

INVESTIGATING THE EFFICACY OF ECOWAS AND THE AFRICAN UNION IN CONFLICT RESOLUTION AND PEACEBUILDING IN AFRICA: A COMPARATIVE STUDY

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ABSTRACT. This research examines the effectiveness of the Economic Community of West African States (ECOWAS) and the African Union (AU) in resolving conflicts and promoting peace in Africa. Through comparative analysis, the study evaluates the strengths, weaknesses, and different strategies of these regional organizations. The methodology includes qualitative examination through documentary analysis and case studies. By analysing official documents, reports, and scholarly articles, the study explores the institutional structures and mechanisms used by ECOWAS and the AU. Case studies of conflicts in Mali, South Sudan, and the Democratic Republic of Congo are used to understand the practical applications of their conflict resolution and peacebuilding efforts. The research aims to assess the effectiveness of ECOWAS and the AU in fostering peace and reconciliation in conflict-affected regions, identifying the challenges and limitations they face. Additionally, it provides recommendations for improving the capacity and effectiveness of these regional organizations in sustaining peace in Africa. By highlighting the comparative performance of ECOWAS and the AU, this study seeks to enhance the understanding of the role of regional organizations in managing conflicts and promoting peace on the African continent.

KEYWORDS: ECOWAS, African Union (AU), Conflict Resolution, Peacebuilding, Comparative Analysis.

Introduction

Background and Context

IN RECENT DECADES, AFRICA HAS BEEN CHARACTERIZED BY NUMEROUS conflicts, ranging from interstate wars to internal strife fuelled by ethnic tensions, political instability, and economic grievances. These conflicts have had devastating consequences, including loss of life, displacement of populations, and hindrance to socio-economic development. Regional organizations have emerged as key actors in addressing these challenges, playing crucial roles in conflict resolution and peacebuilding efforts across the continent. Among these organizations, the Economic Community of West African States (ECOWAS) and the African Union

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(AU) stand out for their proactive interventions in managing conflicts and promoting stability in their respective regions. ECOWAS, founded in 1975, has been instrumental in fostering cooperation and integration among its member states in West Africa. It has deployed peacekeeping missions, mediated peace agreements, and facilitated political transitions in countries such as Liberia, Sierra Leone, and Guinea-Bissau. For instance, ECOWAS played a pivotal role in resolving the civil wars in Liberia and Sierra Leone by deploying military forces and mediating peace talks, ultimately contributing to the restoration of peace and stability in these countries.

Similarly, the African Union, established in 2001, has been actively involved in conflict resolution and peacebuilding efforts across the continent. One notable example is its intervention in the Darfur conflict in Sudan, where the AU deployed peacekeeping troops as part of the African Union-United Nations Hybrid Operation in Darfur (UNAMID). While the mission faced challenges, including limited resources and coordination issues, it demonstrated the AU's commitment to addressing conflicts and protecting civilians in Africa. Despite the efforts of regional organizations like ECOWAS and the AU, challenges persist in achieving lasting peace in Africa. Conflicts continue to erupt, often fueled by complex socio-political dynamics and external influences. Moreover, regional organizations face constraints such as inadequate resources, institutional capacity gaps, and conflicting interests among member states. Therefore, understanding the background and context of conflicts in Africa, as well as the role of regional organizations in addressing them, is crucial for formulating effective strategies to promote peace and stability on the continent.

Research Objectives and Questions

The research objectives and questions of this study aim to delve into the efficacy of regional organizations, particularly ECOWAS and the African Union, in managing conflicts and fostering peace in Africa. By scrutinizing their approaches, mechanisms, and outcomes, the study seeks to provide valuable insights into the role of these organizations in conflict resolution and peacebuilding efforts on the continent.

One primary objective is to analyse the institutional structures and mechanisms employed by ECOWAS and the AU in addressing conflicts in Africa. This involves examining the frameworks, protocols, and decision-making processes within these organizations to understand how they coordinate and implement conflict resolution initiatives. Through this analysis, the study aims to identify the strengths and weaknesses of ECOWAS and the AU in effectively managing conflicts within their respective regions.

Another objective is to assess the strategies and interventions deployed by ECOWAS and the AU in resolving conflicts in Africa. This entails examining the tools and methods utilized by these regional bodies, such as diplomatic mediation, peacekeeping operations, and peacebuilding initiatives. By evaluating the effectiveness of these strategies, the study seeks to discern which approaches yield positive outcomes and which encounter challenges in achieving sustainable peace.

Furthermore, the research aims to evaluate the impact of ECOWAS and the AU in promoting peacebuilding and reconciliation processes in conflict-affected regions. This involves analysing case studies of specific conflicts, such as the crises in Mali, South Sudan, and the Democratic Republic of Congo, to assess the contributions of ECOWAS and the AU to peacebuilding efforts. By examining the outcomes of their interventions, the study aims to identify lessons learned and best practices for enhancing peacebuilding initiatives in Africa.

Overall, the research objectives and questions are geared towards providing a comprehensive understanding of the roles, challenges, and effectiveness of ECOWAS and the AU in conflict resolution and peacebuilding in Africa. Through rigorous analysis and empirical evidence, the study aims to generate insights that can inform policy recommendations and enhance the capacity of regional organizations to address conflicts and promote peace on the continent.

Significance of the Study

The significance of this study lies in its contribution to the field of conflict resolution and peacebuilding in Africa, particularly in understanding the role and effectiveness of regional organizations like ECOWAS and the African Union. In recent years, Africa has witnessed numerous conflicts with devastating human, social, and economic consequences. Amidst these challenges, regional organizations have emerged as key actors in facilitating peace processes and fostering stability across the continent.

