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Auteur : Al Bouchouari, Hamid

Promoteur(s) : Santander, Sébastien

Faculté : Faculté de Droit, de Science Politique et de Criminologie

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Final dissertation

The role of Regional Intergovernmental Organizations in managing regional crises with global dimensions: ECOWAS and the July Putsch of Niger

Hamid Al Bouchouari

Master in Global Politics & Political Affairs

Promotor: Dr. SANTANDER Sébastien

Faculté de droit, de science politiques, et de criminologie

Université de Liège, Belgium.

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Abstract

The purpose of this research is to examine the effectiveness of regional blocs in dealing with regional crises with a global dimension, through the case study of ECOWAS action regarding the July Putsch in Niger.

The research examines the dynamics of the coup d'état in Niger and the reactions raised towards this event through a literature review about the role of regional intergovernmental organizations and a deep analysis of press articles and political statements of the actors involved in the event. The framework used to assess the ECOWAS role is Complex adaptive system.

The results reveal that regional organizations are constrained by power dynamics that reflect the interests and influence of the most powerful member states and geopolitical interests of foreign powers. The conclusions help to understand the issues faced by regional institutions and offer insight into the intricate relationship between state-centric dynamics and institutional influences of regional intergovernmental organizations.

The findings provide valuable insights that can be applied to other regional organizations facing similar challenges. This case study is useful and sheds light on the intricacies of regionalism, providing valuable perspectives on the strategic use of sanctions by regional bodies against their member states experiencing unconstitutional changes.

This dissertation encourages further exploration of the dynamics within regional organizations in crisis management. It establishes a framework for investigating regional intergovernmental organizations that takes into account both state-centric and institutional dynamics when analyzing regional responses to crises within an academic framework, making possible a deeper examination of regionalism and the evolving roles that such bodies play in addressing global challenges.

1. Introduction

On 26th July, a military coup in Niger deposed the democratically elected President Mohamed Bazoum. This event is deemed to have significant local, regional and global ramifications. Unlike most coups in Africa, which typically stem from internal conflicts and power struggles.

In this particular context, various actors at regional and international levels adopted distinct positions and took initiatives, taking into account the strategic importance of the country. The country's abundant mineral and oil resources, potential for renewable energy development, geographical location at the crossroads of North, West and Central Africa, and strong demographic growth all help to explain the seemingly disproportionate interest of medium and large powers in the current crisis.

Niger is a member of the Economic Community of West African States (ECOWAS). The response of the West African bloc has been led by Nigeria, the regional giant that dominates the region politically and economically. Ecowas has focused its efforts on removing the putschists and has taken a firm stance towards Niger. Initially, they set the first weekend of August as the deadline for a return to civilian rule, had warned of using force multiple times and ultimately imposed significant sanctions.

It would be of interest to inquire about the role of ECOWAS and its effectiveness as an intergovernmental organization in managing this crisis, given the global coverage and reaction to this event. This allows the following research question to be posed: *How effective is the role played by regional intergovernmental organizations in managing regional crises with global implications?*

This research thereby intends to examine the dynamics of the coup d'état in Niger and the reactions raised towards this event. Particularly the reaction and actions of ECOWAS, the regional organization in which Niger is a member State. The aim is to analyze through this case study the effectiveness of the regional bloc in dealing with this kind of regional crises.

The hypothesis which this research will focus on in response to the research question above is: *Regional organizations are constrained by power dynamics that reflect the interests and influence of the most powerful member states and geopolitical interests of foreign powers.*

In the field of international relations theory, Neo-institutionalism assumes that Intergovernmental organizations (IGOs) contribute to global stability and crisis management by providing structured frameworks for negotiation and coordination. Nevertheless, Neo-institutionalism faces multiple criticisms and challenges. structural realist theorists contend that Neo-institutionalism ignores the unequal distribution of power and divergent interests among States, which undermines the effectiveness of crisis management. ECOWAS has a long-standing commitment to promoting democratic norms in the region. But since 2020, military coups have occurred in Mali, Guinea Bissau, Burkina Faso, and finally Niger.

This series of coups within the region since 2020 has had a significant impact on the integration process of ECOWAS and the objectives outlined in the Treaty of Lagos. Additionally, this issue has a global dimension, with many actors in the international arena concerned about who will have greater influence in the region, particularly as the rivalry between the West and Russia deepens.

The objective of this research is to examine the effectiveness of ECOWAS in dealing with regional crises with a global dimension. Therefore, to investigate the above hypothesis, the factors behind a literature

review on the role of Regional Intergovernmental organizations will be provided, while a detailed analysis of the dynamics of the putsch in Niger and relative implications is based on the Complex Adaptive Systems framework, which can provide a comprehensive analysis of the ECOWAS capacity to adapt its governance structures to new kind of crisis in the region, which will allow to better understand the effectiveness of the role played by ECOWAS in the Niger.

2. ECOWAS and Niger in context

Before assessing the research question, knowledge of the complex background in which the ECOWAS and Niger political structures find themselves is necessary, in order to understand the context in which the research is framed.

2.1 African Regional Economic communities (RECs)

Regional economic communities (RECs) in Africa are intergovernmental organizations that promote economic integration and cooperation among their member states. There are currently eight RECs recognized by the African Union, which are as follows:

- Arab Maghreb Union (AMU)
- Common Market for Eastern and Southern Africa (COMESA)
- Community of Sahel-Saharan States (CEN-SAD)
- East African Community (EAC)
- Economic Community of Central African States (ECCAS)
- Economic Community of West African States (ECOWAS)
- Intergovernmental Authority on Development (IGAD)
- Southern African Development Community (SADC)

These RECs are considered by the African Union as building blocks of the future African Economic Community (AEC) as laid out in the Abuja Treaty that came into force in May 1994. Each REC is structured differently, but they generally have similar bodies and institutions. The main bodies of the RECs are:

- Summit/Summit of Heads of State and Government: This is the highest decision-making body of the REC, which is composed of the heads of state or government of member states.
- Council/Council of Ministers: This is the second-highest decision-making body of the REC, which is composed of the ministers of foreign affairs or trade of member states.
- Secretariat: This is the administrative arm of the REC, which is responsible for implementing the decisions made by the Summit and Council.
- Technical Committees: These are specialized committees that deal with specific areas, such as trade, finance, and agriculture.
- Court of Justice: Some RECs have a court of justice, which is responsible for resolving disputes among member states and interpreting the REC's legal instruments.

Each REC has its own legal framework, which is based on its founding treaty and other legal instruments adopted by its member states. The legal framework typically includes provisions for trade liberalization, investment promotion, infrastructure development, and cooperation in various sectors. In addition to these bodies and institutions, some RECs have their own development banks, regional investment funds, and other specialised institutions designed to promote economic development and integration among member states.

Regional Economic Communities play a crucial role in African integration, with the potential to drive economic growth and foster a sense of continental community (Odhiambo, 2016, P. 2). However, their performance is hindered by challenges such as overlapping memberships, weak policy coordination, and

fragile political commitment (Uzodike, 2010, P.26). Despite these constraints, some RECs, such as the Southern African Development Community (SADC) and Economic Community of West African States (ECOWAS), have made significant progress in both economic and political integration (Peters, 2010).

2.2 Economic Community of West African States (ECOWAS)

On May 28, 1975, the heads of state and government of 15 West African countries signed the Treaty of Lagos, which established the Economic Community of West African States (ECOWAS). The ECOWAS region, which covers an area of 5.2 million square kilometers with combined GDP of \$734.8 billion and populated by 387 million inhabitants, is composed of the following member states: Benin, Burkina Faso, Cabo Verde, Côte d'Ivoire, The Gambia, Ghana, Guinea, Guinea Bissau, Liberia, Mali, Niger, Nigeria, Sierra Leone, Senegal, and Togo.

As stated on the official website of the organization, the community was established to promote the concept of collective self-sufficiency among member states. Additionally, as a trade union, its goal is to create a unified and significant trading bloc through economic cooperation.

ECOWAS comprises seven institutions with different functions as outlined in the Lagos Treaty and its revised treaty of 1993. The institutions are the Authority of Heads of State and Government, the Council of Ministers; the Community Parliament; the Economic and Social Council, the Community Court of Justice; the Executive Secretariat; the Fund for Cooperation, Compensation, and Development; Specialised Technical Commissions. The supreme body is the Authority of the Head of State and Government, who is responsible for general direction, control, and progressive development of the Community. Additionally, there are Other specialised organs and agencies that carry out specific functions (Afesorgbor S. K. and Van Bergeijk Peter, 2011, P. 15).

The fundamental principles that underpin the regional cooperation within ECOWAS include a set of key values and objectives. The principles focus on acknowledging the equality and inter-dependence of the involved Member States. They also highlight the significance of solidarity and collective self-reliance as foundational tenets, cultivating a sense of mutual support among the participating nations. Moreover, effective functioning of the collaborative framework requires the establishment of inter-State cooperation, harmonization of policies, and integration of programs. The commitment to non-aggression among Member States reflects a commitment to peace, with a specific emphasis on maintaining regional peace, stability and security through the promotion and strengthening of good neighborliness and a commitment to the peaceful settlement of disputes (Official website of ECOWAS).

The legal basis of the functioning of ECOWAS is complex and multifaceted. For the purpose of this research, the focus is drawn on the crisis management legal framework, which includes mechanisms for conflict management and security. The primary legal sources for managing crisis in the Economic Community of West African States are the *ECOWAS Protocol Relating to the Mechanism for Conflict Prevention, Management, Resolution, Peacekeeping, and Security*, which was adopted in 1999, and the *ECOWAS Protocol on Democracy and Good Governance*, which was adopted in 2001. These protocols outline the framework and guidelines for ECOWAS to operate in peace and security matters, including conflict prevention, management, and resolution. Additionally, the 1993 ECOWAS Revised Treaty includes provisions concerning the management of conflicts within the organization.

The important components of the ECOWAS conflict management framework include:

- **The Mechanisms:** The Protocol Relating to the Mechanism for Conflict Prevention, Management, Resolution, Peacekeeping, and Security establishes the institutional framework for conflict management. It includes organs such as the Authority of Heads of State and Government, Mediation and Security Council, Executive Secretariat, Council of Elders, Defence and Security Commission, and Early Warning Observation and Monitoring System.
- **ECOMOG:** The ECOWAS Cease-Fire Monitoring Group (ECOMOG) is a military force that plays a crucial role in maintaining peace and stability in the region. It consists of contingents from the armed forces of ECOWAS member states and operates under the command structure headed by the Force Commander.
- **Early Warning System:** ECOWAS has developed an early warning system to predict and monitor emerging conflicts. The Observation and Monitoring Centre (OMC) coordinates the system, and civil society actors, such as the West African Network for Peace (WANEP), assist in data collection and analysis. The system includes Observation and Monitoring Zones in different countries to collect data on potential conflict triggers.
- **ECOWAS Conflict Prevention Framework (ECPF):** The ECPF aims to prevent the outbreak, escalation, spread, or relapse of conflicts. It includes components such as Early Warning, Preventive Diplomacy, Human Rights and the Rule of Law, Media, Democracy and Political Governance, Women, Peace and Security, Natural Resources and Governance, and Peace Education.

These components work together to address conflicts and crises in the region, from early warning and prevention to peacekeeping and peacebuilding efforts. However, the influence of external actors, particularly France, can also impact ECOWAS's actions, as seen in the Mali crisis (Adu, 2023, P. 172).

2.3 Military coups in West Africa

The history of military coups in West Africa is a complex and recurring phenomenon, with a significant number of successful and failed coups, coup plots, and civil wars occurring in the region (McGowan, 2006). The military's role in politics has been a significant factor in the region's history, with the armed forces assuming political control in several African states. The recent coup in Niger is part of a resurgence of coup culture in West Africa, highlighting the ongoing influence of the military in the region.

Patrick J. McGowan (2006) presented a data set that describes all coup-related events in West Africa during the period between 1955 and 2004, revealing that military interventions have occurred repeatedly in fourteen of the sixteen West African states. The success rate of coup attempts in West Africa is 50.6 percent, showing that once a coup is undertaken, it has a good chance of succeeding.

Concerning recent years, there have been five coups in the area of West Africa. In August 2020, Malian colonels removed President Ibrahim Boubacar Keita in a coup following anti-government protests over deteriorating security, contested legislative elections, and alleged corruption. Nine months later, a countercoup took place, with Assimi Goita, who served as vice president after the first coup, leading the second and becoming head of state (AJLabs, Aljazeera, 2023).

In September 2021, President Alpha Conde of Guinea was overthrown by special forces commander Colonel Mamady Doumbouya. The president had altered the constitution to surpass the term limit for a third time (AJLabs, Aljazeera, 2023).

