeting in Abuja, which resulted in suspension of Niger from the Organization, and subsequently the fall of his government (Plaisse, 2009; Okposi, 2020). Therefore ECOWAS is supporting and working with them. The establishment of WACSOF in 2003 by ECOWAS, for instance, is aimed at galvanizing 'the emerging 'civic' power and facilitate constructive partnership with states authorities, political parties, as well as ECOWAS' (WACSOF, 2009; Abe, 2019).

Moreover, the ECOWAS Court of Justice is potentially another space for deepening democratic governance given its competencies in human rights matters and interpretation of the Community instruments. The Court has received many cases related to elections and democratic governance crises from across the sub-region. For instance, in the case of *SERAP v The Federal Republic of Nigeria*, the Court ruled that “the right of Nigerian children to free, quality, and compulsory basic education, as the most effective way to address the root causes of the post election violence and killing” (Mumini, 2012; Agbite, 2021). Similarly, the court listened to the case of *RADDHO v Senegal*, where the plaintiff, an NGO, sought the court to intervene over the 2012 election crises in Senegal in which the Government of former President Wade used force to quell opposition before the elections (Centre for Human Rights, 2012).

### **Discussion of Finding**

The research question revealed that ECOWAS has strategies that it uses to actualize its goal of consolidation of democracy in West Africa with reference to Nigeria in particular. Some of these strategies are ensuring that elections are conducted in war torn countries to bring about stability and restore democracy, engaging with democratic institutions such as political parties and civil society organizations to promote democracy through their involvement with government, the ECOWAS Court of Justice, and effective involvement and participation of the community citizens. These strategies help to strengthen ECOWAS tools put in place and give it a level playing field to ensure that democratic tenets are respected and upheld. The works of (ECOWAS, 2014; ECOWAS, 2019; Human Rights Watch, 2021; Gbesan, 2010) stated that ECOWAS has been in the drive for ensuring that elections are held in every country in West Africa where there was previous crisis. This way, there will be the restoration of democratic rule that will put power in the hands of the people who will decide how they are governed and also participate in the process of governance.

Moreover, the ECOWAS Court of Justice is potentially another space for entrenching democratic governance, given its competencies in human rights matters and interpretation of the Community instruments. The Court has received many cases related to elections and democratic governance crises from across the sub-region. For instance, in the case of *SERAP v The Federal Republic of Nigeria*, the Court ruled that “the right of Nigerian children to free, quality, and compulsory basic education, as the most effective way to address the root causes of the post election violence and killing (Mumini, 2012; Agbite, 2021). Similarly, the court listened to the case of *RADDHO v Senegal*, where the plaintiff, an NGO, sought the court to intervene over the 2012 election crises in Senegal in which the Government of former President Wade used force to quell opposition before the elections (Centre for Human Rights, 2012). The challenge, however, is the Court lacks enforcement capacity. It relies on member states' goodwill for implementation to take place. This arrangement clearly negates the effort of the Court. The member state governments often ignore the verdicts of the Court. Consequently, the Court's Vice President, Justice Benefeito Mosso Ramos, said “more than 60 per cent of the court's rulings are not enforced as many of such cases end on preliminary objection,” thereby undermining the impact of the court (Nigeria Daily News, 2012, p. 56; Human Rights Watch, 2020). This problem also undermines the deepening of democratic governance in the sub-region. Governments acting in the name of the state exploit the people and use the state apparatus to defend their actions. With an effective regional court, such abuses can be checked.

### **4. CONCLUSION**

The study concludes that ECOWAS as a regional body in West Africa has been committed to promoting democracy and good governance in Nigeria and West Africa as a

whole. This it has done with the introduction of the different principles designed to ensure that good governance and peaceful transition from one civilian regime to another is achieved. This is very well seen in the aforementioned principles such as elections, the position of security forces in democratic governance, strategies for reducing poverty and promoting social dialogue, education, culture, and religion, the rule of law, human rights, and good governance. Others include the well-being of women, children, and adolescents, and terms of implementation, sanctions, and amendments, separation of powers; free, fair, and transparent elections; and zero tolerance for power gained or held by unconstitutional means. The rest include the creation of legal nonpolitical troops, national secularism and neutrality in religious affairs, non-discrimination for all reasons; and compliance with the provisions of the African Union Charter and other international conventions. These principles have strategies outlined to achieve them and ECOWAS has been working with these strategies to see that the principles are not compromised with West Africa and in the overall, the objective of democracy promotion and consolidation is achieved. The study also conclude by stating that ECOWAS as a regional body has been faced with challenges in the quest to achieve the pursuit of democracy. Some of the identified challenges have been funding issue and lack of political weak by member states to implement ECOWAS treaty within their territory.

### Recommendation

- i. The strategies for the achievement of democratic consolidation as provided for by ECOWAS should be strengthened. This can be done with regular workshops and seminars with representatives of government to bring to the government the interest of the people.
- ii. International bodies can also be called to provide support through advocacy where there seem to be efforts to thwart democracy and the pursuit of self interest. International bodies can also provide aid to ECOWAS in the form of training of personnel, technology provision and resources to support the effective use of the strategies.

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