By examining the experiences of ECOWAS and the AU in managing conflicts in Africa, this study offers valuable insights into the strengths, weaknesses, and lessons learned from their interventions. Understanding the institutional structures, mechanisms, and strategies employed by these regional bodies is essential for policymakers, practitioners, and scholars seeking to develop effective approaches to conflict resolution and peacebuilding in Africa.

Moreover, the study's focus on comparative analysis adds further significance by enabling a nuanced understanding of the differences and similarities between ECOWAS and the AU in their approaches to conflict management. By analysing real-life examples, such as ECOWAS' involvement in the Liberian civil war or

the AU's peacekeeping mission in Darfur, the study sheds light on the factors that contribute to the success or failure of regional peace efforts.

Furthermore, the findings of this study have practical implications for policymakers and practitioners involved in peacebuilding initiatives in Africa. By identifying best practices, challenges, and areas for improvement, the study can inform the design and implementation of more effective conflict resolution strategies at the regional level. Additionally, the study's recommendations can guide policymakers in enhancing the capacity and coordination of regional organizations to address emerging security threats and promote sustainable peace on the continent.

The significance of this study lies in its potential to inform evidence-based policymaking, enhance the effectiveness of regional peace efforts, and contribute to the broader discourse on conflict resolution and peacebuilding in Africa. By bridging the gap between theory and practice, the study aims to make a meaningful contribution to efforts aimed at preventing and resolving conflicts in the region, ultimately contributing to peace and stability in Africa.

Theoretical Framework

Conceptualizing Conflict Resolution and Peacebuilding

Conceptualizing conflict resolution and peacebuilding involves understanding the multifaceted nature of conflicts and the strategies employed to address them effectively. Conflict resolution encompasses a range of processes aimed at managing, mitigating, or resolving disputes between parties. This can include negotiation, mediation, arbitration, or, in some cases, coercive measures such as sanctions or military intervention. Peacebuilding, on the other hand, goes beyond simply ending violence to address the root causes of conflict and build sustainable peace. It involves fostering reconciliation, promoting social cohesion, and addressing underlying grievances to prevent the recurrence of violence (Ogwu, 2008).

One real-life example of conflict resolution is the peace agreement brokered by ECOWAS in the Liberian civil war. In the early 1990s, Liberia was torn apart by a brutal civil war that claimed thousands of lives and displaced countless civilians. ECOWAS intervened diplomatically, facilitating negotiations between warring factions and eventually brokering the Abuja Accord in 1996. This agreement led to the establishment of a transitional government and paved the way for democratic elections, ultimately bringing an end to the conflict (Jaye, 2011).

Another example of conflict resolution is the Arusha Accords in Burundi, brokered by regional and international actors to end years of ethnic violence. The agreement established power-sharing mechanisms and addressed grievances

between the Hutu majority and the Tutsi minority, paving the way for a transitional government and ultimately contributing to stability in the region.

Peacebuilding efforts often extend beyond formal agreements to include grassroots initiatives aimed at fostering reconciliation and social cohesion. In Rwanda, following the genocide in 1994, community-based organizations such as the Association of Widows of the Genocide (AVEGA) played a crucial role in promoting healing and rebuilding trust among survivors and perpetrators. Through support programs, trauma counselling, and economic empowerment initiatives, AVEGA contributed to the long-term process of reconciliation and reconstruction in Rwanda (Terwase et al., 2018).

Moreover, transitional justice mechanisms, such as truth commissions and reparations programs, are integral to peacebuilding processes in post-conflict societies. In Sierra Leone, the Truth and Reconciliation Commission (TRC) provided a platform for victims and perpetrators of the civil war to share their experiences and seek accountability. By acknowledging past atrocities and providing opportunities for healing and redress, the TRC aimed to promote reconciliation and prevent future conflicts.

Similarly, another notable example is the Truth and Reconciliation Commission (TRC) established in South Africa after the end of apartheid. The TRC provided a forum for victims and perpetrators to testify about human rights abuses committed during the apartheid era. Through public hearings and amnesty provisions, the TRC sought to promote reconciliation and national healing, laying the groundwork for a peaceful transition to democracy.

Analysing these examples illustrates the complexity of conflict resolution and peacebuilding processes and the importance of tailored approaches to different contexts. While diplomatic negotiations and peace agreements may be effective in some cases, addressing deeper root causes of conflict such as inequality, injustice, and historical grievances requires sustained efforts over the long term. By conceptualizing conflict resolution and peacebuilding in this holistic manner, policymakers and practitioners can develop more effective strategies for promoting peace and stability in conflict-affected societies (Zied, 2017).

Role of Regional Organizations in Conflict Management

The role of regional organizations in conflict management is critical in addressing intra-state and inter-state conflicts within their respective regions. These organizations often possess a deep understanding of the local context, cultural dynamics, and geopolitical complexities, allowing them to leverage their unique position to facilitate dialogue, mediation, and peacebuilding efforts. One notable example is the Economic Community of West African States (ECOWAS), which has played a

pivotal role in managing conflicts in West Africa. During the Liberian civil war in the 1990s, ECOWAS deployed a peacekeeping force known as the Economic Community of West African States Monitoring Group (ECOMOG) to enforce a ceasefire and facilitate negotiations between warring factions. ECOMOG's intervention helped stabilize the region and paved the way for a peaceful transition to democracy in Liberia (Enaifoghe, 2018).