In January 2022, the Burkina Faso army dismissed President Roch Kabore, accusing him of failing to limit violence by Islamist militants. In September of the same year, army Captain Ibrahim Traoré carried out a second coup, forcibly deposing Paul Henri-Damiba (AJLabs, Aljazeera, 2023).

The most recent coups occurred in Niger on July 26, 2023, where the military overthrew President Bazoum, and in Gabon on August 30th, where a group of Gabonese military officers seized power and invalidated the results of the previous elections (AJLabs, Aljazeera, 2023).

The most common factor that contributes to the occurrence of coups in West Africa is the military factionalism, rivalries based on ethnicity, religion, regional backgrounds, rank, and personal grievances among military officers which led in many cases to coup attempts. However, in the recent coups, it can be noted the emergence of geopolitical factor given the increasing rivalry between Russia and West. In fact, the new officers claim a new international repositioning far from the old colonizer France and closer to Russia.

2.4 Niger

Niger is a country in West Africa, sharing borders with Libya in the northeast, Chad in the east, Nigeria in the south, Benin and Burkina Faso in the southwest, Mali in the west, and Algeria in the northwest. It covers an area of nearly 1,270,000 km² and is therefore the largest landlocked country in West Africa (World Population Prospects, 2022).

Niger's strategic importance is linked to the presence of several foreign military bases due to counter-terrorism efforts in the Sahel region. France has between 1,000 and 1,500 troops, with support from drones and warplanes. Additionally, there are 1,100 U.S. troops based in the drone base of Agadez which was built in 2014 for countering terrorism purposes (Olayinka Ajala, 2018, P. 25). Finally, Italy has about 300 soldiers, while Germany said in April 2023 that it would deploy around 60 soldiers to the EU three-year military training mission (Reuters, July 28, 2023). This explains the significant local, regional and global ramifications of the putsch of July 2023.

Despite the potential for democracy, it must be highlighted the struggle between democracy and military rule in Niger which has been a recurring theme in the country's history. The recent military coup is the fifth successful one in the West African nation's history since independence in 1960 (Al Jazeera, 27 Jul 2023).

3. State of the art

A broad range of literature may be found on researching the role played by regional intergovernmental Organizations in managing regional crises with global dimensions, particularly the Economic Community of West African States. Neo-Institutionalist theorists in international relations often assume that RIGOs play a significant and constructive role in managing regional crises with global dimensions which can be reflected in the historical role that Ecowas play in dealing with various conflicts in the region. Oppositely, Structural realism theory may exemplify the dynamics of the West African block, which assume that RIGOs are constrained by the power dynamics of the international system and often reflect the interests and influence of the most powerful states that found and sustain them, and consequently shape its decision making.

3.1 Neo-Institutionalism

To understand Neo-Institutionalist theory, a useful book is *International Relations, A Self-Study Guide to Theory* (Manuela Spindler, 2005). In the chapter “Neo-institutionalist theory”, the author defined Neo-institutionalism as “modified structural realism”, identifying three elements introduced by the Modified Structural Realism: Splitting international politics into issue areas, Focusing on international institutions and Considering the issue of peaceful change. The international system in neo-institutionalism consists of multiple structures, classified in terms of issue areas and the resources available to States to influence outcomes. Furthermore, this system considers the traditional military force no longer the main source of power. Neo institutionalism opposes the neo-realism view, which assumes that states are compelled to enhance their power due to the anarchical nature of the international system, while in the neo-institutionalism perspective, States are not obligated to prioritise power and can pursue other objectives and issue areas, given the reduced insecurity in systems characterized by interdependence. This framework provides insights into the emergence of institutionalized international relations based on rules and procedures with which States comply.

According to Spindler’s view, the neo-institutionalist explanation begins by conceptualising the increasing levels of international interdependence. To explain the concept of interdependence, she mentioned the work of Keohane and Nye in 1977 “*Power and Interdependence*”, which showed how unilateral crisis management was powerless under conditions of interdependence, the context of this assumption was the oil price shocks of 1973. As a result, national policies depend on the politics of all actors being part of the interdependent relationship. Interdependence is defined as a structural characteristic of the international system; it is specific to each issue area. Interdependence operates between power (as the independent variable) and the outcomes of international politics (as the dependent variable). This relationship alters the context and structure of international negotiation processes, because under conditions of interdependence, military power loses its significance. Additionally, interdependence strengthens international cooperation.

Finally, Spindler concluded by claiming that in the long term, institutionalisation in international politics can be viewed as an evolutionary process for creating a harmonious world order that will lead to a transformation of anarchy. Applying the conclusions of this paragraph to the context of Ecowas, the West African states are in a position of mutual dependence, particularly with regard to cross-border terrorism and economic difficulties, which compels them to manage these issues together within an institutional framework.

In the paper "*The "Isms" of Regional Integration: What Do Underlying Interstate Preferences Hold for the ECOWAS Union?*" (Paul Agu Igwe, Chinedu Ochinanwata, Nnamdi O. Madichie 2021), the authors explored institutionalism among other theoretical paradigms that impact the Ecowas regional governance system and analysed its current strategy towards the integration of the West African region, its successes and failures. The analysis follows the framework of Laursen (2008), which includes an assessment of whether geopolitical or economic interests dominate member states' preferences and a focus on the efficiency and distributional outcomes of interstate bargaining, taking into account the underlying national preferences and their impact on cooperation and decision making.

In the article, institutionalism is discussed as one of the theoretical frameworks that impact regional governance and integration in the Economic Community of West African States. It refers to the role of institutions in determining how States behave and what interests they share in dealing with regional problems. The paper claims that Institutionalism had both positive and negative impact on Ecowas management of the crisis. On the positive side, the regional block succeeded in promoting interstate peace among its member states thanks to the institutional framework and mechanisms adopted. For instance, the protocol on democracy and good governance prescribes measures to prevent conflicts and encourage democratic principles. However, the article highlights the struggles of ECOWAS in effectively implementing the policies aimed to achieve regional growth and solve internal conflicts and terrorism, which are the main root causes of the instability.

This suggests that while institutionalism has provided a framework for promoting peace and stability among member states, ECOWAS has faced challenges in implementing its policies and addressing conflicts due to institutional weaknesses, bad governance, and external tensions. In fact, this issue is evident in the recent crises in Niger, where external tensions were accompanied by an institutional struggle by Ecowas to persuade Niger to restore the constitutional regime, the same is true for other crises that affect the region such as cross-border terrorism and the series of military coups.

Finally, Shipilov, A.Yu. (2019) had the same view on the positive role that Intergovernmental organisations or supranational regional structures, as referred to in his article, play in conflict resolution. The author examined the West African context, and argued that these structures have a significant impact in finding solutions to pressing issues. He described ECOWAS as a mechanism for conflict prevention, a management framework for joint response to threats and potential conflicts. The author concluded that despite some limitations and challenges, the regional block has proven to be more effective in addressing regional security issues than larger international organisations.

3.2 Structural realism

Kenneth N. Waltz (1924-2013) is considered one of the prominent contributors to the field of international theory, especially, the development of structural realism theory. In the article *Structural Realism after the Cold War* (2000), the author argues that realism remains relevant in international politics despite changes in the international political system; he also highlighted the limitations of other theories, such as the democratic peace thesis and liberal institutionalism. In his view, realism provides a valuable framework for analysing and predicting state behaviour, as it focuses on the distribution of power and the self-interested actions of states.

The scholar of structural realism assesses that the effects of interdependence on peace and conflict are weak, and he emphasises that mutual independence is not able to shape international politics because it is just strong within States not at the international level.

Furthermore, Structural realism, as proposed by Kenneth Waltz, does not specifically address the role of intergovernmental organisations (IGOs) in international relations, because their role, according to the paper, is shaped and limited by the states that found and sustain them. The author argued that IGOs are primarily driven by national interests rather than independent entities. It highlights the example of NATO, stating that the survival and expansion of NATO illustrate the subordination of international institutions to national purposes. The document suggests that IGOs are created and maintained by stronger states to serve their perceived or misperceived interests. Therefore, the role of IGOs in international relations is seen as being influenced and determined by the major state or states that establish and support them.

However, it is important to note that structural realism does not completely disregard the role of IGOs. While IGOs may not be central to the theory, they can still play a role in facilitating cooperation and coordination among states within the international system. IGOs can provide a platform for states to negotiate and resolve conflicts, and they can also serve as mechanisms for collective decision-making and the establishment of international norms and rules.

Winner Agung Pribadi (2013) in the article "*On Structural Theories of International Relations: Examining Waltzian Structural Realism And Wallerstein's World System Theory*" examined Structural Realism of Waltz together with World System Theory of Wallerstein. The author argued that both theories emphasise the importance of structures in understanding international politics, but they ignore the role of agents and the dynamics of change.

To connect structural realism to the context of West Africa, a useful research paper is "*The foreign policy and intervention behaviour of Nigeria and South Africa in Africa A structural realist analysis*" (Olumuyiwa Babatunde Amao, 2019). The article evaluates the foreign policy and intervention role of Nigeria and South Africa in Africa by virtue of their position as regional powers.

The author argues that structural realism, with its focus on power and consequent relative gains, is an effective theoretical framework for analysing what guides their political actions. The analysis discusses how national interests and the pursuit of relative power shape their behavior, and how changes in the structure of the international system and regional power dynamics influence their actions. The case studies discussed are Nigeria's intervention in Sierra Leone and South Africa's intervention in the Democratic Republic of Congo.

The article mentions the position of ECOWAS in relation to Nigeria's intervention in Sierra Leone. On one hand, it states that Nigeria's intervention in Sierra Leone was compelled by its obligations as a frontline state in ECOWAS, which aims to ensure peace and security in the region. On the other hand, it also discusses how Nigeria used the regional block as a platform to further its interests, in fact, its intervention role in Africa can be categorised under the broader spectrum of unilateral intervention and not within the Ecowas platform that include other 14 Member States.

Nigeria positioned itself as an essential actor in West African politics and extended its regional influence by combining factors such as military power, economic strength, and demographic dominance. Nigeria's ambition for hegemony in West Africa was based on its commitment to the notion of Pax Nigeriana, which aimed to assume a leadership role in Africa based on its demographic, economic, and natural resources. As the largest economy and most populous country in the region, Nigeria shapes ECOWAS' decision-making processes and agenda, allowing it to advocate for policies that align with its national interests and contribute to its relative power in the region.

4. Theoretical framework

Analyzing the effectiveness of ECOWAS in dealing with the coup in Niger can be approached using the theoretical framework of Complex Adaptive Systems (CAS). This framework views the organization as a complex system that adapts to changes and challenges (Carlisle, 2006, P. 8).

Bristow (2014) mobilized the complex adaptive system to understand policy action at the regional level while discussing the concept of resilience in the context of regional and local economies. The author emphasizes three critical dimensions for policy intervention in managing regional economic resilience: governance structures, types of policy interventions, and the timing of policy intervention.

Bolaji (2012) highlights the normative and institutional framework of ECOWAS, which can be seen as a set of rules and behaviors that adapt to the changing environment, such as adopting mechanisms for conflict resolutions when it was first created to enhance economic cooperation in the region. This is in line with the CAS Framework, which emphasizes the adaptive nature of systems.

This framework can be applied in this research by analyzing:

- **Adaptive capacity:** it is a critical aspect for improving an organization's ability to respond to dynamic challenges, by referring to an organization's capability to adjust its strategies, structures, and processes in response to changes in its internal and external environment. In the context of ECOWAS response to the coup in Niger, enhancing adaptive capacity would involve the organization's ability to quickly reassess its approach, modify existing protocols as necessary, and incorporate lessons learned from previous crises.
- **Governance and Decision-Making Structures:** this aspect relates to the institutional frameworks, procedural efficacy, and distribution of decision-making authority within the organization, including an analysis of the institutional frameworks and procedural mechanisms employed by ECOWAS during the crisis. This examination evaluates the organization's ability to navigate complex geopolitical scenarios, ensuring agile, well-informed decision-making that aligns with the principles of democratic governance and regional stability. The main indicators may be inclusivity of member states and the efficiency of organizational structures such as the Mediation and Security Council.
- **Legal Framework and Protocols:** this involves analyzing existing legal instruments, such as the Protocol Relating to the Mechanism for Conflict Prevention, Management, Resolution, Peace-Keeping, and Security. The evaluation of ECOWAS's commitment to these legal provisions during the crisis provides insight into the organization's commitment to upholding democratic principles and the rule of law. The appropriate indicators are Consistency in legal instruments and the effectiveness of protocols in guiding responses to crises.
- **External Influence:** the exploration of external influence involves an examination of the interactions between ECOWAS and non-African actors, such as France, China, Russia, and the United States, and the role these actors play in influencing the actions of the regional bloc. This is essential in assessing its autonomy and the potential alignment of its actions with global power interests.
- **Public Opinion and Perception:** A thorough analysis of public opinion and its perception is crucial to evaluating ECOWAS' response to the July coup. This requires examining how the actions and decisions of ECOWAS are perceived by the public opinion in the region. Public sentiment can serve as a barometer for the legitimacy and effectiveness of ECOWAS interventions.

