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Abstract

The coronavirus disease 2019 (Covid-19) pandemic remains a global security threat, as the result of the emerging and exacerbated security challenges that have impacted on the national security policies of various regional economic communities (RECs). This study analyses SADC and ECOWAS' responses to the Covid-19 pandemic under their respective existing peace and security structures and explores if both RECs, SADC and ECOWAS have been efficient. This article discusses the Southern African and West African security setting, how its security architecture emerged and whether it has been successful in overcoming the security ramification in the region under the Covid-19 pandemic.

Coincidentally, both SADC and ECOWAS have been confronted with existing and emerging human security threats, such as increased poverty, inequality, and the spread of diseases, such as Covid-19. The Covid-19 pandemic, a non-traditional security threat, has exposed how RECs, such as SADC and ECOWAS, respond to non-traditional and emerging security threats, suggesting for the transcendence of their security architecture that caters equally for non-military and emerging human security threats, alike military threats. This article explores the regional security experiences, challenges, and responses of both the SADC and ECOWAS under the Covid-19 pandemic.

Keywords: Southern African Development Community (SADC), Economic Community of West African States (ECOWAS) regionalism, security community, Covid-19.

1. Introduction

Globally, as the result of the coronavirus (Covid-19) pandemic there has been unprecedented concern on peace and security. The Covid-19 pandemic continues to remain a security threat, and as a result requires for regions to align their security structures and frameworks to also attend to these emerging non-traditional human security threats.

Since the demise of colonialism, African countries adopted a security architecture, aligned to the African Union's (AU) African Peace and Security Architecture (APSA), that comprises of the regional building blocks, termed the regional economic communities (RECs) [1]. Despite the advances, achieved by the RECs, the lack of an evolved security architecture that is more inclusive of non-military security alone remains a major challenge for the transformation of peace and security in the region [2].

The Centre for Conflict Resolution [3] notes, non-military human security threats in Africa remain a challenge alongside Africa's redistribution of resources, which has resulted in conflicts across Africa. The security threats, within SADC and ECOWAS extend beyond merely military aggression (state-centric) and include emerging threats, which are non-traditional, such as human security, and are linked to realist notions of security [4, 5].

Amidst the Covid-19 pandemic, Africa and the globe at large has undergone major changes alongside the ramifications of the cold war, globalization, and the increased usage of technology amidst the fourth/fifth industrial revolution/s and increased human security threats. These contributing factors have been accompanied by new security threats, such as cyber security, and current security threats have been exacerbated such increased unemployment and emerging pandemics, to mention as few.

Coincidentally, the current security architecture and frameworks of the RECs, like SADC and ECOWAS does not adequately cater for these emerging security threats [4–10]. Further to this,

SADC [11] and ECOWAS's [1] human security threats that have transpired and, in some cases, have been further exacerbated by the Covid-19 pandemic include economic decline, job losses, food insecurity and the loss of life, to mention a few. This is because prior to the Covid-19 pandemic, both these RECs endured nonmilitary security threats and in the case of pandemic management had to exercise greater regional pandemic management due to the spread of disease on the African continent, such as the Ebola virus (EBOV) in ECOWAS and the Human Acquired Immune (HIV/AIDs) in SADC.

From a contextual perspective both RECs ECOWAS and SADC constitute of diversified histories, borders, and languages, as the result of colonialism. Notably, for a decade West African state have been characterised as politically turbulent; despite having been able to manage issues, connected to managing competition and confrontation [12], as opposed to SADC states who have succeeded in promoting greater consultation and consensus in their conflict mediation processes [13–15].

This highlights why this study serves as valuable research. Importantly, both sub regional groupings have gained experience in pandemic preparedness and management prior to Covid-19 as was the case for ECOWAS with Ebov and SADC with HIV/AIDs. Notably both RECs endured regional insecurity under the Covid-19 pandemic. In ECOWAS attacks were carried out by various armed groups in the Democratic Republic of the Congo and in the case of SADC there was an insurgency in Carbo delgado.

Peace and security for SADC and ECOWAS is primarily about achieving security communities at the regional level [8]. Both RECs have already initiated commitment and change through their respective treaties, policies, protocols and agreements. This has led to greater collectively and the conscious institutionalisation and transformation, linked to intent (policy, protocol, charters, and agreements) and action (security institution formation).

For the peace and security efforts, undertaken by the AU and RECs to be effective, the actors involved should not only have the requisite capacity for peace and security to remain, but also requires political will and commitment, and cooperation among members and with the international community to remain crucial for the process of attending to human security and emerging security threats, more specifically and not only military threats. In particular, factors, such as financial costs involved, the inadequate funds available for emerging human security threats, preparedness and attending timeously to security treats, greater collective co-ordination and adequate human and logistics capacity, have constrained the ability of African countries to achieve their peace and security agenda under the Covid-19 pandemic [16–18].

Despite the advances in harmonising human security efforts, peace, defence and security through the African Peace and Security Architecture (APSA) and the RECs, there is the need for a more transformed and inclusive non-traditional human security framework and architecture to exist within the current security architecture of both the SADC and the ECOWAS in order for these regions to reap the full rewards of regional integration [19].