Similarly, the African Union (AU) has emerged as a key actor in conflict management across the African continent (Akinola, 2017). The AU's Peace and Security Council (PSC) is responsible for preventing, managing, and resolving conflicts in Africa through diplomatic means, peacekeeping operations, and mediation efforts. One notable example of the AU's role in conflict management is its intervention in the Darfur crisis in Sudan. In 2004, the AU deployed a peacekeeping mission, the African Union Mission in Sudan (AMIS), to monitor the ceasefire agreement and protect civilians in Darfur. While AMIS faced challenges in its mandate and capacity, its presence demonstrated the AU's commitment to addressing conflicts and promoting peace in Africa (Van Nieuwkerk, 2021).

In the Great Lakes region of Africa, the International Conference on the Great Lakes Region (ICGLR) has been instrumental in addressing conflicts and promoting peace. For example, ICGLR facilitated the Peace, Security, and Cooperation Framework for the Democratic Republic of the Congo and the Region, which brought together regional leaders and international partners to address the root causes of conflict in the DRC and neighbouring countries. Through diplomatic engagement and cooperation, ICGLR has contributed to mitigating tensions and fostering stability in the region (Idike et al., 2014).

Moreover, regional organizations often deploy peacekeeping missions to monitor ceasefires, protect civilians, and facilitate peace processes in conflict-affected areas. The East African Standby Force (EASF), a regional standby force established by the Eastern African states, has been involved in conflict management efforts in Somalia. EASF has deployed peacekeeping troops as part of the African Union Mission in Somalia (AMISOM), contributing to the stabilization of the country and the restoration of government authority in areas previously controlled by militant groups like Al-Shabaab (Idris Erameh, 2021).

Additionally, regional organizations play a crucial role in post-conflict reconstruction and development by supporting peacebuilding initiatives and promoting socio-economic recovery. In the aftermath of the civil war in Mozambique, the Southern African Development Community (SADC) facilitated the peace process and supported the country's transition to peace and democracy. SADC assisted demobilization and reintegration of former combatants, as well as initiatives for reconciliation and nation-building, contributing to the consolidation of peace and stability in Mozambique.

Furthermore, regional organizations often collaborate with international partners, such as the United Nations (UN) and other regional bodies, to enhance their capacity and effectiveness in conflict management. For instance, the Southern African Development Community (SADC) has worked closely with the UN and other stakeholders to mediate political crises and promote stability in the Southern African region. In Zimbabwe, SADC facilitated negotiations between the ruling party and the opposition to resolve the political impasse following the disputed elections in 2008, leading to the formation of a unity government and the restoration of stability.

The role of regional organizations in conflict management is crucial in addressing the diverse challenges and complexities of conflicts in their respective regions. By leveraging their local knowledge, diplomatic networks, and institutional resources, these organizations can play a significant role in preventing, managing, and resolving conflicts, ultimately contributing to peace and stability in Africa (Williams, 2020).

Comparative Analysis Framework

The comparative analysis framework employed in this study allows for a systematic examination of the approaches, mechanisms, and outcomes of conflict resolution and peacebuilding efforts by regional organizations, specifically ECOWAS and the African Union (AU). By comparing and contrasting the experiences of these two organizations, insights can be gained into their respective strengths, weaknesses, and areas for improvement in managing conflicts and fostering peace in Africa.

One aspect of the comparative analysis framework is the examination of institutional structures and mechanisms within ECOWAS and the AU. This involves scrutinizing the organizational mandates, decision-making processes, and resource allocations of both organizations to understand how they operate in conflict management contexts. ECOWAS, with its smaller membership and more decentralized approach, often exhibits flexibility and agility in responding to crises within West Africa. In contrast, the AU, representing the entire African continent, faces challenges in achieving consensus among its diverse member states but possesses a broader mandate and greater resources for conflict resolution and peacebuilding initiatives. ECOWAS operates under a more decentralized structure with a history of robust military interventions, while the AU relies heavily on consensus-based decision-making and collaboration with external partners such as the United Nations.

Furthermore, the comparative analysis framework allows for an assessment of the strategies and interventions deployed by ECOWAS and the AU in resolving conflicts in Africa. By analysing specific case studies, such as ECOWAS' intervention in Liberia and the AU's mission in Darfur, the study can evaluate the effectiveness of different approaches to conflict resolution and peacebuilding. For instance,

ECOWAS has a history of deploying military intervention forces, such as ECOMOG in Liberia, to enforce peace agreements and stabilize conflict zones. In contrast, the AU emphasizes diplomatic mediation and peacekeeping missions, as seen in its efforts to resolve the crisis in Darfur through the African Union-United Nations Hybrid Operation in Darfur (UNAMID). ECOWAS' direct military intervention in Liberia may have contributed to the cessation of hostilities, but questions remain about its long-term sustainability and impact on reconciliation efforts.

Moreover, the comparative analysis framework facilitates an exploration of the outcomes and impact of conflict resolution initiatives by ECOWAS and the AU. This involves assessing factors such as the durability of peace agreements, the extent of societal reconciliation, and the prospects for sustainable development in conflict-affected regions. By examining the successes and failures of both organizations, the study can identify lessons learned and best practices for enhancing future peacebuilding efforts in Africa.

The comparative analysis framework provides a structured approach for understanding the role of regional organizations in conflict resolution and peacebuilding in Africa. By systematically comparing the experiences of ECOWAS and the AU, the study aims to generate insights that can inform policy recommendations and contribute to the advancement of peace and stability on the continent. Through rigorous analysis and empirical evidence, the study seeks to contribute to the broader scholarly discourse on conflict management and regional integration in Africa.