- Capacity for Enforcement: this aspect involves evaluating the organization's capacity to effectively implement and enforce its decisions. ECOWAS' intervention capabilities are evaluated based on logistical, financial, and military factors. By examining the organization's ability to enforce its proposed measures, such as sanctions or military intervention threats, it is possible to determine their feasibility.

Applying the Complex Adaptive Systems Framework to these dimensions can provide a comprehensive analysis of ECOWAS's effectiveness in dealing with the coup in Niger. The framework considers the organization's adaptability, governance structures, legal frameworks, external interactions, public perception, and enforcement capacity.

5. Methodology

5.1 Deductive and Inductive Methods

The use of both inductive and deductive methods in political science research is a topic of ongoing debate. The deductive method is a logical approach that involves deriving specific conclusions from general principles or premises. In this method, one starts with a general theory or hypothesis and then applies it to specific cases or situations to reach a specific conclusion. While the Inductive approach involves deriving general principles or theories from specific observations or evidence. In this method, one starts with specific observations and then uses them to develop broader theories or generalizations (Wahlström, 2018).

The research involved in this dissertation uses deductive approach, allowing conclusions to be determined, starting from two general theories which are opposing: Structural realism and Neo-institutionalism. The aim is to determine whether the role of regional organizations in managing regional crises with global impact is shaped and limited by the states that found and sustain them, as claimed by Structural realism, or that Regional organizations may exert soft and hard power by shaping the Member States behavior as assumed by Neo-institutionalist theorists.

This research moves from the general to the specific. from a literature review of regional Intergovernmental organizations in the form of a state of the art to a specific analysis of ECOWAS role in managing regional crises, specifically the crises of Niger putsch. Once the information about this event was gathered, from which established the basis of the dissertation's hypothesis, a deductive method was thereafter involved which tested the validity of the initial hypothesis. This approach was completed through a deep analysis of scientific and press articles in addition to an interview in order to gather conclusions that may be applied to the specific case study.

5.2 Qualitative and quantitative methods

A range of studies have explored the use of qualitative and quantitative methods in political science research. Qualitative methods involve a collection of instruments employed to analyze political phenomena that are non-numerical or statistical in nature. The approach does not aim to quantify or measure data, but rather relies on observation and description of non-numerical information to draw conclusions. Quantitative methods combine statistics, mathematics, and formal theory as tools for positive research in political science. This data-driven approach involves collecting, analyzing, interpreting, and presenting numerical data to derive inferences and insights into critical political questions (Steinmetz, 2021, P. 218).

In order to best gauge the role played by ECOWAS in Niger crises, qualitative data in the form of scientific and press articles is the most suitable method of assessing the role of the West African regional bloc. Indeed, within a qualitative study, the principles of interpretive social science are more prevalent, and they provide subjective aspects; exploring the meaning and complexities of people's experiences and opinions, speaking the language of case and contexts.

5.3 The use of press articles

Given the global coverage of the putsch in Niger and the fact that it is a recent event, press articles play a crucial role in this dissertation, which involve the analysis of the case study. Press articles provide valuable insights, expert opinions, and real-life examples that enrich the research process. Furthermore, utilizing press articles allows for up-to-date information, capturing the most recent developments in the

case. This approach ensures a holistic understanding of the subject matter, enabling to present a well-rounded argument.

The nature of this research that focuses on a recent case study makes it necessary to use press articles. Indeed, most of the information about the events that followed the putsch are gathered from press articles, particularly, the paragraphs 6.2.2 Dynamics of Ecowas's action in Niger and 6.1 the main actors. Through these press articles, it is possible to strengthen the validity and relevance of the research, making it more persuasive and impactful.

5.4 Case study

Case study research in political science has been increasingly emphasized as a valuable method for providing evidence for causal claims (Crasnow, 2012, P. 655). Furthermore, the use of group case studies in political science teaching has been explored as a way to bridge the gap between practical political education and academic programs (Fluno, 1970, age 22).

This research aims to determine the validity of the Structural Realism assumption that states that the role of regional organizations in addressing regional crises with global implications is limited and determined by the states that found and sustain them. To test this hypothesis, we examine the Niger coup d'etat by analyzing ECOWAS's response for this regional crisis.

We then conduct a detailed review of the actions taken by the regional bloc to assess how effective this role has been and whether it is subject to the concerns and interests of the most powerful member state, in this case Nigeria. However, providing an overview of international reactions is necessary to justify the use of Niger Putsch as a case study of regional crises with global implications in order to assess the role of ECOWAS in managing it.

5.5 Interviews

This research used the tool of interviews as a means to better explain the information collected from the press articles and make the appropriate conclusions. Interviews are a valuable tool in social science research, allowing for in-depth exploration of participants' perspectives (Monday, 2020, P. 15). However, they also present methodological challenges, including issues of validity, reliability, and ethics (Alshenqeeti, 2014, P. 39).

For practical reasons, the only expert interviewed for this thesis is RIGA Dealan, a researcher in international relations at the faculty of law and political science of the university of Liège.

The aim is to gain insight into the research question and analyze the case study and assess the validity of the hypothesis. The questions posed are:

- How did geopolitical interests and concerns of Member States and Foreign powers affect the Ecowas's action in Niger?
- What would be a credible justification for military intervention, given that in other cases of coups, the bloc's actions were limited to membership suspension and sanctions?
- Did public opinion play a significant role?
- What would be the long-term impact of sanctions on Niger?

5.6 Challenges and limitations

In political science research, different limitations might encounter a researcher even with the most comprehensive methodological approach.

- Debate over deductive and inductive methods: the debate regarding the use of deductive and inductive methods in political science may raise questions about the appropriateness of the chosen deductive approach. Critics may argue that an inductive approach could offer different perspectives and enrich the analysis.
- Depending solely on qualitative methods, such as analyzing scientific and press articles, may restrict the extent to which data can be quantified. This could present challenges in terms of generalizability and statistical validation of results.
- Subjectivity in qualitative methods: qualitative research methods involve interpretation, which may introduce biases into the analysis and affect the objectivity of the research findings.
- Limited scope of case study: although a case study approach can provide an in-depth look at the specific context of the Niger coup, it may limit the generalizability of the findings to other regional crises or geopolitical contexts.
- Reliance on press articles: relying heavily on press articles for information can introduce bias, as media sources may have their own viewpoints and agendas. It is crucial to address potential biases and verify the sources' credibility.
- Recent and dynamic events: studying a recent case such as the Niger putsch may pose challenges in terms of obtaining a full historical perspective. The situation is dynamic, and ongoing developments could affect the interpretation of events.

Identifying and addressing these limitations and challenges is crucial to maintain the integrity and validity of research outcomes. Researchers should carefully consider these factors when making interpretations and reaching conclusions from the study.

6. Case study: The global impact of Niger's coup

In order to answer the research question of this thesis, it is appropriate to understand the global impact of the putsch in Niger.

The overthrown president Bazoum succeeded Mohamadou Issoufou as president in April 2021, which represented the first transfer of power between two civilians since the country's independence in 1960. However, the democratic practices in the country are limited to the procedural dimension of elections and the tricks of political competition without visible results in terms of management of public affairs. The geopolitical importance of Niger is because it is landlocked among nations that are all subject to attacks from al-Qaeda, the Islamic State of Iraq and the Levant (ISIL), and Boko Haram.

In terms of strategic significance, Niger is a crucial partner for the United States in West Africa. As the biggest beneficiary of military assistance from the State Department in the area, this landlocked country plays a vital role (Gilles Yabi, 2023). Since 2012, Niger has received over \$500 million worth of military assistance in equipment and training programs to combat terrorism and transnational crime, as reported by the U.S. Embassy in Niger. The West African country also benefits from duty-free export privileges to the U.S. market under the Africa Growth and Opportunities Act. Additionally, the West African nation is home to the most important U.S. military base in the region, with 1,100 troops and critical reconnaissance aircraft. Moreover, the northern region of Niger serves as a pivotal location for surveillance of Libya, the Sahel-Saharan region, and beyond. Additionally, after an agreement signed in 2013, Air Base 201 was constructed in Agadez, central Niger, and it is currently the second-largest U.S. military base in Africa. (Giles Yabi, 2023).

On the other hand, the visibility of Russia in Niger's geopolitics can be observed in the Russian flags waved by some coup supporters, suggesting a potential shift in Niger's international relations from the most welcoming country for Western civilian and military partners to a new African country added to the Russian bloc in this new cold war. In 2016, Niger and Russia signed an agreement aimed at enhancing their cooperation in security and development even prior to the July coup. Additionally, according to the Nigerien defense minister, several Russian-made aircrafts were used by the air force and hundreds of Nigerien officers received training in Russia (Afrik.com, 16 November 2023). Furthermore, in recent years, Niger has been the subject of apparent Russian disinformation campaigns, particularly following the coup in Burkina Faso in October 2022. These campaigns suggest a possible Russian involvement and support for the recent insurgency, despite Russia's condemnation of the junta and call for a restoration of constitutional order.

France's interest in Niger can be attributed to the countries' economic ties, specifically related to uranium - a strategic mineral for civilian and military purposes. While Niger gained independence, France took care to ensure agreements guaranteeing the supply of this precious raw material, essential for its nuclear power plants, under very advantageous conditions. According to Euratom data from 2005 to 2020, Niger was France's third-largest supplier of natural uranium. However, the consequences of French mining activities have led to a growing anti-French discourse. Niger's electricity accessibility remains limited, and its economy does not profit from the unequal economic relationship with France, which is evident in the negotiation of contracts. In addition to that, health risks associated with mining are substantial. According to the French Center for Monitoring Radioactivity Risks, about 20 million tons of radioactive tailings from uranium mining have been improperly dumped (Giles Yabi, 2023).

The coup d'état in July is indicative of the changing regional landscape but with different context and cause roots for each country, for instance, in Niger, many observers agreed that is about a straight up

power struggle, Bazoum was making changes to the military leadership and one of his generals, Tchiani, turned on him when there were rumours that his job was on the line.

In 2020, military regimes took power in Mali, followed by Guinea in 2021, and Burkina Faso in 2022. This triad alliance has voiced unequivocal backing for the junta in Niger, and pledged to oppose any external interference. The military leaders of Mali, Burkina Faso, and Niger signed the Liptako-Gourma Charter on September 16, creating the so-called "Alliance of Sahel States," a mutual defense pact. According to the Defense Minister of Mali, "this alliance will consist of military and economic cooperation among the three countries" (Le Monde, September 16, 2023). The charter commits the three countries to help each other in the event of an attack on the sovereignty and territorial integrity of any of them, including the use of armed force.

In the region, there appears to be a frequent wave of military takeovers. Therefore, actors such as ECOWAS, endorsed by other foreign entities, are pushing for Niger to restore the constitutional order to prevent the wave of instability from spreading, taking into account the regional and global impact of this situation.

6.1 The main actors

For the purpose of this thesis, it is necessary to analyze the role of the most important actors involved in the case study assessed, in order to understand the impact of ECOWAS role compared to other actors. Some supported the coup such as the military regimes in the area, while others opposed it through statements of condemnations or more severe actions like sanctions or even threats of a military intervention to restore the constitutional order. Among the various international actors who have expressed their opinions on the coup, United States, France, Nigeria, European Union, and ECOWAS are prominent. Then, it is important to examine the roles played by each of these actors and evaluate the effectiveness of their actions.

To begin with, ECOWAS issued a Communique on July 26th denouncing the coup and implemented various sanctions (Ecowas, 26 Jul, 2023), which include closing borders, ceasing all financial and commercial transactions with Niger, and imposing economic sanctions and travel bans. These measures were also supported by the Economic Community of Central African States (ECCAS). The July 30th statement gave the junta one week to free President Bazoum (ECOWAS commission, 30th July 2023), but ECOWAS did not take action by the deadline. On August 10th, ECOWAS released a statement declaring the creation of a "standby force" and reiterating their warning to the military junta that every option is being considered including the use of force as a last resort. On August 17, ECOWAS announced that the majority of its member nations were prepared for military intervention to restore President Bazoum to power (Al Jazeera,). Nonetheless, a few countries, including Cape Verde and those currently under military rule (Mali, Burkina Faso, and Guinea), indicated they would not participate in the joint forces. At the same time, ECOWAS expressed hope that diplomatic efforts would triumph, and military intervention would not be needed.