The fundamental question, addressed in this article, focuses on the extent, at which the Southern African Development Community (SADC) and the Economic Community of West African States (ECOWAS) have succeeded in attaining peace and security through their respective security frameworks, common defense, and security institutions, by examining the security architecture and experiences of both the SADC and the ECOWAS, amidst a current global pandemic, the Covid-19 pandemic. This article explores the regional security experiences, challenges, and responses to peace and security of both the SADC and the ECOWAS under the Covid-19 pandemic.

Among the main objectives of this study is to improve the security arrangements in SADC and ECOWAS based on the lessons of the Covid 19 global pandemic preparedness. As a region with great potential for growth, Africa is the most affected by conflict and insecurity, as shown in Sierra Leone, Rwanda, Libya, Ethiopia, and the Democratic Republic of the Congo (DRC), which have lagged behind economically due to internal conflict, genocide, and military regimes and are slow to develop, which prevents them from reaping the benefits of regional integration. Comparatively to other regional groups in the world, African governments were subjected to higher levels of coups d'etat in the 1970s and 1990s. It is no secret, that both the African Union and the Economic Community of West African States (ECOWAS) have been criticized for delaying the sanctions of key participants in coups in Africa.

Particularly since the end of the Cold War, the paradigm of state defence has been restructured to include non-traditional threats, such as chronic poverty, economic inequities, and environmental degradation. In recent years, SADC countries South Africa, Zimbabwe, Botswana, Lesotho, Mozambique, Namibia and Eswatini have been criticized for escalating human security issues, such as high levels of disease, in particular HIV and AIDS, malaria and tuberculosis, rising poverty, high unemployment, and limited access to clean water and sanitation.

The purpose of this study is to consider the recommendations of Baregu and Landsberg [20] that the framework for peace and security is a continuous process, and the arguments of Arthur [1], Baregu and Landsberg [20], Marc et al [21] and Kuwali [22] who assert that there is a history of lack of commitment to implementing conflict and security policies.

2. Materials and Methods

A qualitative research study was conducted. The study focused on the politics of new regionalism and security communities SADC and ECOWAS for the promotion, mediation and management of peace and security within the continent.

There is a paucity of academic literature on pandemic preparedness in the ECOWAS and the SADC with regard to the Covid-19 pandemic. Additionally, there is dearth of evidence regarding the successes and failures of regional integration on these RECs during the Covid-19 pandemic. As a consequence, the contribution of this study is related to the limited knowledge regarding not only the status of the RECs in pandemic management under Covid-19, but also their status in a post-liberation context.

In particular, this study examined the security settings in Southern Africa and West Africa, as well as how its security architecture emerged and whether it has been successful in overcoming the emerging security aspects in the region under the Covid-19 pandemic. Based on new regionalism, the research examined how the regional security architecture of pandemic preparedness within SADC and ECOWAS measures up. Moreover, the study sought to identify deficiencies that impede effective policy implementation.

The rationale of this case study identified the context, background and depth of the situation within these sub-settings as both regional communities adopted a regional security strategy. West African states were politically turbulent; managed competition issues and confrontation as opposed to consultation and consensus. This serves as a valuable study. A regional pandemic preparedness model is much needed in SADC and ECOWAS, to ensure that they are well prepared to meet the emergence of new pandemics, ensure they are e-contained and that pandemics are management in the integration process. SADC can learn from the experiences of ECOWAS, such as the successes and challenges of pandemic management in Ebola. ECOWAS can also learn from approaches, used in SADC, related to the Omicron variant of Covid-19, without compromising regional stability. This calls for a strong case study.

A qualitative, exploratory approach was used in the methodology and design of the research, which relied heavily on both primary and secondary sources of data. The research study was structured around the collection and documentation of data to answer the questions and test the hypothesis.

Initially, an exploratory literature review was used to search and examining definitions, theories, policies, viewpoints, principles, methods and other research findings, as well as data that was collected on the statistics from the various institutions. The study focused on the politics of security communities within the African continent as the promotion, mediation and management of peace and security within the continent.

Secondly, primary and secondary sources were used to conduct desk research. A wide range of sources were reviewed, including archives, documentary evidence, articles and testimonies, the Internet, SADC and ECOWAS security frameworks, SADC and ECOWAS treaties, strategic plans, missions, protocols, and decision-making documents by SADC and ECOWAS institutions regarding pandemic preparedness, as well as reports, press releases, papers, and regional frameworks and operational plans.

3. Results

3. 1. Theoretical underpinnings of new regionalism

The "new regionalized world order" has evolved from the old regionalist order which existed between 1950–1970 and has changed in content and context. Hettne and Soderbaum [23] contend that old regionalism was defined by Cold War structures, whereas new regionalism reflects the globalization process.