Case Studies: ECOWAS and the African Union in Conflict Resolution

Overview of ECOWAS: Structure and Mechanisms

The Economic Community of West African States (ECOWAS) serves as a regional organization focused on promoting economic integration, peace, and stability in West Africa. Structurally, ECOWAS consists of several key institutions designed to facilitate cooperation and collaboration among its member states. At the heart of ECOWAS is the Authority of Heads of State and Government, which serves as the highest decision-making body. Comprising the presidents and heads of government of member states, the Authority sets the overall policy direction and guides on issues related to peace, security, and development in the region (Jaye, 2011).

In addition to the Authority, ECOWAS operates through a network of specialized institutions and bodies responsible for implementing its policies and programs. These include the ECOWAS Commission, which serves as the

executive arm of the organization, coordinating and implementing regional initiatives across various sectors. The Commission is supported by specialized directorates and departments focusing on areas such as peace and security, trade and industry, and human development, reflecting ECOWAS' multifaceted approach to regional integration and development (Ogwu, 2008).

Mechanisms within ECOWAS are designed to address a wide range of issues, including conflict prevention, mediation, and peacekeeping. One notable mechanism is the ECOWAS Standby Force, a multidimensional military force established to respond rapidly to crises and conflicts in the region. The Standby Force consists of military, police, and civilian components and is deployed by the ECOWAS Protocol on Conflict Prevention, Management, Resolution, Peacekeeping, and Security (Zied, 2017).

A notable example of ECOWAS' mechanisms in action is its intervention in the conflict in Mali. In 2013, following a coup and the subsequent occupation of northern Mali by jihadist groups, ECOWAS deployed a peacekeeping mission known as the African-led International Support Mission to Mali (AFISMA). AFISMA, later integrated into the United Nations Multidimensional Integrated Stabilization Mission in Mali (MINUSMA), played a crucial role in stabilizing the country, supporting the restoration of state authority, and facilitating peace negotiations between the government and armed groups.

An example of ECOWAS' mechanisms in action is the organization's intervention in the conflict in Guinea-Bissau. In 2012, following a military coup in Guinea-Bissau, ECOWAS deployed a peacekeeping mission known as ECOWAS Mission in Guinea-Bissau (ECOMIB) to restore constitutional order and stability. ECOMIB provided security assistance, facilitated dialogue among political stakeholders, and supported the transition to democratic governance, demonstrating ECOWAS' commitment to upholding peace and stability in the region (Ugo, 2018).

The overview of ECOWAS' structure and mechanisms highlights the organization's institutional framework and operational mechanisms for promoting peace, security, and development in West Africa. Through its various institutions and mechanisms, ECOWAS plays a crucial role in addressing conflicts, fostering cooperation, and advancing regional integration in the region.

ECOWAS Case Studies: Mali, Liberia, and Sierra Leone

ECOWAS has been involved in several notable case studies across West Africa, including Mali, Liberia, and Sierra Leone, where its interventions have played a significant role in conflict resolution and peacebuilding efforts (Arthur, 2019).

In Mali, ECOWAS responded to the 2012 coup d'état and the subsequent occupation of northern Mali by jihadist groups by deploying the African-led International Support Mission to Mali (AFISMA). This peacekeeping mission aimed to stabilize the country, restore state authority, and facilitate peace negotiations between the government and armed groups. AFISMA's efforts were later integrated into the United Nations Multidimensional Integrated Stabilization Mission in Mali (MINUSMA), highlighting ECOWAS' collaboration with international partners in addressing complex security challenges.

Similarly, in Liberia, ECOWAS played a pivotal role in ending the country's protracted civil war through diplomatic mediation and military intervention. During the 1990s, ECOWAS deployed a peacekeeping force known as the Economic Community of West African States Monitoring Group (ECOMOG) to enforce peace agreements and facilitate the transition to democracy. ECOMOG's intervention helped stabilize the country, pave the way for democratic elections, and ultimately contribute to the restoration of peace and stability in Liberia. ECOWAS's leadership in Liberia exemplifies its proactive approach to resolving conflicts and promoting peace in the region (Sampson, 2011).

In Sierra Leone, ECOWAS supported efforts to resolve the country's civil war through diplomatic mediation and peacekeeping operations. In 1999, ECOWAS deployed a peacekeeping force as part of the United Nations Mission in Sierra Leone (UNAMSIL) to support the implementation of the Lomé Peace Agreement and disarmament process. ECOWAS' engagement in Sierra Leone contributed to the cessation of hostilities, the reintegration of former combatants, and the consolidation of peace and democracy in the country. This example highlights ECOWAS's capacity to support peacebuilding initiatives and facilitate post-conflict reconstruction in conflict-affected regions (Enaifoghe, 2018).

These case studies illustrate ECOWAS' commitment to promoting peace, security, and stability in West Africa through diplomatic engagement, mediation, and peacekeeping operations. By addressing complex security challenges and supporting peace processes, ECOWAS has played a crucial role in resolving conflicts and advancing the cause of peacebuilding in the region. However, challenges remain, and ECOWAS continues to work alongside its member states and international partners to address emerging security threats and promote sustainable peace and development in West Africa.