The reaction of the African Union (AU) was soft compared to ECOWAS, the Peace and Security Council (PSC) rejected any military intervention (Le Monde, 16th August 2023). However, PSC suspended Niger's participation from all AU activities until a return to constitutional order (PSC, 14th August 2023).

On July 26, the Secretary General of the United Nations (UN) condemned the unconstitutional change of government in Niger. The military government's representative was prevented from addressing the UN General Assembly in September 2023, as the ousted government opposed their presence (France 24, 23th September 2024).

Regarding the European reaction, on July 29th, the European Union High Representative, Joseph Borrell, announced that the EU will not recognize the authorities resulting from the coup and urged the complete and immediate return to constitutional order. The EU also suspended with immediate effect budget support and security cooperation activities and endorsed the ECOWAS declarations and any upcoming decisions (EU external action, 29 July 2023). On August 30th, following the informal council in Toledo with Defense Ministers, the High Representative restated EU support for ECOWAS. He also did not rule out the possibility of funding an ECOWAS standby force for military intervention (EU external action, 30 August 2023).

Concerning neighboring countries' response, Nigeria turned off its electricity supply (African News 8 August 2023). The President of Nigeria, Bola Tinubu, was a major supporter of the return of President Bazoum to power, even with a military intervention, but at the national level, the Senate of Nigeria opposed such an intervention because, in their view, such an action could damage Niger-Nigeria cooperation in the fight against cross-border criminality and worsen insecurity in northern Nigeria (BBC, 8 August 2023). Preventing the intervention of the strongest regional military force contributed to the non-execution of ECOWAS threats expressed on July 31st. On August 31st, the Nigerian president suggested a nine-month transition period, which was shorter than the three-year timeline proposed by the Junta (Alarabiya news, 31 August 2023). However, ECOWAS did not support this proposal and called for an immediate return to constitutional order.

Algeria, which shares a 951-kilometer border with Niger, proposed a six-month transition plan to the Nigerien junta involving all political factions in the country and led by a figure accepted by all sides of the political sphere (France 24, 29 August 2023). Indeed, the Algerian president expressed his opposition to a military intervention claiming that would threaten Algeria's security (RFI, 24 August 2023).

Mali and Burkina Faso, both under military leadership and suspended from ECOWAS, have reacted positively to the coup and committed themselves to defend Niger against external intervention aimed at reinstating President Bazoum (Communique Conjoint Burkina-Mali, 2 August 2023). On 16 September, the military heads of the three countries signed a mutual defense agreement.

As the former colonial power with significant economic interests in Niger, France's response is a crucial factor in evaluating global reactions to the coup in Niger. On August 5th, French Foreign Minister Catherine Colonna announced that France is firmly supporting ECOWAS' measures to stop this coup attempt, including military action, a position not shared by other EU member states (France 24, 5 August 2023). In response, the Junta revoked the French Ambassador's diplomatic immunity and issued an expulsion order which was not respected by the French government, claiming that just the president Bazoum could order the envoy out. However, one month later, the ambassador left the country (Aljazeera, 27 Sep 2023).

Regarding the military presence, a military representative reported that French military forces are prepared to react to any escalation of tension that may jeopardize French diplomatic and military facilities in Niger. As a response to the Junta's demands to withdraw the French troops, President Macron announced that the redeployment of troops would only take place at the request of the deposed head of State. However, two months after the coup, Macron announced the withdrawal of troops within the end of 2023 (France 24, 24 September 2023).

On the other side, the Chinese response was limited to calling for a political solution to the coup (Reuters, 3 August 2023). Additionally, on September 17, a representative from China visited the leader of the military junta, General Tchiani, and offered availability for mediation talks (Le Sahel, 17 September 2023).

Concerning Russia, the Foreign Minister, Sergey Lavrov, expressed condemnation and urged the return to constitutional order. Nevertheless, Russia opposed the military intervention (Reuters, August 24, 2023). In contrast to the Russian official statement, a social media message from the deceased leader of Wagner, Yevgeny Prigozhin, welcomed the coup and offered Wagner's assistance to the leaders (CNN, 9 July 2023). Worthy of being noted that there has been military cooperation with Russia during the mandate of Bazoum, who claimed that he was against allowing a Wagner presence. However, even if there is no evidence on the Russian involvement, the Kremlin benefited from this coup in strategic terms, the public opinion seemed to sympathize with a Russian presence given that Russian flags have appeared at pro-junta demonstrations. Additionally, On 4th December, Niger scrapped two military agreements with EU, while in the same time, the leader of Junta, held meeting with Russian Deputy Minister of Defence Lounous-Bek Evkourov to discuss cooperation in the field of defense (France 24, 4 December 2023), making evident a shift in the global alliances of the West African country.

Regarding the United States position, Secretary of State Antony Blinken has endorsed Ecowas' call for the return of constitutional government (US Department of State, 10 August 2023), but without supporting the idea of military intervention, as France did, preferring a diplomatic solution. Additionally, the US has suspended military assistance to Niger but has not withdrawn its troops, nor has it been solicited to do so by the new rulers. However, the primary concern of the U.S. is to contain Russian influence in the region and to address any possible threat to its personnel in case of the arrival of Wagner fighters to support the military leaders.

The roles played by regional and international organizations, neighboring countries, and non-African actors such as France, China, Russia, and the United States, demonstrate the global dimension of this event and a diverse range of approaches. While ECOWAS took a firm stance through sanctions and ultimatums. the African Union exhibited a softer response. Neighboring countries like Nigeria and Algeria had opposite approaches and proposed alternative transition plans. The United States backed ECOWAS' call for a return to constitutional government but opted for a diplomatic solution, reflecting its concerns about Russian influence and the safety of its personnel operating in Niger. Overall, the varied responses highlight the complicated geopolitical factors and connections that are influencing the aftermath of the coup in Niger.

6.2 ECOWAS's role and response

After displaying the positions and actions taken by different actors, the focus would be on the role of Ecowas, the tools available and used, the legality and effectiveness of the actions taken or announced.

6.2.1 Ecowas mechanisms

Analyzing the ECOWAS's role in the Niger crisis requires an understanding of the legal framework that covers any action taken by the organization to address these issues.

The United Nations Charter acknowledges the significance of regional arrangements in promoting global peace and security. Chapter VIII of the Charter outlines the role of regional institutions and arrangements in fostering peace and cooperation within a specific geographic location. While at the regional level, ECOWAS adopted different arrangements to execute its functions related to conflict management.

At the regional level, the *Protocol Relating to the Mechanism for Conflict Prevention, Management Resolution, Peace keeping and Security* is the primary umbrella for dealing with these crises such as the military coups.

The purpose of this mechanism is to establish a system for the prevention, management and resolution of conflicts within the Economic Community of West African States. It aims to promote and enforce

standards of legitimate governance, including democratic government, protection of human rights and freedoms, and respect for the rule of law. The protocol allows ECOWAS to intervene militarily in member states in cases of human rights abuses, violations of democratic principles, or attempts to overthrow a democratically elected government. The protocol also seeks to contain the negative effects of civil wars in the region and to consolidate the democratic progress of newly democratizing states.

The Heads of States and Government adopted the *Supplementary Protocol on Democracy and Good Governance* in 2001, establishing new political and institutional standards aimed at promoting peace, security and stability in the region. "Supplementary" meant that it complements the Mechanism for conflict management adopted in 1999. It brings essential improvements that establish a direct and explicit link between Member States' adherence to standards of democracy and good governance and prospects for peace and security.

It is worth mentioning the constitutional principles outlined in the Protocol, including the separation of powers among the executive, legislative, and judiciary branches, strengthening of Parliaments, judicial independence, and prohibition of any unconstitutional or undemocratic means of accessing and retaining power.

One of the important aims of the supplementary protocol is to set up common standards concerning the role of the army within a democratic framework. The article 1(e) of the protocol stated that "*the army and public security forces shall be under the command of a legally constituted civilian authority*". Additionally, the article 45 pointed out that if "*democracy is abruptly brought to an end by any means or where there is massive violation of Human Rights in a Member State, ECOWAS may impose sanctions on the State concerned*".

The protocol mechanism sets up several institutions and procedures for its implementation. According to the provisions of the protocol, "*the Assembly of Heads of State shall be the highest decision making body on issues relating to conflict prevention, management and resolution, peace-keeping and security, humanitarian support, peace building, control of cross-border crime, proliferation of small arms as well as other issues covered by the provisions of the Mechanism*". Articles 6 and 7 of Chapter II of the Protocol state that the Assembly confers upon the *Mediation and Security Council* (MSC) the authority to take decisions on its behalf for the appropriate implementation of the provisions of the Mechanism. Other institutions established by the protocol include the *Defense and Security Commission* (DSC), *Council of Elders* and *ECOMOG* (Hartmann, C., & Striebinger, K. 2015, P. 70).

MSC is the core institution of the implementation, which is composed of nine member States and can take decisions by a two-thirds majority. The MSC meets at the level of heads of state and government, ambassadors, and ministers. The MSC can activate the intervention mechanism, which has several steps. First, the Executive Secretary informs MSC members and takes the necessary action. The MSC then decides on the course of action, which may include fact-finding missions, political and mediation missions, or intervention by the ECOWAS Ceasefire Monitoring Group (ECOMOG). The Executive Secretary then develops a plan, informs the African Union (AU) and the United Nations (UN), and seeks funding for the operations.

In DSC, Member States are represented by Chiefs of Defence Staff or their equivalents, Officials of Ministries responsible for Internal Affairs and Security, Experts from the Ministry of Foreign Affairs of Each Member State and depending on the agenda, officers of other services such as immigration, customs, drugs and narcotics agencies, border guards or civil protection force. This commission addresses the technical and administrative aspects and assesses logistical requirements for peacekeeping operations. It supports the MSC in formulating mandates for peacekeeping forces, defining the terms of reference for these forces, nominating commanders, and determining the composition of contingents.

The Council of Elders is composed of high-profile personalities who can use their good will and wise counsel to play the role of mediator, conciliator and facilitator on behalf of ECOWAS. These individuals, hailing from diverse segments of society, including women, political leaders, traditional leaders, and religious leaders, are selected from a list adopted by the Mediation and Security Council at the level of Heads of State and Government. These individuals are engaged as needed by the Executive Secretary or the MSC to address a particular conflict situation.

ECOMOG is a multi-purpose structure composed of several civilian and military units that are on stand-by in their country of origin and prepared to be deployed in the future. ECOMOG carries out various missions, such as peace monitoring and observation, peacekeeping and restoration operations, support for humanitarian actions, missions to enforce sanctions (including embargoes), preventive deployments, peace building operations, disarmament and demobilization, policing activities to combat fraud and organized crime, as well as any other operations ordered by CMS.

Many critics and observations can be mobilized in assessing ECOWAS conflict management mechanisms. Odobo (2017) and Okere (2015) noted the need for more synergy, political will, and attention to poverty, human rights abuses, and election fraud. Daniel (2020) further emphasizes the importance of proper funding and technical resources, as well as the need for a stable military force and regional cooperation. Therefore, it is worthy to request how ECOWAS addressed the recent crisis of Niger, given its legal and logistic tools, and whether the external interferences impacted its action.

6.2.2 Dynamics of Ecowas's action in Niger

ECOWAS has adopted various strategies to deal with coups in West Africa. One of the main strategies is the use of economic sanctions. These sanctions include freezing assets, cutting off financial aid to countries involved in coups, closing the country's borders with other ECOWAS member states, and withdrawing ambassadors, turning the state into a pariah in the region.

According to article 6 of the protocol of 1999, the Authority of Heads of State and Government of Member States is the Mechanisms' highest decision making body. Furthermore, the promotion and consolidation of a democratic government as well as democratic institutions in each Member States is one of the fundamental principles reaffirmed in the article 2 of the protocol. This role of custodian of democratic norms is a result of destabilizing civil wars and military coups of the 1990s.

Following the putsh in Niger, the Authority of Heads of State and government met firstly on July 30th and recalled the principle of zero tolerance for unconstitutional change of government as enshrined in the ECOWAS and African Union Protocols and other instruments, condemned the putsch, threatened the use of force, approved several sanctions with immediate effect and called for a meeting of chiefs of defense staff of the regional bloc (ECOWAS Communique, 30 July 2023). A week later, the Chairman of the Authority of Heads of State and Government and the President of Nigeria convened another extraordinary summit after the experiment of the ultimatum issued at the first summit. The summit's communique emphasized the need to keep all options open for peaceful resolution and called for the endorsement of the African Union and other partner countries and institutions. It also ordered the activation of the ECOWAS Standby force with all of its components (ECOWAS Communique, 10 August 2023).