This new wave of regionalism is characterized by: the transition from a Cold War bipolar system to a multipolar one; the decline of American hegemony through open regionalism; and the creation of a political economy on the basis of the European Union (EU) and the North American Free Trade Area (NAFTA). Consequently, also as a result of the collapse of the Westphalian nation-state system, transnational relations have evolved into interactions between governments and actors politically, socially and economically. As a result of globalization, there has been a shift in the international division of labour, the rise of multilateral trade, and the importance of trade tariffs; the end of Third Worldism; and changes in the attitudes of nations and political systems.

Thus, Soderbaum and Hettne [23] noted that a "new wave of regionalism" emerged after the 1990's because of increased African-Western relations, and that it characterized as being multifaceted, and multidimensional; encompassing economics, political regimes, heterogeneity, and social dimensions. With new regionalism, external opportunities are provided in such areas as trade, capital flow, technology, knowledge, and manpower.

Hettne and Soderbaum [23] said that this new wave of regionalism caused a shift from regime centred security to collective security as seen in the creation of continental, regional and sub-regional security mechanisms and protocols [24]. The change within the security framework forms the basis of this study. This article discusses new regional security issues in the SADC and the ECOWAS, including their peculiarities and challenges.

The new regionalism is an organic process, unlike the old war, and it reflects issues, faced by the region. As a result of globalization and security, regional relations are a dimension of this new regionalism. State behaviours affect each other in consequence; therefore, they become a major agenda item.

3. 2. Regional integration and security defence in Africa

At inception, the sigining of the Abuja Treaty in 1991 reflects the seriousness of the desire for unification by the 48 Member States of the Organisation for African Unity (OAU) [25].This has been regarded as vital and aimed at unifying vulnerable national economies in Africa with the aim to translate pan-African and economic integration of political unity. At the same time, this very treaty challeneges the extent, to which these RECs and their security exist.

Evidentley, regional integration aims to create peacefull and strengthened economic blocks in order for markets to flourish [26]. However the previaling institutional, structural and capacity building challenges remain a stark reality, according to the African Union Audit Report [27]. It is for this reason, the AU Report [27] identifies and challenges the extent, to which these RECs have secured peace within the sub-regions, such as SADC and the continent. Evidently, the literature on RECs highlights, these institutions lack correct implementation and co-ordination, affecting their delivery [28]. In addition, the AU's broader security context focuses on integration and human security, which continues to be de-emphasized.

Regional integration transpires in various forms, such as through harmonizing security policies [29, 30]. The SADC Secretariat has been cognizant of the fact that "policy makers must consider that an enabling environment of peace and security is required for regional integration and development to take place." This means that no development can fully occur unless political acceptance, security, and the absence of rule of law are present within the region [31]. This has also been implemented by ECOWAS through their regional Parliament, which acknowledges and seeks to consciously uphold the rule of law. Coincidentally, SADC in turn has identified its vision in this regard, lacking in a fully operational regional Parliament.

Notably, Zondi [32] notes treaties and protocols promote for integration and are a combination of political solidarity and a comprehensive security framework. Additionally, Qobo [33] notes

peace promotion and security progress within the African region has been slow, as the result of weak institutional capacity of member states. The literature argues regional relations within the security domain can't be assessed in isolation from domestic level challenges [8, 34–36], such a human security threats, which have resulted in line with the Covid-19 pandemic and in some instances been exacerbated.

In conceptualizing the idea of security integration, it can be seen to be connected to the cooperation amongst states, collective values and norms that exist amongst this groups of states and then propel different stages of development to transpire [37]. Further to this, the levels of integration (low and high) are linked to theories, such as "inter-governmentalism, neo-functionalist and supra-nationalism. Neo-functionalism theory notes for regional integration to be successful the nation states must surrender sovereignty to the region. Inter-governmentalism leads to neo-functionalism, as it creates the mix between power differences amongst members and state interests [38, 39].

Hence, states determine the outcomes of integration based on their political will, the need for common identity and values creates challenges. Supra-nationalism requires for states to surrender their sovereignty and act on decisions, this remains a hurdle within SADC [31]. These requirements have been some of the main hurdles, which have hampered the success of regional security for both RECs.

Patrick Mazimhaka and Iqabal Jhazbhay [40] pose an important question, "What specific institutions, policies and systems are required to build more effective and sustained development and security from within, and what forms of external engagement will do the most to support better governance to ensure long term stability and security in Africa." It is for this reason the link between integration and security defense must be clarified with objectives, process and structure, which are specific and implementable.

Considering this, RECs have come under a lot of pressure, due to the need for intervention in security, which impacts on human survival. This has led to the slow responses to emerging security threats, financial strain because of their activities and ultimately preventing the balance of peace in certain regions, resulting in ineffectiveness [27, 41]. This was the case when SADC members intervene in Carbo del Gardo insurgency in 2021, their slow response times suggests their lack of preparedness for the conflict. The 2021 protests in both Lesotho and South Africa also further highlight how human security threats have started to impact on regional security as the result of the lag in the regional security framework and focus on emerging human security threats in the region.