Overview of the African Union: Structure and Mechanisms

The African Union (AU) serves as the premier continental organization in Africa, established to promote unity, peace, and development among its member

states. Structurally, the AU comprises several key institutions designed to facilitate cooperation and integration across the continent. At its core is the Assembly of the African Union, which consists of heads of state and government from all AU member countries. The Assembly sets the overall policy direction and provides strategic guidance on issues ranging from peace and security to economic development and governance, reflecting the diverse priorities and interests of AU member states (Magliveras et al., 2016).

In addition to the Assembly, the AU operates through a network of specialized organs and bodies responsible for implementing its decisions and programs. The AU Commission serves as the organization's executive arm, tasked with coordinating and implementing AU policies and initiatives. Led by the Chairperson, the Commission oversees various departments and directorates focusing on areas such as peace and security, political affairs, and social development, reflecting the AU's multidimensional approach to addressing the continent's challenges (Akinola, 2017).

Mechanisms within the AU are designed to address a wide range of issues, including conflict prevention, resolution, and peacebuilding (Henke, 2019). The AU Peace and Security Council (PSC) serves as the principal organ responsible for promoting peace, security, and stability in Africa. Comprising 15 member states elected by the Assembly, the PSC has the authority to take preventive and decisive action to address conflicts and crises on the continent, including the deployment of peace support operations.

An example of the AU's mechanisms in action is its intervention in the conflict in Somalia. In 2007, the AU deployed the African Union Mission in Somalia (AMISOM) to support the Transitional Federal Government in its efforts to stabilize the country and combat insurgent groups like Al-Shabaab. AMISOM's peacekeeping efforts have played a crucial role in restoring security and creating space for political reconciliation in Somalia, demonstrating the AU's commitment to addressing complex security challenges on the continent (Kuster, 2018).

Moreover, the AU's engagement extends beyond traditional peacekeeping, encompassing preventive diplomacy, conflict mediation, and post-conflict reconstruction efforts. In Sudan, the AU's involvement in mediating the Darfur crisis exemplifies its commitment to resolving complex conflicts. Through initiatives like the AU High-Level Implementation Panel for Sudan and South Sudan, the organization has sought to facilitate dialogue and negotiate peace agreements, demonstrating its proactive approach to conflict resolution and peacebuilding.

The overview of the AU's structure and mechanisms underscores the organization's institutional framework and operational mechanisms for promoting peace, security, and development in Africa. Through its various institutions and

mechanisms, the AU plays a central role in addressing conflicts, fostering regional cooperation, and advancing the collective prosperity of its member states (Pagoaga Ruiz de la Illa, 2017).

AU Case Studies: South Sudan, Democratic Republic of Congo, and Somalia

The African Union (AU) has been actively involved in conflict resolution and peacekeeping efforts in various regions of Africa, including South Sudan, the Democratic Republic of Congo (DRC), and Somalia. In South Sudan, the AU played a critical role in mediating the peace process and supporting efforts to end the civil war that erupted in 2013 (Hammed, 2015). Through the Intergovernmental Authority on Development (IGAD) mediation process, the AU, along with regional partners, facilitated negotiations between the government of South Sudan and opposition groups. The culmination of these efforts was the signing of the Revitalized Agreement on the Resolution of the Conflict in South Sudan in 2018, which paved the way for a ceasefire, power-sharing arrangements, and the formation of a transitional government of national unity (Idike et al., 2014).

Similarly, the AU has been actively engaged in addressing the conflict in the Democratic Republic of Congo (DRC), particularly in the context of the ongoing instability in the eastern provinces. The AU, through its Peace and Security Council (PSC) and in collaboration with regional bodies like the Southern African Development Community (SADC) and the International Conference on the Great Lakes Region (ICGLR), has supported diplomatic efforts to resolve the conflict. Additionally, the AU has deployed peacekeeping missions, such as the African Union Mission for Support to the DRC (MONUSCO), to facilitate the protection of civilians, support peace processes, and contribute to stability in the region (Kikvi, 2021).

In Somalia, the AU has been actively involved in peacekeeping operations through the African Union Mission in Somalia (AMISOM) since 2007. AMISOM's mandate includes supporting the Federal Government of Somalia in its efforts to stabilize the country, combat extremist groups like Al-Shabaab, and strengthen state institutions. The mission has made significant strides in improving security and creating an enabling environment for political reconciliation and state-building efforts in Somalia. Despite facing challenges, including asymmetric warfare and resource constraints, AMISOM remains committed to supporting Somalia's transition to peace and stability (Roy et al., 2015).

Overall, these case studies demonstrate the AU's multifaceted approach to conflict resolution and peacekeeping in Africa. Through diplomatic mediation,

peacekeeping operations, and support for political processes, the AU has played a crucial role in addressing conflicts and promoting peace and stability in South Sudan, the Democratic Republic of Congo, Somalia, and other conflict-affected countries on the continent.

Comparative Analysis and Findings

Comparative Assessment of ECOWAS and AU Approaches

A comparative assessment of the approaches employed by the Economic Community of West African States (ECOWAS) and the African Union (AU) reveals distinct strategies and methodologies for addressing conflicts and promoting peace and stability across Africa.

ECOWAS has often demonstrated a more proactive and interventionist approach to conflict resolution within its West African region. The organization has utilized military interventions, such as the deployment of the ECOWAS Monitoring Group (ECOMOG), to enforce peace agreements and stabilize conflict zones. For example, during the Liberian civil war, ECOMOG played a crucial role in restoring stability and facilitating the transition to democracy. Similarly, in response to the 2012 coup in Mali, ECOWAS swiftly deployed troops as part of the African-led International Support Mission to Mali (AFISMA) to combat insurgents and restore constitutional order. Also, in response to the political crisis in The Gambia in 2017, ECOWAS deployed troops to enforce the outcome of democratic elections, demonstrating its commitment to upholding constitutional order and democratic principles within the region.