On August 2, the defense chiefs began a three-day meeting called by the authority of the Heads of State, in the absence of the defense chiefs of Mali, Niger, Guinea, Burkina Faso and Guinea-Bissau, and continued talks in Ghana on 18th August, one day after the activation of "standby force", upon this meeting, the committee agreed on "D-day" for the military intervention and fine-tuned what would be required for the intervention (Al Jazeera, 18 August 2023). In response, the junta has announced the

creation of the Volunteers for the Defense of Niger (VDN), a civilian militia force intended to oppose a potential military intervention by ECOWAS (Anadolu Ajansi, 20 August 2023). Meanwhile, Mali and Burkina Faso sent Super Tucano warplanes to Niger as a gesture of solidarity with the junta (Anadolu Ajansi, 19 August 2023), and signed the Liptako-Gourma charter forming the Alliance of Sahel States, which is a pact aimed to cooperate against threats of armed rebellion or external aggression.

On 20 August, ECOWAS rejected the Junta's proposal of a three-year transition to civilian rule, reiterating that it would only accept a transfer of power in the shortest possible time (France 24, 21 August 2023). One day later, the junta authorized the armies of Burkina Faso and Mali to officially intervene in Niger in the event of aggression (Alarabiya news, 26 August 2023). In late August, the Nigerian president proposed the junta to cut its transition to civilian government to nine months, while at the same time warning that ECOWAS sanctions against the junta would continue until the regime made positive adjustments (France 24, 31 August 2023).

At the same time, On August 2nd, ECOWAS dispatched a delegation to Niger to engage in negotiations with the junta. The delegation consisted of former Nigerian military leader Abdulsalami Abubakar, the Sultan of Sokoto, Muhammadu Sa'ad Abubakar, and Omar Touray, the president of the ECOWAS Commission. However, the delegation did not meet the Head of the coup general Tchiani and other junta members (Premium Times, 2 August 2023). On 8th August, another attempt was made, a joint delegation of representatives from ECOWAS, the United Nations, and the AU tried to meet with the junta, but were not allowed to enter (Jeune Afrique, 8 August 2023). On 12th August, the Nigerian President sent a delegation of religious leaders from Nigeria to meet with members of the military junta and seek possible mediation (Voanews, 12 August 2023).

ECOWAS gave unofficially a mandate to the Chadian President Mahamat Idriss Déby to negotiate with the military rulers in Niger. He met on 31 July Niger's ousted president (BBC, 31 July 2023) and the military-installed Prime Minister Zeine (Reuters, 15 August 2023). Upon this meeting, Zeine announced that the junta reiterated its support for dialogue. However, Chad is neither a member of ECOWAS, nor its president a civilian. In fact, Mahamat Idriss Déby came to power by force after carrying out an institutional coup the day after the death of his father Idriss Déby Itno.

On August 19, another delegation from ECOWAS, joined by the UN Special Representative for West Africa and the Sahel, met with the Head of the Junta and later ousted President Bazoum; the impressions from this meeting were positive for a peaceful solution (Associated press, 20 August 2023).

During this crisis, ECOWAS' action faced several critics. Firstly, it appears that Niger was given exceptional treatment, given that Ecowas acted very quickly with sanctions and a military ultimatum, while the same body contented itself with sanctions in recent cases such as Mali, Guinea and Burkina Faso. Secondly, Observers requested whether the hard line taken by ECOWAS is due to external power pressure such as France that supported the Chadian president in his military coup. ECOWAS rejected allegations that it was being manipulated by external powers in its attempts to address the crisis. At the same time, the junta in Niger accused France of sending troops and equipment to ECOWAS member states, particularly Senegal, Côte d'Ivoire and Benin, as part of a plan to launch an aggression against Niger in coordination with the regional bloc (Aljazeera, 10 September 2023).

The regional bloc has faced numerous criticisms for its double standards due to its partial enforcement of democratic norms, primarily concentrated on protecting elected heads of state from putsches, and ignoring other practices that threaten democracy, such as unlimited presidential mandates and alleged corruption (Ronceray Martin, 2023).

Another potential criticism that could be mobilized against Ecowas is that its focus on legal constitutional continuity does not really meet the governance aspirations of many citizens that are interested more in human rights and anti-corruption policies. According to the 2022 country report on human rights practices from the US Bureau of Democracy, Human Rights, and Labor, several abuses, including arbitrary deprivation of life, torture, arbitrary arrests, and denial of fair public trials, have been observed in Niger.

In conclusion, ECOWAS adopted a multifaceted approach in response to the coup in Niger, which combined economic sanctions, diplomatic efforts, and the threat of military intervention. However, the regional body faced criticism for perceived contradictions in its actions, raising questions about external influence and double standards. The crisis's complexity underscores the delicate balance between maintaining constitutional continuity and addressing broader governance concerns. This emphasizes the need for balanced strategies to promote stability and democracy in the region.

6.3 Nigeria's role

For the purposes of this research, it is essential to analyse Nigeria's role given its influence and the fact that it is the most powerful State in Ecowas, such power is exercised through both Soft and Hard power means. The scholars Olusola Ogunnubi and Christopher Isike (2018) explore Nigeria's soft power potential and its influence on the country's regional leadership, according to the authors, Nigeria has several soft power resources. These include its cultural exports, particularly in the entertainment industry with Nollywood films, music, and comedy. Nigeria's international peacekeeping record, contribution to African scholarship, and its strong presence in Ecowas.

The authors also discuss the concept of soft power and its three components: attractive culture, political values, and foreign policy. These components are seen as resources that a State can mobilize to attract and influence others without resorting to coercion or payment. Culture refers to the values, norms, and practices that give meaning to a society, including literature, art, music, entertainment, tourism, and indigenous products. Political values encompass the adherence to certain values, such as political accommodation, consensus, and tolerance, which can be attractive to other nations. Furthermore, foreign policy, when seen as legitimate and having moral authority, also contributes to a State's soft power.

However, Nigeria's soft power potential faces limitations and criticisms. A negative reputation associated with Nigeria and Nigerians worldwide weakens Nigeria's status as a regional power in Africa. This perception stems from corruption, human rights abuses, and the involvement of security forces in torture and extrajudicial killings. Furthermore, Nigeria's economic position and GDP per capita income do not rank highly in Africa, impacting its potential for soft power. The article recommends that Nigeria address these limitations and criticisms to successfully utilize its soft power assets.

In its efforts to promote democracy, Nigeria has employed hard power tools as well. Oluwaseun Tella (2022, P. 1279) details Nigeria's utilization of hard power techniques in addition to other dimensions of power. Tella mentions the case of Sierra Leone, where Nigeria intervened militarily to restore democracy and overthrow military rulers. According to the article, Nigeria's hard power sources consist of its economic strength, military capacity, and the legal and moral foundation established by the 1981 ECOWAS Protocol Relating to Mutual Assistance.

Nigeria's economic strength is evident in its financial contributions and economic sanctions, while its military capacity is seen in the military hardware and troops deployed. The ECOWAS protocol underscores collective responsibility and mandates a written request from a country under attack, which Nigeria used to justify its intervention in Sierra Leone.

Nigeria's approach to democracy promotion varies depending on several factors, including the domestic circumstances of both Nigeria and the recipient states, the type of political system, and the personality of the country's president. Nonetheless, the author concluded that Nigeria's democracy promotion efforts in Africa involve a combination of hard, soft, and smart power strategies, depending on the specific context and circumstances (Tella, 2022, P. 1290).

In its role as a promoter of democracy in the region, Nigeria employs a mix of hard, soft, and smart power to enhance democratic values in West Africa. The application of hard power is apparent in its military engagement in Sierra Leone, where Nigeria dispatched peacekeepers and military strength to topple autocratic leaders and reinstate democracy. Conversely, Nigeria employed a soft power tactic in São Tomé by highlighting diplomacy and negotiations to regulate the constitutional crisis. Additionally, Nigeria implemented smart power in The Gambia by leading negotiations and providing air and naval assistance to support the Senegalese armed forces (Tella, 2022, P. 1290).

Nigeria has actively participated in peacekeeping efforts, economic collaboration, and leadership positions within ECOWAS. However, Nigeria's approach to its neighboring countries in West Africa is both remarkable and paradoxical, as it strives to counter the military coup culture in the region while maintaining strong diplomatic relations with those countries.

The primary benefits that Nigeria derives from its participation in ECOWAS include increased trade volume, improved trading activities with other member states, and enhanced economic stability and relations within the West African sub-region. Nigeria has also gained prestige and recognition as a leader in intra-ECOWAS exports, particularly in the export of oil. Additionally, Nigeria's participation in ECOWAS has allowed the country to command respect and influence in the sub-region, particularly in the context of military actions and peacekeeping efforts (Osondu, 2015).

However, it is important to note that the tangible economic benefits arising from Nigeria's participation in ECOWAS are likely to remain low for the foreseeable future, while the cost of sustaining ECOWAS may continue to be on the high side. Indeed, Nigeria's financial contribution to ECOWAS is significantly higher than that of other member states, Nigeria paid \$710m between 2003 and 2015. In the same period, 13 other countries contributed a cumulative amount of \$697m (Premium Times, 6 December 2018). The scale of assessment for financial contributions takes into consideration the inequality of the national incomes of the member states, and Nigeria, being the most economically advanced member, bears a disproportionate share of the financial burden.

This disproportionate financial burden has resulted in a strain on Nigeria's economy, particularly in the context of the country's substantial external debt and high unemployment rate (Osondu, 2015). However, it is worthy to note that such financial burden is used to exercise a strategic influence on the other member States especially in promoting democracy and stable constitutional governments.

Orladiran Bello (2023) discusses the political and security implications of the military takeover in Niger and Nigeria's response as the lead State within ECOWAS. According to the author, Nigeria's approach to the crisis in Niger is being shaped by several key factors. President Bola Tinubu's personal history with military rule, including his exile by former Nigerian military leader Abacha, has led to his strong aversion to military intervention in Niger. Additionally, Tinubu's concerns about the potential impact of military rule in Niger on Nigeria's own security and stability, particularly in light of the country's ongoing struggles with Boko Haram insurgency, banditry, and kidnapping, are influencing Nigeria's approach.

According to Bello's paper (2023) the initial ECOWAS-Nigerian threat for a military intervention flew down soon. There are many reasons observed for this shape in its approach. A military intervention in Niger could have significant implications for Nigeria's internal security and stability. Firstly, the potential

for military action on the Nigeria-Niger borders poses a direct threat to the safety of over 300,000 Nigerian refugees and internally displaced persons who may be caught in the crossfire. This could exacerbate the humanitarian crisis and strain resources along the shared frontier, leading to popular disaffection and potential unrest. Additionally, Nigeria's constitution mandates that the president seek approval from the Senate before deploying troops abroad. The stretched resources of Nigeria's 135,000 active military troops, already facing internal security challenges such as radical jihadist and Boko Haram extremists in the northeast, banditry, herder-farmer clashes, and other forms of unrest, could be further strained by involvement in a military intervention in Niger. Furthermore, a costly intervention in Niger could potentially impact Nigeria's economy, leading to a state of affairs that encourages adventurist officers in the army. This could pose a risk to Nigeria's internal stability and security, potentially leading to a Malian-style meltdown in State authority. Additionally, the involvement of Nigeria's military in a complex military campaign in Niger, confronting regular forces, civilian militias, Islamist insurgents, and potentially Wagner combatants, could risk internal sabotage by soldiers with close affinity to communities in Niger.

The specific goals and ambitions pursued by Nigeria within the context of ECOWAS include promoting coordinated development of the economic resources of the West African sub-region, intensifying intra-regional trade, promoting the free flow of intra-regional services and investment, and facilitating economic growth in the sub-region. However, a military intervention in Niger could strain Nigeria's resources, impact its internal security dynamics, and potentially destabilize the country, posing significant risks to its stability and reform agenda. Therefore, it is crucial for Nigeria to carefully consider the potential implications and weigh the costs and benefits before taking any action in Niger.

To conclude, Nigeria is the leading member of ECOWAS, as a result, any action pursued by the regional bloc depends on Nigeria's wish, for this reason analysis of Nigeria's dynamics is essential to assess ECOWAS's actions.