3. 3. Historical background: The Southern African Development Community (SADC)
The predecessor body, the South African Development Co-ordination Conference (SADCC) (1980) restructured itself in Windhoek, establishing the SADC. The SADCC demonstrated a common identity, political infrastructure and that of a security community. Zondi [31] notes it was the SADCC, which pushed for a secure region [27].

The vision of the SADC sub-regional bloc is premised on:

"… a common future, a future within a regional community that will ensure economic well-being, improvement of the standards of living and quality of life, freedom and social justice and peace and security for the peoples of Southern Africa [42]."

Further to this, SADC has aimed to promote for economic growth alongside security mechanisms. This has amounted to much regional security materialising as the results of documents, treaties and protocols that have been enshrined, highlighting the intentions and stance of the regional body. The regional security achievements in the SADC region under the Covid-19 pandemic can be seen to be connected to the SADC Brigade response to the Carbo del Gardo insurgency and response to the Covid-19 pandemic, which has been contained as the number of people infected has been much more than some of the major first world countries.

The Secretariat, located in Gaborone, is the principle executive institution of SADC and headed by an Executive Secretary, appointed for a four-year term at a time. The institutional reform within SADC focuses on the changing roles and functions of the SADC Secretariat, which must hold power and authority to impact on regional security initiatives and the proficient operation of its actions. This means that institutional reform must continually consider all the strengths, weak-

nesses, opportunities, and threats within the functioning of the security sector units or committees. This has materialised through audit reports and reviews by the Secretariat.

Van Nieuwkerk [42] argues the key decision makers within SADC are the member states and this poses challenges, linked to autonomy. This has resulted in SADC treaty and mandates of the directorate, enabling the Secretariat to become highly administrative, executor of member's decisions and lacking in independent decision-making powers.

Isaksen and Tjønneland [43] note it is for this reason that the Secretariat must strengthen its capacity of staff as well as monitoring and evaluation of the operationalization of policies and protocols.

The SADC: Treaty, Protocols and Agreements

The SADC Declaration and Treaty focuses on cooperation amongst member states on areas related to human security, such as non military security foreign diplomacy and regional peace [30]. Further to this, the Declaration and Treaty confirmed the SADC Act highlights principles, pertaining to the independence of states with national interest, upholding national security and state sovereignty amongst its Member States. The SADC treaties and protocols further highlight the promotion of peace and stability within the region, upholding the rule of law and for the principle of democracy and good governance to prevail within the region.

Isaksen and Tjønneland [43] note SADC's 1992 Treaty strongly emphasised the importance of maintaining a peaceful and secure region amidst democratic rule and governance. This SADC Treaty is the only vehicle, which aims to provide a regional security regime. Apart from the SADC Treaty, in later years the Agreement on Combatting Crime also aimed at ensuring a regional security paradigm within Southern Africa. Prior to the signing of the SADC Treaty Namibia and South Africa became members in 1990 as well as Mauritius, the Seychelles, and the Democratic Republic respectively after 1994 [43].

Cilliers [44] notes, Article 9 of the SADC Treaty established a few Institutional Mechanisms, including the following institutions for the operationalisation and for greater oversight within the SADC. Firstly, the Summit of Heads of State and Government, a very small organisation, often overburdened by the magnitude of its development co-ordination challenge. Secondly, the Tribunal is constituted to ensure adherence to the proper interpretation of the Treaty. The composition, powers, functions, and procedures, governing the Tribunal, are described in a Protocol, adopted by the Summit. Thirdly, the Council of Ministers, that consists of one minister from each member state. The Council of Ministers is the most important structure in ensuring the functionality of the Treaty and is also responsible for the operationalisation and development of the SADC body. Fourthly, the Standing Committee of Officials serves as a technical advisory committee to the Council and is composed of one permanent official from each member state. The Treaty also envisaged the establishment of commissions to guide and co-ordinate co-operation and integration policies and programmes in designated sectorial area as prescribed by the appropriate protocol, approved by the Summit.

Structures

The Organ on Politics, Defence and Security (OPDS)

Ngoma [35] notes the Organ on Politics Defence and Security (OPDS) mandate seeks to promote for collaborative security initiatives through peace promotion by means of negotiations, mediation and arbitration. This can only be achieved through a common political value systems and strong institutions, linked to a regional security policy, premised on common interest for the region, of which SADC requires further clarity on.

The Organ's guiding principles focus on "equality for member states, human rights, democracy, rule of law, peace, security, equity, mutual benefits, collective settlement of disputes, solidarity, respect for sovereignty and non-interference in internal affairs of sister states" [45].

Thompson et al. [46] notes the Organ's role, function and objectives were originally intended to go beyond traditional security issues (see above), so that new institutions may not undermine SADCs original developmental role. Evidence suggests the OPDS has not prevented or hampered the regression of this, as the Human Development Index validates the living conditions remains a

challenge in the region. This was demonstrated in 1996 when Nelson Mandela brought the matter of human rights violations in Nigeria to discussions.