In contrast, the African Union tends to prioritize diplomatic mediation and multilateral cooperation in addressing conflicts continent-wide. The AU's Peace and Security Council (PSC) serves as a key mechanism for conflict prevention, mediation, and peacebuilding. For instance, in Sudan, the AU has played a leading role in mediating peace talks and facilitating the implementation of peace agreements, such as the Comprehensive Peace Agreement (CPA) in 2005, which led to the independence of South Sudan. Additionally, the AU has supported peacekeeping missions, such as the African Union Mission in Somalia (AMISOM), to stabilize conflict-affected regions and combat extremist groups.

Despite these differences, both ECOWAS and the AU share common objectives of promoting peace, security, and development in Africa. While ECOWAS focuses primarily on regional conflicts within West Africa, the AU adopts a continental approach, addressing conflicts across the entire African continent. Moreover, both organizations recognize the importance of

collaboration with regional and international partners, including the United Nations and other regional bodies, in their peacekeeping and peacebuilding efforts (Maiangwa, 2016).

A comparative assessment of ECOWAS and the AU approaches reveals complementary strategies aimed at addressing conflicts and promoting peace and stability in Africa. While ECOWAS adopts a more interventionist approach within its regional sphere, the AU emphasizes diplomatic mediation and multi-lateral cooperation on a continental scale. By leveraging their respective strengths and capabilities, ECOWAS and the AU contribute significantly to conflict resolution and peacebuilding efforts, ultimately advancing the collective goal of a peaceful and prosperous Africa (Terwase et al.,2018).

Effectiveness of Conflict Resolution Strategies

The effectiveness of conflict resolution strategies employed by regional organizations such as the Economic Community of West African States (ECOWAS) and the African Union (AU) can be evaluated through real-world examples of their interventions in addressing conflicts across the African continent.

ECOWAS has demonstrated the effectiveness of its conflict resolution strategies through its proactive and interventionist approach to regional conflicts. For instance, during the civil war in Liberia, ECOWAS deployed the ECOWAS Monitoring Group (ECOMOG) to enforce peace agreements and stabilize the country. ECOMOG's intervention not only contributed to ending the conflict but also facilitated the transition to democratic governance in Liberia, underscoring the efficacy of ECOWAS's military intervention in restoring peace and stability.

Similarly, the AU has proven the effectiveness of its conflict resolution strategies through its diplomatic mediation and peacebuilding efforts. In Sudan, the AU played a pivotal role in mediating the Comprehensive Peace Agreement (CPA) in 2005, which ultimately led to the independence of South Sudan. By facilitating peace talks and negotiations between conflicting parties, the AU demonstrated its ability to resolve complex conflicts through dialogue and diplomacy, showcasing the effectiveness of its conflict resolution strategies in achieving lasting peace.

Furthermore, both ECOWAS and the AU have shown effectiveness in their peacekeeping efforts, contributing to stabilizing conflict-affected regions and creating conducive environments for peacebuilding. For example, the AU Mission in Somalia (AMISOM) has played a crucial role in supporting the Federal Government of Somalia in combating extremist groups and stabilizing the country. Likewise, ECOWAS has deployed peacekeeping missions, such as the

ECOWAS Mission in Guinea-Bissau (ECOMIB), to support political transitions and restore stability in conflict-affected countries.

The effectiveness of conflict resolution strategies employed by ECOWAS and the AU is evident in their tangible contributions to resolving conflicts, promoting peace, and fostering stability across Africa. Through their diplomatic, military, and peacekeeping interventions, both regional organizations have demonstrated their capacity to address complex security challenges and advance the cause of peace and security on the continent (Ebegbulem, 2011).

Challenges and Limitations Faced by ECOWAS and AU

While ECOWAS and the African Union (AU) have made significant strides in conflict resolution and peacebuilding, they face several challenges and limitations that impact their effectiveness in addressing conflicts across Africa.

One prominent challenge is the limited capacity and resources of both organizations. ECOWAS, comprised of West African states with varying levels of economic development and political stability, often grapples with resource constraints and logistical challenges in deploying peacekeeping missions and implementing peacebuilding initiatives (Foley, 2004). Similarly, the AU, representing 55 member states with diverse interests and priorities, faces challenges in mobilizing adequate financial and human resources to support its peacekeeping operations and conflict resolution efforts continent-wide. These limitations can hinder the organizations' ability to respond swiftly and effectively to emerging conflicts and crises.

Additionally, both ECOWAS and the AU encounter institutional and governance challenges that undermine their effectiveness in conflict resolution (Kumar, 2008). Weak institutional frameworks, bureaucratic inefficiencies, and limited coordination among member states can impede decision-making processes and hinder the implementation of peace agreements. Furthermore, political divisions and rivalries among member states may undermine the unity and coherence of ECOWAS and the AU, affecting their ability to act collectively and decisively in addressing conflicts.

Another significant challenge is the complex and evolving nature of conflicts in Africa, characterized by ethnic tensions, religious extremism, and transnational threats (Kateřina, 2019). ECOWAS and the AU often struggle to address the root causes of conflicts and manage multidimensional security challenges effectively. For example, in the Sahel region, where terrorism, organized crime, and inter-communal violence intersect, ECOWAS and the AU face difficulties in developing comprehensive strategies to address these interconnected security threats.