6.4 Conclusion

In conclusion, the coup in Niger has generated a complex geopolitical dynamic in which global powers are involved. ECOWAS took a firm stance with sanctions and threats of military intervention but faced criticism for potential double standards. Overall, the multifaceted reactions highlight the intricate global dynamics affecting the post-coup scenarios in Niger, which makes this case study useful to analyze the effectiveness of regional intergovernmental organizations in dealing with regional crises with global implications.

7. Analysis

7.1 Conflict Management and Resolution approach

ECOWAS has been gradually transformed, under the pressure of political events, into an organisation responsible for finding solutions to armed conflicts and other political crises which were undermining peace and security within the community space. However, military coups are included in the crises referred to in the *protocol Relating to the Mechanism for Conflict Prevention, Management, Resolution, Peace- Keeping and Security (1999)*, which defined 'Member State in crisis' also States affected by the overthrow or attempted overthrow of a democratically elected government.

S. O. Odobo, M. Andekin, and K. Udegbumam (2017) examine the ECOWAS institutional framework for managing conflicts in West Africa. They analyze the characteristics of conflicts in the region and the evolution of the ECOWAS conflict management framework. The authors asserts that ECOWAS has attained remarkable successes in conflict management, but recommends that poverty, human rights violations, electoral fraud and religious extremism be addressed to improve peacebuilding efforts. According to the authors, ECOWAS faces different challenges in conflict management, including weakness in decision making and accusation of hegemony by Nigeria.

The evolution of ECOWAS' response to coups has been marked by a series of significant developments. Over the years, the regional bloc has demonstrated a growing commitment to addressing coups in the region and has continuously adapted its mechanisms and protocols to effectively deal with such events (Onyekwere, Ignatius E. 2023, p. 192).

The regional bloc has developed various mechanisms and protocols to address the issue of coups within the region. These mechanisms and protocols are designed to promote peace, security, democracy, good governance, conflict prevention, management, resolution, peacekeeping, and security. Through these frameworks, ECOWAS aims to establish a system of collective action among its member states to effectively respond to coup attempts and prevent their recurrence.

The *Protocol on Democracy and Good Governance* is an essential tool for combating coups in the West African region. It places significant emphasis on democratic principles such as conducting free and fair elections, upholding human rights, and adhering to the rule of law. Through the promotion of democratic practices and the establishment of transparent and accountable governance in member states, this protocol effectively works towards averting circumstances that could lead to coup attempts. Consequently, it bolsters the stability and legitimacy of governments across the region.

The Protocol of 1999 focuses on preventing and resolving conflicts through the promotion of dialogue, mediation, and peaceful settlement of disputes. This protocol also allows ECOWAS to deploy peacekeeping missions when necessary to restore peace and security in countries affected by instability. Integrating conflict prevention and peacekeeping efforts in this mechanism, it enhances ECOWAS' ability to effectively respond to coup attempts and maintain stability within the region.

In the early stages of ECOWAS' response to coups, efforts were primarily focused on diplomatic interventions and political negotiations, utilizing its diplomatic channels to engage directly with coup leaders and their supporters, urging them to uphold democratic principles and facilitating negotiations for a peaceful resolution. It also strengthened the Organization's commitment to democratic governance and the restoration of constitutional order in member states facing coup threats by developing a comprehensive peace and security framework, which includes specific provisions for dealing with coups such as economic sanctions.

Following the July coup, ECOWAS announced a series of sanctions on Niger and issued an ultimatum to restore the constitutional order. These are the harshest measures the bloc has ever taken against an errant member state.

However, the impact of the ECOWAS sanctions has apparently exceeded expectations. While they effectively expressed strong disapproval of the coup and put external pressure on Niger's leaders, the ECOWAS sanctions have also had unintended consequences that are significant for both Niamey and Abuja. These measures have caused considerable hardship in Niger, resulting in adverse repercussions that extend to Nigeria. They have negatively impacted a vibrant cross-border economy along the extensive Nigeria-Niger border, disrupting livelihoods, worsening humanitarian challenges, and jeopardizing major rail and gas projects that had the potential to increase regional trade.

Although the purpose of the ECOWAS sanctions was to pressure Niger's de facto military authorities to reinstate Bazoum, this has not yet occurred. However, civilians are bearing the brunt of the wide-ranging measures due to the closure of borders with Benin and Nigeria, which are the two countries from which Niger typically imports food and other basic necessities. As a result, the population is facing shortages of medicines, cereals and sugar (Nnamdi Obasi, 2023).

The diplomatic efforts of the Economic Community of West African States in response to the political turbulence in Niger can be assessed through a variety of perspectives. The repeated sending of diplomatic delegations on August 2, August 8, and August 19 is remarkable and illustrates a sustained commitment to initiate dialogue and negotiate a peaceful solution to the crisis. The composition of these delegations, which included eminent figures such as former Nigerian military leader Abdulsalami Abubakar, the Sultan of Sokoto, Muhammadu Sa'ad Abubakar, and Omar Touray, the President of the ECOWAS Commission, reflects a strategic choice to enhance the credibility and effectiveness of diplomatic approaches.

One notable aspect of ECOWAS's diplomatic approach is the informal mandate given to Chadian President Mahamat Idriss Déby to negotiate with Niger's military rulers. However, the involvement of Chad, a non-ECOWAS member, and the fact that President Mahamat Idriss Déby came to power in a coup following the death of his father, Idriss Déby Itno, create complications regarding the legitimacy of this diplomatic channel.

The first attempts, on August 2 and August 8, were met with obstacles, as the junta refused to engage in direct talks with the diplomatic envoys. This resistance represented a challenge to ECOWAS's pursuit of a diplomatic solution. Conversely, a positive turn of events occurred on August 19 when an ECOWAS delegation, accompanied by the UN Special Representative for West Africa and the Sahel, met with the head of the junta and ousted President Bazoum. This development has been described as a positive step towards a peaceful solution. Further diversifying its mediation strategies, on August 12, ECOWAS sent a delegation of religious leaders from Nigeria to engage with the military junta. The extent of the success of this particular initiative remains unclear from the information available.

The ECOWAS sanctions were implemented to pressure Niger's military junta to restore constitutional order. Despite these efforts, the desired outcome of Bazoum's reinstatement has yet to be achieved. While the diplomatic efforts, characterized by persistence and a multifaceted approach, have faced challenges in securing direct engagement with the junta during initial overtures. While the positive outcome of August 19 indicates progress, the ultimate success of ECOWAS' diplomatic initiatives depends on the junta's receptiveness to meaningful dialogue and the effectiveness of concurrent mediation efforts. The involvement of non-ECOWAS actors, such as Chad, adds a complex dynamic to the diplomatic landscape.

Despite these developments, the ECOWAS conflict management framework has faced challenges, such as controversies surrounding interventions, weak decision-making processes, and accusations of Nigeria's hegemony. The dynamic nature of conflicts in the region also necessitates a reassessment of established frameworks to effectively address emerging challenges.

In conclusion, it can be observed an evolution of ECOWAS action in dealing with the coup of Niger in comparison with other coups, threatening to use a military intervention. This new approach is justified by the necessity to stop the recent occurrence of putsches in the region. However, at the level of legal structure, there are no changes given that the existing protocols and mechanisms are set to deal with the coups.

7.2 Governance and Decision-Making Structures

The effectiveness of the institutional frameworks utilized by ECOWAS during the July Putsch in Niger is a crucial aspect to evaluate. These frameworks serve as guidelines for member states and provide a basis for intervention in political crises. The article 4 of *Protocol Relating to the Mechanism for Conflict Prevention, Management, Resolution, Peace-Keeping and Security* established several institutions for its implementation.

Following the dynamics of the putsch in Niger, it appears that ECOWAS still faces different challenges in implementing this decision making framework. These challenges include regional security stability and disagreements among member states.

The security challenges in West Africa are multifaceted and complex which include terrorism and weak national security institutions. These challenges are further exacerbated by failures in economic development, governance, and democratization.

The lack of public support and the hesitancy of pursuing a military intervention in Niger is a result of the security challenges that may arise from such action. The analysts Yahia H. Zoubir and Abdelkader Abderrahmane (2023) claim that a military action in Niger would deepen the Sahel's Woes. According to the author's analysis, the main reason behind the epidemic of military coups in the region is the incompetence of the civilian leaders in dealing with terrorism. The jihadists' repeated attacks on the military and the local population have encouraged military officers in Niger and other countries in the region to get rid of what they see as incompetent civilians. The second reason regards the presence of foreign troops which are considered inefficient and unpopular, especially the French ones.

In addition to the potential humanitarian crises resulting from military action, violent extremist groups could benefit from the resulting security vacuum and strengthen their presence in Niger and neighboring countries. Niger serves as one of the most important migratory routes, acting as a transit corridor to Libya, a key departure points for migration to Europe. This might help understand why France has not obtained the desired support from its European Union allies for a military intervention in Niger. Indeed, an intervention in Niger would likely involve other actors on the Niger side, such as the Wagner group.

Due to the complex nature of the region's ethnic and tribal affiliations and global and regional power struggles, military intervention in Niger would be disastrous, especially given the dire humanitarian condition and the lack of security that already reigns in much of the region.

Another aspect regards the consensus among member states. Consensus decision-making is a crucial process in intergovernmental organizations, as it allows for the resolution of conflicts and the creation of solutions that are acceptable to all members (Christian, 2016, p. 66). The use of consensus in such organizations is a type of negotiation that allows for the consolidation of the group's wisdom and the creation of "win-win" solutions.

The lack of consensus between ECOWAS member states has always been a significant challenge, particularly in the areas of democratic governance, single currency integration, and political and security issues. Indeed, the organization has struggled to address governmental instability and national security breakdowns, with member states facing challenges such as military coups and rebellions (Bamfo, 2013).

Concerning the military coup in Niger, the Economic Community of West African States has said most of its members are ready to join a standby force that could intervene in Niger. However, the members under military rule and Cape Verde were against it. The ECOWAS countries currently under military coup are Mali, Guinea, Burkina Faso and recently Niger. If we add Cape Verde, which opposes military intervention, we have a third of the member states opposed to military action in Niger, which is far from a consensus.

In terms of the organization's principles, Nigeria's Chief of Defence Staff, General Christopher Gwabin Musa said at the start of the two-day meeting in Accra, which was organized to plan the action in Niger, that "Democracy is what we stand for and it's what we encourage," (Aljazeera, 17 Aug 2023). Given that 4 of 15 member states are under military regimes, is it still the case of ECOWAS policy flagship of zero tolerance for unconstitutional changes of government? The current dilemma is between accepting military regimes back into the fold and avoiding disintegration or keeping anti-coup policy with the potential risk of disintegration in the region?

The decisional making structures in ECOWAS face challenges in implementing the democratic values. Prior to dealing with putsches, the regional bloc failed in addressing some of the root causes, such as limiting presidential mandates which were not institutionalized in the legal framework. Indeed, many across the region reject the dichotomy between the idea that any elected leader is legitimate, and all coups are illegitimate.

7.3 Legal assessment

Many observers questioned the legality of a military action to restore the constitutional order in Niger, after the ultimatum given by the bloc to the Junta in the meeting of July 30th and the meeting of chiefs of defense staff on August 2nd.

It must be noted that the protocol of 1999 in different clauses may interfere with other legal texts which allow the organization or member states to make different interpretations. A military intervention or aggression, in Niger's junta view, would be illegal according to the provisions of the *Protocol of Non-Aggression* signed in Lagos on the 22nd of April 1978. The article 1 states: "*Member States shall, in their relations with one another, refrain from the threat or use of force or aggression or from employing any other means inconsistent with the Charters of the United Nations and the Organisation of African Unity against the territorial integrity of political independence of other Member-States.*"

The 1981 Protocol Relating to Mutual Assistance on Defense allows for collective self-defense in situations involving an armed threat or aggression against any ECOWAS member state. The article 2 states: "*Member States declare and accept that any armed threat or aggression directed against any Member State shall constitute a threat or aggression against the entire Community.*" The article 3 states: "*Member States resolve to give mutual aid and assistance for defence against any armed threat or aggression*". Article 2 makes the armed threat of ECOWAS illegal, while article 3 gives Mali and Burkina Faso the right to act in support of the junta in Niger in case of an ECOWAS military intervention.

Furthermore, the *Protocol on Democracy and Good Governance* signed in 2001 stated in the article 45(1) that "*In the event that democracy is abruptly brought to an end by any means or where there is massive violation of Human Rights in a Member State, ECOWAS may impose sanctions on the State*

concerned". The same article mentioned the forms of sanctions that ECOWAS may impose without mentioning a military intervention. On the other hand, the protocol enacted in 1999 establishes a system of collective security. It outlines the fundamental rules of the procedure and specifies the situations that trigger it, including the ousting or attempted ousting of a freely elected government (Article 25). Niger by ratifying the above instruments mentioned, gave its consent to such intervention.