Mutual Defence Pact

The Mutual Defence Pact was signed in 2003 and instituted for members to contribute to the development of defence capabilities and through defence training, research and intelligence matters [47]. The main objective of the SADC Organ on Politics, Defence and Security Co-operation is to ensure collective security and mutual defence. The Mutual Defence Pact of 2003 was signed, committing member states to develop both individually and through collective effort, ensuring the Organs objectives are operationalised. Despite this the Pact has not achieved much within defence and security matters.

The Strategic Indicative Plan for the Organ on Politics, Defence and Security (SIPO)

In 2004 SADC adopted SIPO in order to achieve the regions security objectives. SIPO would ultimately operationalise and implement the Organ on Politics, Defence and Security Co-operation (OPDSC). The SIPO was revised in 2012 [47] and focuses on security defence and police sectors. Ultimately focusing on creating "peaceful and stable political and security environment, through which the region will endeavour to cause its socio-economic objectives" [42].

The SADC BRIGADE

The 2007 SADC Summit launched the SADC Brigade to undertake sub-regional and multi-dimensional peace support operations. This brigade was launched in 2008 and is a force in the making, it is still a long way from being able to undertake any of these goals and the deadline for it established has been postponed from 2010 to 2015. SADC's Planning Element (PLANELM) was established as its Secretariat in 205 as a key operational framework for the OPDSC and takes guidance from the SADC Committee of Chiefs of Defence Staff and the Committee for Police Chiefs.

3. 4. Historical background: The Economic Community of West African States (ECOWAS)

The ECOWAS sub-regional block consists of 15 member states and was founded in 1975. ECOWAS aims to promote for economic growth alongside security mechanisms. ECOWAS comprises of a variety of states that have been colonised by former European colonial powers, creating difference in language, borders, and culture. One of the major challenges, faced by the ECOWAS region, is characterised by authoritarian states that have endured some of the deadliest conflicts in their post-colonial aftermath [12, 48–50].

Nwoko [1] suggests that ECOWAS is an efficient military security architecture, and lags in its human security framework, which can be seen to be connected to the lack of preparedness, funding, and operational requirements necessary to curtail pandemics, both previous efforts undertaken, such as combating Ebola virus and the current Covid-19.

ECOWAS remains a volatile region within the African continent due to it abundance of resources and a number of regional threats and instability. This has been further exacerbated by the lack of attention by the United Nations. Despite this ECOWAS has taken the initiative to seek solutions to the collective security threats within the region [2].

The ECOWAS: Treaty, Protocols and Agreements

van Nieuwkerk [42] notes in 1975 the ECOWAS Treaty at inception in May 1975 did not focus on a security-driven agenda as the focus was mainly on economic goals. In comparison to SADC, whose predecessor the SADCC focused on a security agenda. Evidently, in 1978 the first signs of a Protocol on Non-Aggression transpired, alongside the Protocol on Mutual Assistance on Defence (1986), which is similar to the SADC Mutual Defence Pact. In addition, the ECOWAS treaty was revised in 1993 for greater supranational power to the ECOWAS body.

The amended treaty was signed in 1993 and seeks to promote greater cooperation and political will amongst members. This is what ultimately institutionalised the vision of ECOWAS through mechanisms, such as the judicial systems, a parliament and common economic system. In comparison to ECOWAS, SADC is lagging behind in this regard. Further to this the treaty holds members accountable for the settlement of regional security threats [42].

Ignatius Acheampon [50] Ghana's former head of state notes that ECOWAS was created to overcome "centuries" of separation and obstructions, imposed by the West in order to redevelop the Africa, which reinstitutes regional harmony.

The Protocol on Non-Aggression

This protocol seeks to address external threats, as these led to and impacted on the internal security threats [51].

The Protocol on Mutual Assistance in Defence

The Protocol provides for "a non-standing military force for the purpose of mutual military assistance to members of the Community, attacked by external aggressors." Further to this the response mechanism is premised on collective forces in overcoming external attacks on member states [52]. The Protocol promotes for peace amongst member states and maintaining this peace in the case of foreign invasion. The Mutual Assistance on Defense (MAD) was adopted by member states of the ECOWAS on 29 May 198. It facilitated the creation of the ECOMOG security agenda in the participation of the Liberian civil war. This was created to compliment the non-aggression protocols.

The Protocol on the Mechanism for Conflict Prevention, Management, Resolution, Peace-keeping and Security

This protocol was signed in 1991 and its role is to institutionalise the peacekeeping and conflict management activities of the Community. It therefore makes provision for a Mediation and Security Council, a dedicated Secretariat, Committees of Ambassadors and Ministers, a Defence and Security Commission, an ad hoc Council of Elders, and a sub-regional Security and Peace Observation System (an 'early warning' mechanism) [42].

The Protocol on Democracy and Good Governance

This protocol was adopted in 2001, in an attempt to overcome military coups and unconstitutional changes in government. This mechanism is linked to a process that automatically temporarily withdraws and suspends member states who demonstrate unconstitutional behaviour in this regard [52].