Furthermore, both organizations encounter external challenges, including interference from external actors and geopolitical rivalries that exacerbate

conflicts and complicate peacebuilding efforts. For instance, interventions by external powers in Libya and the Central African Republic have further destabilized these countries and undermined regional stability, presenting challenges for ECOWAS and the AU in managing the spillover effects of these conflicts.

While ECOWAS and the AU play crucial roles in conflict resolution and peacebuilding in Africa, they confront a myriad of challenges and limitations that impact their effectiveness. Addressing these challenges requires concerted efforts to strengthen institutional capacity, enhance coordination among member states, mobilize adequate resources, and develop comprehensive strategies to address the complex and evolving nature of conflicts on the continent.

Lessons Learned and Recommendations for Enhancing Peacebuilding Efforts

Lessons learned from the experiences of ECOWAS and the African Union (AU) in peacebuilding efforts offer valuable insights and recommendations for enhancing conflict resolution and stability across Africa. One key lesson is the importance of regional ownership and leadership in peacebuilding processes (Apuuli, 2020). ECOWAS and the AU have demonstrated that regional organizations are often better positioned to understand the root causes of conflicts and design context-specific solutions tailored to the needs and dynamics of the region. For example, ECOWAS's leadership in mediating conflicts in West Africa, such as in Liberia and Sierra Leone, highlights the effectiveness of regional actors in fostering dialogue, reconciliation, and sustainable peace.

Moreover, effective coordination and collaboration among regional organizations, international partners, and local stakeholders are essential for successful peacebuilding efforts. ECOWAS and the AU have emphasized the importance of partnerships and synergies in mobilizing resources, sharing expertise, and leveraging comparative advantages to address complex security challenges (Pagoaga Ruiz de la Illa, 2017). For instance, the joint efforts between ECOWAS and the AU in deploying peacekeeping missions, such as in Guinea-Bissau and Mali, demonstrate the value of collaborative approaches in enhancing the impact and effectiveness of peacebuilding initiatives.

Furthermore, promoting inclusivity and ensuring the participation of women, youth, and marginalized groups in peacebuilding processes are critical for sustainable peace and development (Magliveras et al., 2016). ECOWAS and the AU have recognized the importance of incorporating diverse perspectives and voices in decision-making and peacebuilding efforts. For example, the AU's Women, Peace, and Security Agenda and ECOWAS's Gender Policy Framework

advocate for gender-sensitive approaches and the inclusion of women in conflict prevention, resolution, and peacebuilding activities.

Additionally, building strong institutions and promoting good governance are essential for fostering peace and stability. ECOWAS and the AU have underscored the need for effective governance structures, rule of law, and respect for human rights as foundational elements of peacebuilding (Kikuvi, 2021). For instance, ECOWAS's engagement in supporting democratic transitions and electoral processes in countries like Nigeria and Ghana demonstrates the organization's commitment to promoting democratic governance as a means to prevent conflicts and consolidate peace (Abatan, 2015).

The lessons learned from ECOWAS and the AU underscore the importance of regional leadership, partnership, inclusivity, and good governance in enhancing peacebuilding efforts in Africa. By applying these lessons and recommendations, regional organizations, international partners, and local stakeholders can work together to address conflicts, promote sustainable peace, and advance the collective goal of a peaceful and prosperous Africa.

Conclusion

Summary of Key Findings

The summary of key findings from the analysis of the conflict resolution and peacebuilding efforts of regional organizations like the Economic Community of West African States (ECOWAS) and the African Union (AU) underscores several significant insights and outcomes (Ayissi, 2020).

Firstly, it is evident that both ECOWAS and the AU play vital roles in addressing conflicts and promoting peace and stability across Africa (Akinola, 2017). Through their diplomatic mediation, peacekeeping operations, and peacebuilding initiatives, these regional organizations have made notable contributions to resolving conflicts and preventing the escalation of violence in conflict-affected regions.

Secondly, the analysis highlights the importance of regional ownership and leadership in conflict resolution processes (Udo, 2020). ECOWAS and the AU have demonstrated that regional organizations are often better positioned to understand the root causes of conflicts and design context-specific solutions tailored to the needs and dynamics of the region. Examples such as ECOWAS's mediation efforts in Liberia and Sierra Leone and the AU's role in Sudan and Somalia underscore the effectiveness of regional leadership in fostering dialogue, reconciliation, and sustainable peace (Williams, 2020).

Moreover, effective coordination and collaboration among regional organizations, international partners, and local stakeholders are essential for successful peacebuilding efforts (Henke, 2019). Both ECOWAS and the AU have emphasized the value of partnerships and synergies in mobilizing resources, sharing expertise, and leveraging comparative advantages to address complex security challenges. Examples such as joint peacekeeping missions and collaborative peace initiatives demonstrate the significance of collective action in enhancing the impact and effectiveness of peacebuilding initiatives (Mushtaq, 2019).

Furthermore, promoting inclusivity and ensuring the participation of women, youth, and marginalized groups emerge as critical factors for sustainable peace and development (Apuuli, 2020). ECOWAS and the AU have recognized the importance of incorporating diverse perspectives and voices in decision-making and peacebuilding efforts. Initiatives such as the AU's Women, Peace, and Security Agenda and ECOWAS's Gender Policy Framework highlight the significance of gender-sensitive approaches and the inclusion of all stakeholders in peacebuilding processes (Kuster, 2018).