At the international relations level, the threat or use of force is prohibited according to Article 2(4) of the United Nations Charter except in the case of a U.N. Security Council authorization under the Chapter VII of U.N. Charter.

As there is no general authorization for pro-democratic intervention under international law, the only possible legal basis for a potential ECOWAS military intervention would be an ad hoc invitation or the 2001 protocol.

Additionally, the ECOWAS legal framework outlines the conditions that must be met before a military intervention can be authorized. First of all, before considering a military intervention, ECOWAS places great emphasis on the exhaustion of diplomatic efforts. Secondly, the existence of a significant threat to regional peace and security. Thirdly, violation of democratic principles and finally a consent of the affected State. In the case of the putsch in Niger, just the third condition is met, while the other conditions are subject to different interpretations.

In conclusion, the sanctions imposed are lawful according to article 45(1) of the protocol of 2001, however, the legal basis for a military intervention to restore constitutional order after a military putsch is founded on a complex and comprehensive framework. The ECOWAS Treaty and Charter, along with the Protocol and Supplementary Protocol on Democracy and Good Governance, serve as the foundation for such interventions. These legal instruments outline the conditions, procedures, and challenges of military interventions.

7.4 External influence

The role of foreign powers in Niger's crises is significant, as various international actors expressed their opinions and took actions in response to the coup. The key actors include the United States, France, Nigeria, the European Union (EU), China and Russia.

The international response to the July putsch in Niger was characterized by a range of diplomatic statements and economic sanctions. Several countries and international organizations expressed their concern and condemnation of the coup, calling for a return to constitutional order and the respect of democratic principles. Economic sanctions were imposed on individuals and entities involved in the July putsch in Niger as a means to undermine their financial resources and isolate them politically.

External actors play a significant role in influencing ECOWAS's response to the crisis in Niger, the most important of them is France, the former colonial power, which wields considerable economic influence in Niger and in the French-speaking member states of the regional bloc. Dealan Riga (interviewed) argued that there is a structural relationship between France and ECOWAS due to the colonial legacy and economic ties. However, the strong ECOWAS reaction to this coup, compared to other ones in the region, can be attributed to French pressure, especially because of the presence of its troops in the country, since it will be the third country in the region to call for the withdrawal of the French troops, which poses a critical challenge to the strategic interests of the ex-colonial power.

France's influence on the West African organization is significant and multifaceted. This influence is evident in the peacekeeping partnership, where France's military interventions can override ECOWAS' peacekeeping aspirations. However, Critics argue that France has taken advantage of the region's

resources without breaking colonial ties. For example, Niger, the world's fifth-largest uranium producer, supplies nearly a quarter of the European Union's uranium imports, which is used for electricity production, while the country continues to be one of the poorest nations globally.

Regarding Russia, there has been a significant rise in the number of Russian flags seen throughout Niger. These displays often include enthusiastic expressions of support for Russia, such as chants of "Long live Russia" and "Down with France, long live Putin". However, there is no evidence of its support for the putsch, although there are many concerns about the presence of Wagner, particularly after the Junta's request for help from the mercenary group.

This involvement of foreign powers in Niger's crises, especially France, showcased a diverse set of responses and priorities, reflecting the complex geopolitical dynamics and the global dimension of the event. The role of ECOWAS was central, but the effectiveness of its actions depended on the cooperation of member States and the broader international community.

7.5 Public Opinion and Perception

The impact of public opinion on how ECOWAS dealt with this crisis is evident. There is an increased perception of the misalignment between the expectations of the general public and the offerings of ECOWAS, suggesting that it predominantly functions as a coalition of self-interested heads of states and governments. These leaders appear to focus on addressing only those aspects of the governance agenda that serve their own interests, contributing to the perceived disparity.

A survey conducted by Premise Data showed that the majority in West Africa approve the recent putsch (Economist, 24 August 2023). The same survey revealed a high level of trust in Russia showing a shift in public opinion orientation regarding the global alliances of the region. Additionally, observers and analysts advocated for a diplomatic solution rather than engaging in a war, which is perceived as a proxy war.

The Chair of the Board of Trustees of Amnesty International in Nigeria Musa Rafsanjani stated in an interview: *"the crisis in Niger is merely an agenda to exploit and impoverish resource-rich countries in the sub-region. Foreign interests are pushing for military intervention, urging the ECOWAS leaders who have woefully failed to prioritize the well-being of their people, leaving them in a state of insecurity, hopelessness, and poverty. These leaders have also failed to impose sanctions on tenure elongation and election rigging"* (Saturday Vanguard, 12 August 2023). Another reason is that military intervention has not dealt with the jihadist insurgencies that thrive in many areas of the Sahel, nor has it restored the rule of law there. According to Rafsanjani, *"The ECOWAS leaders who face accusations of human rights abuses, govern with dictatorial tendencies, commit international crimes, or have ascended to power through flawed processes and questionable academic qualifications, may simply be driven by an intense desire for global recognition and acclaim as supposed 'Champions of Democracy'"*.

The opinion of Rafsanjani reflects the opinion of the West African population which view the intervention in Niger as not essential and consider other priorities. Martin Ronceray (2023) explained that this difference between the will of public opinion and the leadership is a result of the organization's nature as an intergovernmental organization that primarily responds to government demands. Moreover, many governments in the region are not viewed as representative of the will of the people.

Indeed, Dealan Riga (interviewed) argues that relying on public opinion is difficult. It is unclear whether public opinion accurately represents all population spectrum, given the huge differences between urban and rural areas. Additionally, public opinion holds no power in defining government policy in the region. Regarding public opinion in Niger, Nnamdi Obasi (2023, P. 2) suggests that there is a lack of definitive

evidence regarding public opinion due to the difficulty of scoping public sentiment under the junta's regime. However, it does mention that some economic groups and civil society organizations in Nigeria that have called for the sanctions to be lifted, indicating a level of discontent with the current situation.

In conclusion, the complex interplay between public opinion and ECOWAS's response to the crisis in Niger reveals a significant disconnect between the regional organization and the expectations of the public. However, it is difficult to have definitive evidence regarding public opinion.

7.6 Capacity for Enforcement

Several factors influence the implementation of Ecowas decisions regarding the putsch in Niger. First and foremost, the institutional framework which focuses on evaluating the organization's structure related to decision-making and enforcement. Secondly, the commitment and political will of member states and the level of cooperation and coordination between them play a crucial role in determining the extent to which decisions are implemented. Additionally, the willingness of the military and other local actors to comply with decisions are significant factors influencing the successful implementation of Ecowas decisions. Thirdly, the level of resources and capabilities available to Ecowas also affects implementation, including financial resources for a potential military intervention. Moreover, the regional and international context, such as the support or opposition from external actors, can impact decision implementation.

Concerning the institutional framework, the Economic Community of West African States has a well-defined decision-making structure that facilitates the implementation and enforcement of its decisions. It is structured with the Ecowas Commission serving as the executive branch of the organization, responsible for policy formulation and implementation. The Council of Ministers, made up of ministers from member states, supports the commission by making decisions and providing strategic guidance. The ultimate decision-making body at the highest level is the Authority of Heads of State and Government, which ensures that decisions are implemented.

The initial degree of unity among ECOWAS member states in condemning the coup in Niger and imposing sanctions is driven by leaders' fears of a domino effect. Countries such as Senegal and Cote d'Ivoire expressed their will to send troops in case of a military intervention. However, the Niger crisis revealed a crack in the regional bloc, in addition to Niger, three other member states were suspended due to military coups and stands with Niger. Cape Verde abstained from sustaining a military intervention. Moreover, Nigeria's military is currently facing internal crises, and a potential war could further complicate joint counter-terrorism efforts in the region. Indeed, the senate of Nigeria opposed the military action.

ECOWAS faces significant challenges in implementing its decisions due to limited resources. For instance, the effectiveness of ECOMOG is hindered by resource constraints. Indeed, there is no stable spending pattern. According to the protocol of 1999, after the decision of the Mediation and security council, the Executive Secretary then develops a plan, informs the African Union (AU) and the United Nations (UN), and seeks funding for the operations. This will negatively impact the effectiveness of any military intervention planned given that there is no assurance of funds.

Technically speaking, any military intervention should be determined by either a two-thirds majority of ECOWAS members (Article 9 of the Protocol) or authorized by the UN Security Council (Article 53, charter of UN). Oluwatimilehin Sotubo, a researcher in Pardee RAND Graduate School, said that the major military power in ECOWAS, Nigeria, has yet to adequately address its own security issues. Indeed, An intervention in Niger would probably involve other actors on the side of Niger. This is important because Burkina Faso and Mali, which both have military juntas in power, have expressed their support

for the coup in Niger. Therefore, an intervention in Niger is potentially a more dangerous endeavor than previous ECOWAS operations, given a population of 25 million in Niger, an area of 1.2 million km², a shared border with seven countries. Destabilizing the situation through military intervention could lead to severe repercussions for the region, as a result of the global impact of this coup.

In terms of the regional context, Nigeria's internal divisions were highlighted by the opposing stances of President Bola Tinubu, who was against the coup, and the Senate, which opposed military intervention. The internal dynamics of Nigeria, which is the strongest regional military force, contributed to ECOWAS' inability to enforce its threats. Furthermore, the structure of the trilateral alliance between Niger, Mali, and Burkina Faso limited the initial enthusiasm for using force against the putschists in Niger.

France played a crucial role in the international response due to its colonial history and economic interests. Initially supporting ECOWAS measures, France later announced the withdrawal of troops, signaling a shift in its approach. China and Russia took diplomatic stances, with Russia potentially benefiting strategically from the coup, as evidenced by Niger's decision to scrap military agreements with the EU. The United States supported ECOWAS' request for the reinstatement of constitutional government but chose to pursue a diplomatic solution.

The new leaders in Niger are well-positioned in the diverse regional and international context, as they have the possibility to form different alliances that can help defend their authority against any threat from ECOWAS or France.

The capacity of ECOWAS to enforce decisions regarding the crisis in Niger is significantly influenced by a multitude of factors. The institutional framework of ECOWAS provides a structured decision-making process. However, the level of cohesion among member states is affected by internal divisions and different levels of commitment. The regional and international context is complex due to the ongoing geopolitical developments, the formation of a trilateral alliance among Niger, Mali, and Burkina Faso, and France's central role and diverse positions from major actors like China, Russia, and the United States.

7.7 Conclusion

ECOWAS' response to the crisis in Niger demonstrates a dynamic combination of factors influencing its conflict management and enforcement capacities. The organization has evolved to address armed conflicts and political crises, including military coups, demonstrating a commitment to adapting its mechanisms. The *Protocol on Democracy and Good Governance* and the *Protocol on Conflict Prevention, Management, Resolution, Peacekeeping, and Security* set out a framework for collective action to prevent and resolve conflicts.

The recent coup in Niger challenged ECOWAS' ability to enforce decisions, particularly by means of sanctions and diplomatic efforts. The sanctions had the effect of expressing strong disapproval but with negative consequences, causing hardship to the civilian population and causing disruptions to regional economic activities. The diplomatic initiatives faced challenges, including resistance from the junta, but were marked by persistence and a multifaceted approach.

The decision-making structures faced challenges in achieving regional consensus. At the same time, security challenges and potential humanitarian crises complicated the situation and made military action a contentious issue. Legally, the protocol framework provided a basis for sanctions. However, the legitimacy of military intervention faced complexities, requiring careful consideration of legal

instruments and international law. External influences, notably from France, played a critical role, revealing the intricate geopolitical dynamics and economic interests at stake.

In terms of capacity for enforcement, ECOWAS demonstrated a well-defined institutional framework, but challenges arose from resource constraints, internal divisions, and the intricate regional and international context. Overall, the crisis in Niger underscores the multifaceted nature of ECOWAS' capacities and the intricate web of factors influencing its effectiveness in conflict resolution and enforcement.

8. Discussion

This analysis explores the global response to the coup in Niger, focusing on the complex interactions of regional and international actors. It evaluates ECOWAS's approach to the crisis, considering legal foundations, technical challenges, and internal dynamics. The analysis ultimately questions the organization's efficacy. Using the perspectives of structural realism and neo-institutionalism, the study sheds light on the interplay between state-centric dynamics and institutional influences in shaping regional responses to crises.