ECOWAS Conflict Prevention Framework

ECOWAS instituted Early Warning Systems in 1999 through the Protocol of security in ECOWAS, the ECOWAS Observation and Monitoring Centre, which reported to bureaus, known as ECOWARN. Further to this these Early Warning Systems are linked to human security [2].

The ECOWAS Ceasefire Monitoring Group (ECOMOG)

One of the key strengths of the ECOWAS region has been the ECOMOG who have managed to secure their own equipment, soldiers and money for post-conflict operations. Hence, the sub-region has been a force already in operation through collective efforts and political will amongst members. This has been demonstrated in the Sierra Leonie intervention (1998) and the Cote d'Ivoire intervention (2003). However, this did demonstrate the need for greater synergy amongst regional actors.

Structure

The ECOWAS consists of the following structures: The Commission, the Community Parliament, the Community Court of Justice and the ECOWAS Bank for Investment and Development (EBID) [53].

The ECOWAS Commission: The ECOWAS Secretariat was converted into a Commission (2006); this resulted in a name change and escalation in the number of officers. The Community Parliament: The change within this ECOWAS sector has also become more specialised for it to remain focused on its core business. The ECOWAS Community Parliament is represented by the 15 ECOWAS member states, each having 5 seats in Parliament; other seats are also occupied by the population, constituting a total of 115 seats. This body deals with matters related to human rights, fundamental freedoms and will make recommendations to institutions and community Organs. What remains of concern is the degree of functionality of this body [54].

The Community Court of Justice seeks to make it more specialised in its operation for greater efficiency in its purpose. The Community Court of Justice seeks to uphold laws, equity and deal

with the interpretation and implementation of the Revised Treaty and other legalities, linked to the Community and its functioning [55].

The ECOWAS Bank for Investment and Development (EBID) is the financial scope of the ECOWAS body. This focuses on the development of public and private partnerships through "transport, energy, telecommunications, industry, poverty alleviation, the environmental and natural resource" [56].

Evidently the President of ECOWAS Kadre Desire Ouedraogo has highlighted the importance of an involved capacity, complement which is critical for implementation of the aims and objectives of this Commission [57].

3. 5. The ECOWAS and SADC, peacekeeping lessons in its early years

In its former years, SADC and ECOWAS lacked common values, identity, and remained plagued by the reinforcement of difference amongst states through "identity, citizenship and language, which create an environment for security threats to emerge [2]. This goes without saying that the promotion of democratic values is on the increase in these regions and an agile and robust community must be premised on its own values and norms.

The Human Development Report prior to 1996 listed 13 of the West African states as the poorest in the world. The Centre for Conflict Resolution in Cape Town South Africa has termed the West African region a region of "interconnected instability" [2] . Nwoko [1] suggests West Africa has over the last decade endured some of the most troublesome and brutal conflicts in Africa. With many of the West African state enduring both interstate and intra-state conflicts, insurgencies, regional instability as the result of political conquests, such as coups, alongside emerging human security threats, such as the spread of disease like HIV/AIDs, all of which shaped stability within this sub-regional block.

At inception, the ECOWAS security framework was not fully operationalised due to the ad hoc military intervention by Nigeria and a few other members in 1990 who led to the intervention in Liberia. The decision for a focused security regime was taken at the Summit Standing Mediation Committee (SMC) [42]. ECOWAS has been involved in peace missions in Liberia from 1990 to 2003 and Sierra Leonie from 1997; Guinnea-Bissau from 1999 and Côte d'Ivoire from 2003, confronting a mixture of internal and external security threats [2].

Over a decade ago, the conflicts in Sierra Leonie (2002), Liberia (2005) and conflicts in Côte d'Ivoire and Togo were volatile. This highlighted the need for a pragmatic and practical security framework. This ECOMOG structure took on the role as peace promoter in Liberia, Sierra Leone and Guinea-Bissau. This led to greater discussion for institutionalising security and war management, leading to the creation of the Extraordinary Summit [42].

Given this, the lessons, learnt prior to the demise of the Cold War, led to greater resilience for ECOWAS with the emergence of conflicts in Liberia (1989) and Sierra Leonie (1991). This ultimately led to the creation of conflict intervention; management mechanisms; crisis management and preparedness system, which moved from only focusing on the protection of state sovereignty to emerging nonmilitary regional threats [2].

The emergence of increased non-traditional security threats in the aftermath of the Cold War and amidst globalisation led to increased levels of poverty, corruption, insurgencies and weak governance and leadership [58].

ECOWAS' commitment to regional peace and security can be seen to be aligned to the creation from 1999 to the ECOWAS Mechanism for Conflict Prevention, Management, Resolution, Peacekeeping and Security; and the Mechanism and ECOWAS Supplementary Protocol on Democracy and Good Governance was instituted in 2001. This demonstrates that the region did aspire towards a security community, which would seek to overcome the regions military and human security challenges Notably, the advances of the ECOWAS can be seen to be connected to the initiative, undertaken in Liberia and other military interventions, which were as the result of the ECOWAS Ceasefire Monitoring Group (ECOMOG), which led to much of the successes, attained by the regional group in firmly maintaining greater stability within the region.