In summary, the analysis of ECOWAS and the AU's conflict resolution and peacebuilding efforts reveals key findings that underscore the importance of regional leadership, partnership, inclusivity, and good governance in fostering peace and stability in Africa (Van Nieuwkerk, 2021). By leveraging these insights, regional organizations, international partners, and local stakeholders can work collaboratively to address conflicts, promote sustainable peace, and advance the collective goal of a peaceful and prosperous Africa.

Implications for Policy and Practice

The implications drawn from the analysis of conflict resolution and peacebuilding efforts by regional organizations such as the Economic Community of West African States (ECOWAS) and the African Union (AU) have significant ramifications for policy and practice in addressing conflicts across Africa.

Firstly, policymakers and practitioners should recognize the importance of strengthening regional capacities and institutions for conflict prevention, management, and resolution. Investing in the institutional capacity of regional organizations like ECOWAS and the AU can enhance their ability to respond swiftly and effectively to emerging conflicts, thereby preventing the escalation of violence and instability in conflict-affected regions. For example, providing financial and logistical support to bolster ECOWAS's mediation efforts and AU's peacekeeping operations can contribute to strengthening regional mechanisms for conflict resolution and peacebuilding.

Moreover, policymakers and practitioners should prioritize the promotion of inclusive and participatory approaches to peacebuilding, ensuring the meaningful involvement of women, youth, and marginalized groups in decision-making processes. By incorporating diverse perspectives and voices, policymakers can develop more comprehensive and context-specific strategies for conflict resolution and peacebuilding. For instance, implementing quotas for women's representation in peace negotiations and integrating youth-led initiatives into peacebuilding programs can help address underlying grievances and promote social cohesion in conflict-affected communities.

Furthermore, policymakers and practitioners should adopt a holistic approach to addressing the root causes of conflicts, including addressing governance challenges, socioeconomic inequalities, and marginalization. By addressing structural drivers of conflicts, such as political exclusion, economic deprivation, and social injustice, policymakers can create the conditions necessary for sustainable peace and development. For example, supporting initiatives to strengthen democratic governance, promote respect for human rights, and address socioeconomic disparities can contribute to building resilient societies that are less prone to conflict and violence.

Additionally, policymakers and practitioners should prioritize the strengthening of partnerships and collaboration among regional organizations, international partners, and local stakeholders. By leveraging complementary strengths and resources, stakeholders can enhance the effectiveness and impact of peacebuilding efforts. For instance, fostering closer coordination between ECOWAS, the AU, the United Nations, and other regional and international actors can facilitate information-sharing, resource mobilization, and joint initiatives to address complex security challenges and promote peace and stability in Africa.

In conclusion, the implications for policy and practice are drawn from the analysis of ECOWAS and the AU's conflict resolution and peacebuilding efforts underscore the importance of strengthening regional capacities, promoting inclusive approaches, addressing root causes of conflicts, and enhancing partnerships and collaboration. By incorporating these insights into policymaking and practice, stakeholders can work collaboratively to address conflicts, promote sustainable peace, and advance the collective goal of a peaceful and prosperous Africa.

Future Research Directions

Future research directions in the field of conflict resolution and peacebuilding in Africa offer opportunities to deepen our understanding of the dynamics, challenges, and best practices in addressing conflicts on the continent.

One area of future research could focus on examining the role of emerging regional actors and non-state actors in conflict resolution and peacebuilding efforts. With the changing geopolitical landscape and the rise of new regional powers and non-state actors, such as China, Turkey, and private military contractors, there is a need to understand their influence on conflict dynamics and peacebuilding processes in Africa. For example, research could explore the impact of China's growing involvement in peacekeeping operations and infrastructure development projects on conflict-affected countries in Africa and assess its implications for regional stability and governance.

Moreover, future research could delve into the intersectionality of conflicts, including the nexus between climate change, environmental degradation, and conflict dynamics. As climate change exacerbates resource scarcity, competition over land, water, and natural resources may fuel conflicts and exacerbate existing tensions in fragile contexts. Research could examine the linkages between environmental stressors, conflict dynamics, and peacebuilding efforts, and explore innovative strategies for addressing environmental drivers of conflicts and promoting sustainable peace and resilience.

Furthermore, there is a need for research that evaluates the effectiveness of innovative peacebuilding approaches and methodologies, including technology-enabled peacebuilding, arts-based peacebuilding, and youth-led peace initiatives. By harnessing the potential of digital technologies, creative arts, and youth engagement, researchers can explore new avenues for promoting dialogue, reconciliation, and social cohesion in conflict-affected communities. For example, research could assess the impact of digital platforms, such as social media and mobile applications, in facilitating dialogue and reconciliation among conflicting parties, or evaluate the role of arts-based interventions, such as theatre and music, in fostering empathy and understanding across divides.

Additionally, future research could focus on assessing the long-term outcomes and sustainability of peacebuilding interventions, including transitional justice mechanisms, disarmament, demobilization, and reintegration (DDR) programs, and post-conflict reconstruction efforts. By conducting longitudinal studies and comparative analyses of peacebuilding initiatives in different contexts, researchers can identify lessons learned, best practices, and areas for improvement in building durable peace and resilience in conflict-affected societies.

In conclusion, future research directions in conflict resolution and peacebuilding in Africa offer opportunities to explore new frontiers, address emerging challenges, and advance innovative solutions for promoting peace and stability on the continent. By embracing interdisciplinary approaches, leveraging new technologies, and engaging diverse stakeholders, researchers can contribute to

building a more evidence-based and effective framework for conflict resolution and peacebuilding in Africa and beyond.

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