8.1 Main findings

The global reaction to the coup d'état in Niger highlights the intricate global dimension of the events surrounding the Putsch and the different roles of various regional and international actors. Key actors, including ECOWAS, the African Union, the United Nations, the European Union, neighboring countries such as Nigeria and Algeria, and non-African actors such as France, China, Russia, and the United States, exhibited different responses and approaches. For example, ECOWAS implemented sanctions and threatened military intervention, while the AU took a more moderate stance. Neighboring countries took different approaches depending on their own internal situation and foreign interests. Non-African actors varied in their responses. France supported ECOWAS measures and faced tensions with the coup leaders and the United States opted for diplomatic solutions due to concerns about Russian influence.

The legal foundation, outlined in the Protocol for Conflict Prevention, highlights ECOWAS's commitment to democratic governance, human rights, and the rule of law. Key mechanisms, such as the Mediation and Security Council and the Defense and Security Commission, are essential to ECOWAS's conflict prevention strategy. The actions of ECOWAS in Niger were characterized by a hard-line response, which included economic sanctions, military force threats, and the activation of the ECOWAS Standby Force. Diplomatic efforts, such as delegations and mediation attempts, were made to find peaceful solutions.

However, criticism has been directed at ECOWAS for what some perceive as a swift response in Niger compared to previous cases, leading to suspicions of external influence, particularly from France. Observers have questioned the organization's enforcement of democratic norms, highlighting a potential disconnect with citizens' concerns about human rights and anti-corruption policies which represent the main root causes of the coups phenomenon.

The evaluation of the feasibility of military intervention in Niger by ECOWAS requires a comprehensive analysis that includes legal, technical, and internal factors. Although ECOWAS protocols provide a legal basis, the organization's effectiveness as a defender of democracy is undermined by the existence of unconstitutional regimes in member states. Legal complexities can arise from conflicting clauses in protocols, potential breaches of the Protocol of Non-Aggression, and the absence of a general authorization for pro-democratic intervention in international law.

Technical obstacles include the need for approval by a two-thirds majority of ECOWAS member states or the UN Security Council authorization. Nigeria's internal security challenges and the support for the coup by Burkina Faso and Mali introduce additional complexities. ECOMOG deployment faces financial and logistical impediments, with Nigeria's dominant role presenting coordination challenges.

Internal dynamics within Nigeria add further complications, particularly the authority of the Senate and public opinion. The Senate's opposition to the deployment of armed forces and the public's alignment with Russia suggest resistance to military action. Additionally, there is public skepticism about the

effectiveness of ECOWAS, the perceived self-interest of leaders, and a preference for diplomatic solutions, all of which underscore a perceived lack of imperative for military intervention.

Nigeria's approach to promoting democracy within the region became a template for ECOWAS decisions due to its use of hard, soft, and smart power in regional interventions. President Bola Tinubu's historical aversion to military rule, coupled with concerns about potential security threats and economic strains, influenced Nigeria's position in ECOWAS discussions.

The dynamics revealed how Nigeria's concerns about internal security, limited military resources, and economic consequences influenced the regional bloc's response to the coup in Niger. Nigeria's leadership position within ECOWAS was crucial in shaping the collective response and addressing regional challenges while preserving its own stability.

8.2 Is the ECOWAS' role effective?

To evaluate any action, it is appropriate to compare the objectives of the actions taken with their results. As a result, ECOWAS' role in the crises of Niger can be described as ineffective. Despite its active involvement and assertive actions, the regional organization's response failed to restore the constitutional order.

The threat to use force did not have the desired impact, given the potential consequences of military intervention. Dealan Riga (interviewed) agreed that this is not a peacekeeping operation, but a real invasion that will involve two other countries, Mali and Burkina Faso that look at an intervention as an act of war and would stand with Niger against external forces.

Although France and the United States have announced their support for an ECOWAS mission to reinstate the overthrown President, which involves strengthening the financial, tactical, and equipment capabilities of a possible intervention. Additionally, due to logistical and training limitations, ECOWAS lacks the military capability to conduct a precise surgical intervention targeting Niamey through an airlift. Furthermore, there was no division in the military in Niger. If there were factions that remained loyal to Bazoum, a military intervention would be effective.

Moreover, the impact of sanctions has apparently exceeded expectations. While they effectively expressed strong disapproval of the coup and put external pressure on Niger's leaders, the ECOWAS sanctions have also had unintended consequences that are significant for both Niamey and Abuja. These measures have caused considerable hardship in Niger, resulting in adverse repercussions that extend to Nigeria. They have negatively impacted a vibrant cross-border economy along the extensive Nigeria-Niger border, disrupting livelihoods, worsening humanitarian challenges, and jeopardizing major rail and gas projects that had the potential to increase regional trade.

ECOWAS encountered several challenges while addressing the putsch in Niger. Indeed, the organization's effectiveness in mitigating coups has been questioned in different academic researches. Aning (2004) emphasizes the need for better links between security, democracy, and governance, suggesting that ECOWAS's focus on good governance and democratization could enhance its capacity to address regional crises with global dimensions.

8.3 conclusionary remarks

The two theories of international relations that this research seeks to apply to the case study of ECOWAS and the management of the crises related to the putsch in Niger are Structural realism and Neo-institutionalism.

Structural realism assumes that states are the primary actors in international relations, while regional intergovernmental organizations are driven by the actions and interests of their member states. It also assumes a state of anarchy in which there is no overarching authority to enforce rules, resulting in a limited role for regional or international organizations in shaping state behavior. The national interests and power dynamics are the factors that really drives states' actions.

When applying the assumptions of structural realism to the ECOWAS case of dealing with the coup in Niger, several elements can be identified that either align with or challenge these assumptions.

Member states within ECOWAS, such as Nigeria and others, play a central role in guiding the organization's collective approach to the coup in Niger. Furthermore, ECOWAS' strong stance is motivated by the concern of other member states regarding a potential domino effect. In regard to Nigeria's role, it is evident that internal dynamics within the country, such as potential security challenges in the north and the Senate's position, influenced the decision to not execute the threat of military intervention.

The response to the coup in Niger within ECOWAS reflects the significant influence of national interests, both within member states and on the part of external actors. Each member state is driven by its own unique set of priorities and concerns. Nigeria, for example, is concerned about the domino effect and security instability in the north, while Cape Verde has reservations regarding the military intervention, and the three suspended member states under military rule, which supported the coup, announced the military support to Niger given that a successful returning to constitutional order in Niger would have negative consequences on the political future of the juntas in these countries.

Additionally, foreign powers, including France, are involved in the dynamics of this crisis, each with their own national interests. France's stance in the region is shaped by its historical ties, economic stakes, and geopolitical considerations. This is due to the threat of being placed by Russia, its rival in the region.

This interplay demonstrates how external actors bring their own national interests into the complex dynamics of a regional crises with global dimensions, reinforcing the structural realist view that emphasizes the primacy of states and their pursuit of self-interest in the international arena.

On the other hand, Neo-institutionalism, as applied to international relations, assumes that regional intergovernmental organizations have a significant impact on the behavior of member states. These organizations, through their established rules, norms, and procedures, influence the decision-making processes of states in dealing with regional crises, by establishing mechanisms and enforcement tools to ensure that member States adhere to established norms and rules.

When dealing with regional crises with global implications, these institutions provide a framework that defines acceptable and expected behavior among member states. In such crises, regional organizations provide a platform for states to coordinate their responses and engage in joint efforts to address the challenges. Additionally, these institutions act as arenas for diplomatic interaction emphasizing the important role of soft power. Neo-institutionalist theorists also assume that these institutions have a certain degree of resilience and capacity to evolve to meet new challenges.

When applying the assumptions of Neo-Institutionalism theory to the ECOWAS case of dealing with the coup in Niger, several elements can be identified that either align with or challenge these assumptions.

ECOWAS, as a regional intergovernmental organization, can exert influence on the behavior of its member states through an adaptive institutional framework designed to actively address conflicts and crises, such as military coups. The existence of protocols and mechanisms, such as the *Protocol on*

Democracy and Good Governance and the *Protocol on Conflict Prevention, Management, Resolution, Peacekeeping and Security*, reflect the institutional commitment to crisis management.

ECOWAS's imposition of sanctions on Niger following the coup highlights the existence of compliance and enforcement mechanisms. These measures aim to ensure that member states adhere to established norms and rules. However, the ineffectiveness of the sanctions, the impossibility of carrying out the threat of military intervention and Nigeria's hegemony challenge the organization's internal structure and design in dealing with regional crises.

The case of ECOWAS dealing with the coup in Niger aligns with some of the assumptions of neo-institutionalism, such as the institutional framework of the organization and the soft power of diplomatic efforts. However, the ineffectiveness of sanctions and the failure to restore the constitutional order in Niger underscore the challenges faced by ECOWAS in influencing the state's behavior. This showcases the limitations of Neo-institutionalism theory regarding the ability of a regional intergovernmental organization in influencing a Member State behavior.

In summary, the application of Structural Realism and Neo-Institutionalism theories to the ECOWAS case regarding the crisis management of the coup in Niger reveals a rich interaction between state-centric dynamics and institutional influences of regional intergovernmental organizations. Structural Realism underscores the predominant role of states and their pursuit of national interests in shaping the ECOWAS responses to the coup, with internal dynamics within member States, notably Nigeria, assuming a pivotal role. Conversely, Neo-Institutionalism emphasizes the impact of ECOWAS' institutional framework, protocols, and mechanisms on member States behavior. While this case aligns with certain aspects of Neo-Institutionalism, the challenges encountered in the effectiveness of sanctions and reinstating constitutional order underscore complex realities that go beyond the explanatory scope of Neo-Institutionalism.

This study underlines the need for a comprehensive understanding that takes into account both state-centric and institutional dynamics when analyzing regional responses to crises within an academic framework.

9. Conclusion

After analyzing the role of ECOWAS in addressing the implications of the coup in Niger, it can be concluded that regional Intergovernmental organizations may be constrained by the dynamics of power and interests of the most powerful member states. The hypothesis of this research stands: *regional intergovernmental organizations like ECOWAS have limited power in addressing such crises, despite its institutional framework designed to actively address conflicts and crises.*

The analysis of ECOWAS's response to the coup in Niger has revealed important findings that highlight the difficulties and complications of regional organizations' role in managing crises with global implications. The key findings provide a rich understanding of the limitations and dilemmas faced by ECOWAS and offer insights into the dynamics that shape its interventions.

Firstly, the failure of ECOWAS to influence state behavior in Niger is in line with structural realism theory, which highlights the limitations of the regional organizations in front of the interests of the most powerful member States. This underlines the complexity of the web of political realities that regional organizations navigate and recognizes the influence of power imbalances in influencing their effectiveness.

Secondly, ECOWAS is facing a dilemma as it is caught between its principles of democracy promotion and the threat of disintegration posed by military juntas in four member states. This highlights the complex balancing act that regional organizations must perform, as they strive to maintain regional stability while upholding democratic values.

The research suggests that addressing the root causes of these crises, particularly unconstitutional changes, should be a priority for ECOWAS. It is important to focus on the underlying issues that contribute to political instability, such as unlimited presidential mandates, electoral fraud, and corruption.

Moreover, ECOWAS's difficulties in dealing with the recent coup in Niger have been attributed to double standards in the application of its values. This contradiction underscores the challenges of maintaining a coherent approach and enforcing common principles in a diverse regional context.

The research has broad implications that extend to various dimensions. The effectiveness of regional organizations is not only a measure of their internal functioning, but also affects regional stability and security. Successful crisis management can improve international cooperation and recognition, foster confidence in regional institutions, and set a precedent for dealing with future crises.

The effectiveness of regional interventions is closely linked to the global perception of African institutions. Positive results not only contradict stereotypes, but also play a key role in reshaping the narrative regarding the contributions of African organizations to global affairs. When successful, these interventions serve as powerful narratives that challenge preconceived notions and foster a more accurate and nuanced understanding of the influential role of African institutions on the global arena.

The research provides valuable insights that can be applied to other regional organizations facing similar challenges. It serves as a compelling case study, revealing a rich interaction between state-centric dynamics and institutional influences of regional intergovernmental organizations. This contribution to the current body of knowledge also serves as a foundation for future research in this evolving discipline.

This dissertation encourages continued exploration of the dynamics within regional organizations in crisis management. It establishes a foundation for future studies, inviting a deeper examination of regionalism and the evolving roles that such bodies play in addressing regional challenges with global

implications. Research on the effectiveness of sanctions used by ECOWAS against member states experiencing unconstitutional changes may provide valuable insights for this field of studies.

Finally, the tension between sovereignty and regional governance emerges as a critical topic, highlighting the necessity for regional organizations to maintain a delicate balance in order to achieve their goals. The impact on regional integration is considerable as ECOWAS struggles with the evolving dynamics of its member states. Therefore, a comprehensive understanding that takes into account both state-centric and institutional dynamics when analyzing regional responses to crises within an academic framework is needed.

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