Further to this, within emerging security threats in the early 2000 insurgencies opened loopholes for violence to emerge through terrorist groups, which infiltrated states and gained momentum, taking over regions, causing further instability within the West African region [59]. These terrorist organisations in the region include Boko Haram, the Movement for the Emancipation of the Niger Delta Region (MEND), and Al Qaeda in the Islamic Maghreb (AQIM).

In its former years, the SADC comprised of a large number of states and one of its major challenges included that of internal disputes, such as in the Democratic Republic of Congo (DRC) (1997) and Lesotho (1998) conflicts, which later led to collective peacekeeping efforts. Scholars Dzinesa, Nagar and Saunders [59] suggest upholding SADCs core values led to successes, which included the suspension of Madagascar due to unconstitutional domination of the military by the government.

Notably, Adebajo and Landsberg [60] directed attention to the relations amongst member states and their lack of political will over interventions in Lesotho, Zimbabwe and the DRC that existed. All these and more mishaps made it difficult for SADC to become a regional security community to be reckoned with. The criticism for intervention in neighboring states remained a contested topic. This was the case, when some SADC Member states intervened in the Democratic Republic of Congo (DRC) conflict; member states Angola Namibia and Zimbabwe went to the DRC to support Laurent Kabila's rebel government. At the times, the remaining SADC Member state South Africa, Mozambique and Botswana abstained from intervening as consensus had not been met within SADC [27]. Clearly, this led to implications, contestations, and heated disagreement. The outcomes were not the result of collective action.

What remains of paramount importance is whether SADC has been able to demonstrate its core character, linked to its vision and mission, amidst exacerbated and emerging non-military security threats amidst a global pandemic, the Covid-19 pandemic.

Furthermore, a noteworthy point flagged has been the implementation of the Regional Strategic Indicative Plan (RISDP) alongside the Industrialisation Strategy and Roadmap as well as the flagging of monitoring and evaluation of all achievements of SADC.

Both SADC and ECOWAS demonstrated contentious regional security outcomes, when focusing on their efforts in sustaining peace. This was due to military interventions, which were ad hoc within the African continent. Coincidentally, both RECs have been more successful through high-level diplomatic mediations, which seek to prevent conflict. This was demonstrated by ECOWAS in the Liberia civil war, which aggravated the resolution of conflict. In the same light internal conflicts within SADC and intentions behind mediation remained embroiled in debate as was the case of Zimbabwe and Lesotho.

Despite the experiences of ECOWAS, with the focus on the ECOMOG body much has been achieved institutionally and the political will amongst members remains strong. SADCs in comparison was lacking in this regard, as political will amongst members remains questionable if one explores the DRC conflict (1998) and Lesotho (1998) where some member states intervened and there was not a collective effort on these matters.

3. 6. COVID-19 pandemic management: SADC and ECOWAS

The globe has felt the scourge of the Covid-19 pandemic amidst increasing concern regarding insecurity across regions. On March 11, 2020, the World Health Organization announced the disease as a global pandemic [60]. With the roll-out of vaccines, aimed at curtailing the spread and loss of life as the result of the pandemic, the Covid-19 pandemic continues to remain an insecurity. In curbing the ramifications of the Covid-19 pandemic, The World Health Organisation (WHO) has taken the lead in guided countries and provided global insights on pandemic management.

In the latter half of 2019, the outbreak of the coronavirus (Covid-19) disease was reported by the Wuhan Municipal Health Commission, China, in Wuhan, Hubei Province. The coronavirus disease (Covid-19) 2019 is an infectious disease, caused by a newly discovered coronavirus [61] and can be categorised as an infectious disease that affects and debilitates the respiratory system in the body.

The coronavirus disease 2019 (Covid-19), a severe acute respiratory syndrome virus [61], is also an emerging non-traditional security threat that has since affected both RECs SADC and ECOWAS as a result, impacting on the regional and human security of the region. Given that, the peace and security of the region has been disturbed in the upsurge of conflicts in SADC countries, such as South Africa (South Africa's unrest and the Phoenix Massacre) [62], Lesotho (Eswatini protests) [63] and Mozambique's (Carbo Delgado insurgency) [64].

Coincidentally in ECOWAS Mali endured a 2020 Coup d'état in 2020, the most infamous terrorist group in Boko Haram's ongoing insurgency, and there have been increased terrorist groups in the West African region in countries, such as Mali, Niger, Mauritania, and Sierra Leone,

In early March 2019, SADC reported its first Covid-19 case in South Africa. By 15 April 2020, fourteen of the 16 SADC Member States had been affected by the Covid-19 pandemic [65]. In March 2020, fourteen (14) of the sixteen (16) SADC Member States have been affected by Covid-19. Notably by February 2020, the ECOWAS reported its first Covid-19 case in Nigeria. By March 2020 17 countries in West Africa had been affected by the Covid-19 pandemic (OECD).

SADC has also undertaken several regional responses to combat the Covid-19 pandemic, such as reinforcing Disaster Risk Management; implementing the SADC Protocol of Health, pooling procured services for medical supplies, to mention a few [65]. The two-security strategy pertinent to pandemic management within ECOWAS include the APSA, and the ECOWAS Conflict Prevention Framework (ECPF).

Infection rates and death rates have since soared in both the SADC and ECOWAS regions. Further to this, instability, connected to emerging human security threats, is connected to people's livelihoods that have been compromised as the result of economic impacts, job losses and increase poverty [21]. Hence states within this regional bloc have instituted domestic policies, connected to border control, inter-regional travel and transport as well as lock downs and social distancing [65].

Both the ECOWAS AND SADC states have through their regional cooperation strategy crafted plans in line with global and their respective regional response to the Covid-19 pandemic to combat the virus and secure the livelihood of their respective regions in order to overcome the challenges of the Covid-19.

A collective commitment to human security matters remains high on the RECs peace and security agenda and is connected to matters, pertaining to disease, education, food security, climate challenges and gender and women's issues [66] in an effort for these challenges to be overcome, leading to greater success, alongside peace, security, and development) [1].

Landsberg's [67] in his article *The Southern African Development Community decision-making architecture* suggests that at the heart of SADCs progress is the need for greater implementation of their set goals and aspirations. This can be seen to be connected to the most pressing challenges, faced by both RECs SADC and ECOWAS, including the lack of harmonising their security policies at the local, national, and regional level in order to contain emerging human security threats that require immediate attention [22].

Despite the many structural and strategic implementation and operational challenges, faced by the SADC and ECOWAS in its formative years, SADCs has managed to overcome many hurdles through its consultative process with member states and their achievements have led to both RECs overcoming major conflicts. In the case of ECOWAS, successes can be attested to the Democratic Republic of Congo (DRC) crises and in SADC the curtailing of Lesotho insecurities, due to this both RECs possess thriving early warning security systems. Furthermore, ECOWAS's prevention success in epidemic management in the case of Ebov and HIV/IADs [68], and SADCs prevention success in epidemic planning for malaria [69, 70] and HIV [71] epidemic containment and decline have been progressive in the region [72].

Even though both RECs have endured escalating Covid-19 infection and death rates, other regional blocks have been affected even more with their numbers of infections and death rates purely due to advances in the early warning mechanisms, used in the region [73–77].

In recent years, amidst a Covid-19 pandemic and the emergence of security threats in both regional blocks, both SADC and ECOWAS have managed to contain these threats in a reactive manner as opposed to displaying greater responsiveness, lacking preparedness. These challenges

can be seen to be connected to van Nieuwkerk [40] assertions on the financial constraints and capacity inadequacies that remain linked to the promotion of national interests in relation to regional objectives; Nganje [78] posits weak governance and what Nkowo [2] terms the lack of preparedness, which can be seen to be connected to the lack of technical support, budgets and capacity, needed to curtail emerging threats.

Both sub regional groups received international support through global funding that was made available as well as additional vaccines. The World Bank assisted the certain West African states through projects, such as the through the Rapid Cash Assistance programmes (The World Bank) and some SADC states, such as South Africa formed a partnership with the World Bank in order to curtail exacerbated human security treats through the partners programme, termed the New World Bank Group Partnership Framework, in order to support socio-economic transformation (The World Bank)

Notably, both SADC and ECOWAS fell short of resources, such as enough healthcare facilities to help sick people, thus this further burdened current health care systems and the lack funds that were readily available to procure enough vaccines. This highlights the lack of seriousness on the part of the subregional groupings towards emerging non-military security threats, such as the emergence of pandemics, suggesting a reactionary strategy as opposed to a response strategy.

4. Conclusion

This article has discussed and explored the RECs SADC and ECOWAS' respective peace and security architecture and its responses to the Covid-19 pandemic. The study also comparatively studied the evolution of both RECs and their security environments and peace, and security challenges, endured prior to the Covid-19 pandemic. Further to this, the emergence of the Covid-19 pandemic in the two sub regional groupings in Southern Africa and West Africa were also discussed.

The study notes that both RECs reacted to the Covid-19 pandemic in a manner that limited the spread of the Covid-19 virus and limited the large-scale loss of life. If one compares the number of infected cases and deaths in both SADC and ECOWAS to other regions, many of whom are considered developed worlds, both SADC and ECOWAS have faired rather well, limiting the Covid-19 pandemic and preventing mass deaths within their regions.

This goes without saying that SADC and ECOWAS lagged in their preparedness for the Covid-19 human security threat. Given that, both regions have endured pandemics, such as Ebov in West Africa and HIV/AIDs in South Africa, adequate preparedness for such a global catastrophe would seemingly have been integrated into the current strategy and plans and implemented efficiently.

As has been seen with the request and outpour of international support for the region through funding and vaccines, there was also the lack of resources and funds that were readily available for the RECs, highlighting the lack of seriousness on the part of the subregional groupings towards emerging non-military security threats in their subregional groupings.

Acknowledgments

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